



## IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

### Lessons

### Family Food Favorites

#### Overview

Issues surrounding immigration can be difficult or controversial. To balance the seriousness and complexity of these issues, this exercise can be a fun way to:

- understand the importance of food and foodways (food-related activities, preparations, and beliefs) as a part of our cultural heritage
- use food and foodways as a means of encouraging conversation about ethnic diversity
- give students an opportunity to interview family and community members

#### Grade level

Elementary (grade 3)

#### Academic Standards for Social Studies

- Indiana Standards (as of Jan. 2010): Grade 3, History, Standard 1, Chronological Thinking, Historical Comprehension, Research (3.1.6 and 3.1.8)
- National Standards (National Council for the Social Studies): I Culture; III People, Places, and Environments; and IX Global Connections

#### Social Studies/Historical Concepts

Food, culture, and celebrations

#### Learning/Instructional Objectives

Students will be investigating food in their own culture and the culture of other ethnic groups, formulating questions, conducting interviews, reporting on the interview in both oral and written form, and preparing and sharing a particular dish.

#### Time Required

Two class periods, one for introduction of project and one for presentation of project. The activity requires parental supervision and assistance for preparation of recipes and/or recording interviews.

#### Materials Required

- Pencil and paper
- Photocopy equipment or access to computer software for developing a digital resource
- Various food supplies and access to kitchen facilities
- Audio and/or digital video recorder

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- Student Handout: Family Food Favorites
- *Everybody Bakes Bread* by Norah Dooley (Carolrhoda Books, 1995), or use an alternate book selection

## Background/Historical Context

There is an old saying, “You are what you eat!” This may or may not be true, but everyone has a favorite dish or recipe and strong memories tied into the foods we share with one another. What can you say about someone’s culture based on what they eat? A lot. Food is one of those taken-for-granted aspects of culture, even though it plays such a critical role in so many of our celebrations.

Think of all the traditional foods prepared for family gatherings, weddings, religious events, and picnics. What kind of food do you find at the movie theater? At the county fair? At summer camp? Food does more than provide nourishment. It helps define our cultural or ethnic heritage—who we are, where we came from, and where we now live.

For example:

- Gumbo (a kind of seafood stew) is identified as a Cajun specialty from Louisiana
- Grits are associated with southern cooking
- Paella is a familiar Mexican American dish using saffron rice and meat
- Pierogies are a favorite among many eastern European communities
- Traditional Irish cooks are praised for their soda bread
- No Indian powwow would be complete with fry bread and honey

For more information on immigration and ethnic history, refer to the “INTRODUCTION: Ethnic History in America and Indiana” essay by John Bodnar from *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996). The “Introduction” section of the Indiana

Historical Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage” Web site provides a free download of this essay in PDF format.

## Teacher’s Instructional Plan

### Introduction

- Read aloud *Everybody Bakes Bread* by Norah Dooley.
- Introduce the lesson to students by sharing the background information, above.
- Lead a class discussion with these questions:
  - Is there one particular dish or recipe, or an ingredient, a way of preparing food, a favorite vegetable, or spice that you can identify as part of your family’s heritage?
  - Where did this recipe come from—a friend, a relative, a cookbook?
  - Would your ancestors have prepared this same dish or ingredients in the same way in their county of origin?
  - When do you make or eat this kind of food?
  - What recipes for food products help define where you live?
  - Is there a typical vegetable, fruit, or dish that is identified with your state?

### ACTIVITY

- Students will:
  - interview family cooks they know
  - ask about family recipes, where they originated, and any interesting story or custom related to this recipe
  - tell why this particular ingredient or recipe defines who they are, where they come from, or where they now live
- As a class, brainstorm questions to be asked of the person to be interviewed.

- Use the student handout questions as a springboard for more questions.
- Set a date for students to complete their interview with a family member.
- Set a date for students to complete their family recipe cards and illustrations.
- As a class, prepare the cookbook with recipes, illustrations, and photographs. (This activity may be adapted to a digital book.)
- Set aside a day for a class food fair. You might invite another classroom and/or parents to share in the food stories and the feast.

### **Evaluation and Assessment**

Consider using a rubric or checklist for evaluating student work.

### **Additional Resources**

Refer to the “Resources” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage” Web site for lists of educator and student resources on immigration and ethnic history.

## **Student Handout: Family Food Favorites**

**Interview your parent or grandparent. Ask them the following questions:**

- Is there one particular dish or recipe, or an ingredient, a way of preparing food, a favorite vegetable, or spice that you can identify as part of your family's heritage?
- Where did this recipe come from—a friend, a relative, a cookbook?
- Would your ancestors have prepared this same dish or ingredients in the same way in their country of origin?
- When do you make or eat this kind of food?
- Write the recipe down and prepared to share it with your classmates for a class cookbook.
- Is there a typical vegetable or fruit or dish that is identified with your state?

**Take action:**

- As a class, we will create a cookbook with recipes provided by each student.
- The cookbook will include your family stories too. Tell why this particular ingredient or recipe defines who you are, where you came from, or where you now live.
- Be prepared to make the recipe and share it with your classmates.
- Your teacher will give you more instructions on this class project.