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## Interview with My Host Mother

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Chillan, Chile

November 14, 2018

### Interview with My Host Mother

For this interview, I asked my host mother a few questions about her daily routine/life as well as little observations that I have made across my time abroad here with her and other Chilean acquaintances. I felt that since I saw her in her usual routine most days that she would be a good person to write about in addition to the fact that it was easy to ask her questions about life in Chile since I spend a significant amount of time with her. I started off by asking her about daily things she would consider normal in Chile as well as her routine and then I contrasted those things to what is common in the United States. I found that in general the routine was very similar to how an adult in America would go about their day. She wakes up for work and doesn't usually return before 7 or 8 at night upon which she spends her time with her family.

One of the key things that I noticed that was different was the consumption of food. In America we are used to a big breakfast, sizeable lunch, and a dinner to quench any hunger we may have at night. However in Chile, breakfast is rather simple with just some tea or coffee, bread, cheese, and what they call "manjar" which equates to a more liquid form of caramel which can be spread on bread for breakfast. Lunch appears to be the same in the sense that it is usually quite a large meal, however the contents and timing of lunch are different as well. Lunch is usually consumed later in the day, around 2 or 3 in the afternoon and is made up of things like empanadas, various meats, and most likely bread as bread seems to be a very staple food in Chile. When I asked why bread is such a prominent staple food, my host mother said that since bread is very filling and cheap most citizens with less available money tend to eat everything in some form or

shape with bread. On the weekends barbecues are common for lunch as well, especially if a sizable part of the family is coming over. Finally for dinner, it is rather unusual for a family to consume a full sized dinner on a weekday, and instead they opt to take what is called “once” or eleven in Spanish. The origins of this name are tied to a local story that *once* was a code word by Chilean miners for sneaking off to drink some aguardiente liquor, as at the time there were harsh restrictions on alcohol so men would take a break for *once*. There are eleven letters in the word aguardiente, so that is supposedly where the word comes from. *Once* is very simple and light, very similar to breakfast in the sense that there is usually tea, coffee, some bread, cheese, and manjar for a small snack at night. This contrasts heavily to America where we usually like to have a big dinner which one could argue isn’t the best since one shouldn’t go to bed with a completely full stomach. One other norm that seemed decidedly different was the fact that most middle class families in Chile appear to employ housekeepers, or “nanas.” I was not used to this at all since I have almost always done my own laundry, prepared my food, and cleaned my room. It took a while to get used to but it seemed to be an important part of life here for a middle class family as both my host parents were outside of the house for the majority of the day and could not take care of every aspect of the house.

As far as cultural differences in preferences, tastes, and outlooks, there were some stark differences but also many similarities. My host mother, for example, took great enjoyment from watching American movies and television shows that were popular both in America as well as Chile. We even shared shows that we both enjoyed and watched movies together at the cinema. It struck me just how much American culture has permeated into South American society, especially in the entertainment department. Fashion sense in Chile is slightly more formal than what we are used to in America. Just one example: the clothes worn by students is usually composed of a

shirt, jacket, and jeans whereas on American campuses it is not uncommon to see someone go to class in sweatpants, although the fact that Chilean students do not live on campus most likely plays a big part in this. My host family was more conservative in their political values than I was used to, especially seeing as how I live on the West Coast where most political values are rather liberal. This is something I observed in most middle class families in Chile, that they tend to be more conservative since the conservative politicians here represent their best interests. For most part, however, I felt that my experience here showed that Chile isn't that different from America. There are, of course, cultural differences such as the traditional dances, festivals, and history that shape Chile, but at the center of daily life there seems to be a strong similarity that made my transition smooth and without complications.

Finally, as I am already an international student in America, I already have a good grip on how different America is from other parts of the world so in all honesty my views on America have not changed much from this experience. However, my time here and my experience with local people here have certainly changed my perception of Chile and South America, as I had never been here before. I did not really have any idea what Chile would be like before I arrived, and I will be leaving with a good grasp on life in Chile and how it differs from America.