

ACCULTURATION AND FOOD HABITS AMONG AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA ACCULTURATION AND FOOD HABITS AMONG AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA

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The study sought to describe sub-Saharan African (SSA) post-migration food habits and eating patterns and examine how the food habits of SSA households in Australia reflect post-migration acculturation. Data were obtained on 139 households of demographically diverse recent migrants from across sub-Saharan Africa. The study found that SSA migrants and refugees experienced dietary acculturation characterised by three processes: substitution, supplementation and modification of recipes. They experienced difficulty locating their traditional foods; in particular, African vegetables (34.2%), unprocessed maize meal (29.1%), camel milk (23.1%) and maize grain (13.7%). The new foods adopted since arrivals were pizza, breakfast cereals and fast foods, but also included new fruits and vegetables. Takeaway food such as Pizza Hut or McDonalds featured prominently in the SSA post-migration diet. Reasons for eating out were favourite food (48.3%), routine family outing (38.3%), special occasion (33.3%) and no time to cook (25%). A significant change in meal pattern was the inclusion of breakfast, although 21% reported skipping breakfast. In conclusion, many of the observed dietary changes were not consistent with good health and may predispose this population to rapid weight gain and chronic disease. Rapid modernisation and the Anglo-Australian culture interact in a complex way with traditional eating and socialisation practices of SSA migrants. Understanding these forces can allow effective health promotion and community development strategies to be developed for the future health of SSA migrants and their communities..

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