Diet and good health

A With an average lifespan of 82 years, the people of Okinawa have been much discussed in recent years. The inhabitants of this Japanese island have the longest lifespan in the world, with many of them living comfortably past 100 years. Their healthy lifestyle is the subject of great debate, but it is their diet which has received the most attention. The Okinawa diet, named after the island, is low-fat, high in fresh fruit and vegetables, and low in meat, fish and dairy products. It may have contributed not only to the islanders’ longevity, but also to their good health compared to the rest of the world, with low incidences of heart disease and certain types of cancer.

B Nutritionist Dr Rosalind Michaels stated that other countries such as Greece, Italy and France were also noted for their healthy eating habits, with diets rich in fresh fruit and vegetables. ‘Portion control is also important,’ said Dr Michaels, explaining that in France restaurant portions were on average 25% smaller than those in the USA. She also added that in Japan food was normally eaten from small bowls, unlike in the USA, where meals were often served on large plates, tempting people to eat larger portions. ‘Another lesson we could learn from Okinawa is an eating habit known as “hara hachi bu,”’ said Dr Michaels. The saying, meaning ‘eat until you are eight parts out of ten full,’ refers to the custom of stopping eating when you are 80% full, instead of pigging out.

C Studies into the diets of Western countries such as the USA suggest something different. In the USA, Americans spent around $6 billion on fast food in 1970, but over $110 billion today. ‘These unhealthy, fattening types of food are cheap to buy, whereas many people believe that fresh foods are expensive,’ Dr Michaels explained. However, it is not all bad news. Reports state that Americans are now heeding US Department of Agriculture guidelines, which recommend that people eat between five and thirteen helpings of fruit and vegetables a day. Despite rising prices, the average American today consumes 150 kilogrammes of fresh produce per year, compared to 130 kilogrammes in 1990.

D However, diet is not the only factor in a healthy lifestyle – leisurely eating is also important. ‘In countries such as France and Greece, a meal can take several hours. This is because people take their time eating food,’ Dr Michaels explained. She added that a pleasant environment could increase the enjoyment of eating. ‘It can encourage people to eat more slowly, aiding digestion,’ she said. ‘Feeling relaxed and happy when you eat can benefit your health.’

Reading

1 Read the text and mark the sentences true or false. Provide evidence from the text to justify your answers.

1 The people of Okinawa have the longest life expectancy in the world.

2 Japan is famous for its large portions of food.

3 Americans spend more money on fast food because it has become so expensive.

4 Dr Michaels recommends eating quickly in order to digest food more efficiently.

2 Answer the questions using your own words.

1 Why is the French diet considered to be healthy?

2 Summarize the reasons why the average American diet is unhealthy.

Use of English

3 Rewrite sentences 1–2 from the text as reported speech and sentences 3–4 as direct speech.

1 ‘Portion control is also important,’ said Dr Michaels.

2 ‘These unhealthy, fattening types of food are cheap …’ Dr Michaels explained.

3 She also added that in Japan food was normally eaten from small bowls.

4 She added that a pleasant environment could increase the enjoyment of eating.

4 Find synonyms in the text for the following words.

1 long life (paragraph A) 

2 paying attention to (paragraph C)

3 relaxed and unhurried (paragraph D)

4 helping (paragraph D)

Writing

5 Describe your typical daily diet and say why you think it is healthy or unhealthy. Write 100–150 words.
Unit 6 Exam practice

Listening

1 Check you know the meaning of the words in the list.
   - hunters  - previously  - endangered  -
   - extinction  - turtle

2 Read questions 1–8. Then listen to the radio interview and choose the correct answers.

Ari says that in Indonesia:
   A everybody is vegetarian.
   B some people like eating the endangered green turtle.
   C nobody eats endangered species.
   D the green turtle population is doing very well.

In some African countries, eating chimpanzees and gorillas is popular because:
   A it’s becoming harder to hunt and kill other animals.
   B they aren’t endangered any more.
   C people are ignoring cultural traditions.
   D cutting down trees in rainforests has made it easier to find and kill them.

Elephant meat:
   A is cheap to buy in Africa.
   B is inedible.
   C doesn’t cost much money because it’s too tough.
   D can make a lot of money for hunters.

Bluefin tuna fish and lion meat:
   A are banned in the USA.
   B are served in some restaurants in the USA.
   C have never been popular in the USA.
   D both come from endangered species.

In the UK:
   A chimpanzee meat has been found.
   B no meat from endangered species is used.
   C chimpanzees are more protected than other species.
   D lion meat has been found.

Recently, Georgia Adams:
   A decided that we should eat endangered species.
   B told Americans to stop eating endangered species.
   C spoke to someone who is concerned about endangered species in the USA.
   D told people not to read Gary Paul Nabhan’s book.

Gary Paul Nabhan’s book:
   A contains a list of vegetarian recipes.
   B contains recipes that use endangered animals.
   C contains recipes for traditional food.
   D contains some revolting recipes.

Georgia thinks that:
   A Ari’s campaign could do more harm than good.
   B the situation of endangered wild animals and endangered farm animals is different.
   C we should never eat endangered species.
   D Ari should encourage people to eat green turtles.

Speaking

1 Look at the photos and answer the questions.

A Which of the two animals is illegal to eat? Why?
B One animal is wild and the other is bred on a farm. Which of the two deserves more protection and why?

You and your partner are discussing whether it is acceptable to eat meat from endangered species that have been raised on farms. Prepare and practise a conversation in which one of you is in favour of eating the meat and the other is against it. Think of different points that support both sides of the argument. Use the language below as part of your conversation.

Agreeing
   - I see what you mean.
   - You’ve got a point.
   - I think so, too.

Disagreeing
   - I’m afraid I can’t agree with you.
   - I strongly disagree.
   - That’s not entirely true.
   - On the contrary, ...

In pairs, prepare and practise a role-play in which a customer sees meat from an endangered species on a restaurant menu. One person is the customer and the other is the restaurant manager. Use the language from exercise 2 to plan your argument.