

### *Lunch, Supper, Dinner*

---

#### **A question from Pia in Warsaw, Poland**

Could you please explain the difference between lunch, supper and dinner. Does the expression relate to the time of the day that you eat the meal, the type of food or the size of the meal?

#### **Gareth Rees answers**

Well Pia, thank you for asking a question about my favourite topic, food and meals during the day. The expressions you've chosen; lunch, supper and dinner, belong to a larger set which includes words such as breakfast, tea and brunch. I'll be talking about those later.

The expressions do relate to the time of day that you eat the meal and the type of food and the size of meal. That's why it can get confusing.

First of all, breakfast. This is simplest, it is the first meal of the day, in the morning.

In the middle of the day, you might have lunch or dinner. Lunch sounds more informal or more typical, particularly for people who are working.

In the evening, you might have dinner or supper. I think that people who have a quick lunch in the middle of the day will say that they have dinner in the evening and this dinner will be a good meal.

A supper is usually a light meal, and is probably had after a larger dinner has been had in the middle of the day.

Confused? Well most people see a dinner as a more complete meal. A common lunch in England is a sandwich, but dinner might include soup, meat with vegetables, and then a dessert like apple pie and ice cream. So, dinner is really the main meal and people might have it in the middle of the day or in the evening. Lunch and supper are both light kinds of meal. Lunch is in the middle of the day, supper is in the evening.

Now I mentioned there are some other meals. We talked about breakfast. Two more words that you could add to your list are brunch and tea. Brunch is a mixture of breakfast and lunch, as you can tell by the sound of the word. Brunch. And people usually have brunch as a replacement for both lunch and breakfast. Brunch is usually had at about 11 o'clock.

And the final word is tea. Now of course this is a drink, like tea and coffee, but it can also be a light evening meal. I think this word is often used in families, particularly with their children. "It's tea time", "It's time for tea!" This means their small evening meal.

To finish, it is of course unusual to have breakfast, brunch, lunch, dinner, tea and supper all in one day. But let me tell you, not impossible. And from that comment you'll understand that I have the ideal physique and dietary habits for radio and the internet and not for TV.

*Gareth Rees has been an English language teacher and teacher trainer for over 10 years. He is currently a lecturer at London Metropolitan University and his first course book for English Language learners is due to be published in 2007.*