

Lesson Objectives

- Identify factors that influence the availability of foods
- Research your state's major foods and dishes during different historical eras
- Curate and design a museum exhibition highlighting research findings
- Compare and contrast the foods available in two different eras

Suggested Grade Levels

4–8

Time Frame

Four 45-minute periods

Social Studies Performance Expectations

- I. Culture — Early Grades (b); Middle Grades (b)
- II. People, Places, & Environment — Early Grades (h); Middle Grades (h)
- III. Science, Technology, & Society — Early Grades (a, b); Middle Grades (b) (See Appendix)

Handout

Museum Curators' Guidelines (one copy per student)

Supplies

- Art supplies
- Butcher paper
- *Optional:* Tables or stands for displaying exhibition sections

What Do Time Travelers Eat?

Setting the Stage

1. Ask students: *Imagine we can travel back in time. If we arrive in this very spot 500 years ago and take a tour of our state, what would we see around us? For example, would there be any large cities? Who would be living in our state at this time? If we wanted a cheeseburger, could we get one? Can you guess why or why not?* [Fact: Cattle are not native to the United States. The Vikings brought European cattle to America about the year 1000. Their colony disappeared, however, and the cattle disappeared with it. It wasn't until the Jamestown colony in Virginia got its first cattle in 1611 that North Americans had beef readily available.]
2. Write the following question on the board: *What factors influence the foods made available to us?* Brainstorm a list of factors including: local climate and geography, transportation, food preservation techniques, food growing technologies, food preparation technologies, and contact between different cultures.
3. Tell students they will curate (meaning research and write the content) and design a museum exhibition that highlights the foods and dishes people in your state ate in different historical eras and explains these food choices.

Activity Procedure

1. Divide the class into four or five groups. Assign each group a period in your state's history (e.g., the arrival of the first European settlers, the arrival of the railroad, the 1920s, the 1950s, and the present). Each group will curate and design a section of the exhibition, focused on their era.
2. Distribute the *Museum Curators' Guidelines* and review them as a class. Brainstorm a list of resources that groups can use in their research including: textbooks on state history, American history, and agricultural history; encyclopedias; the state historical society; the state archaeologist; websites; and food and travel magazines such as *Gourmet*, *Bon Appetit*, and *National Geographic Traveler*.
3. After groups have researched their eras and prepared their exhibition materials (text, images, and objects), provide each group a large piece of butcher paper (approximately 5 feet long). If possible, give each group a different color. Provide art supplies (scissors, glue sticks, markers, rulers, etc.) for groups to design and mount their section of the exhibition.
4. Hang the sections in chronological order in the classroom. Allow students time to view the entire exhibition. As a class, brainstorm a list of titles for the exhibition and have students vote for their favorite title.



Cheyenne women picking berries, Lame Deer, Montana
George Bird Grinnell / National Museum of the
American Indian, N13548

Gathering wild foodstuffs requires time, patience, and knowledge of plants, animals, and seasonal cycles.

5. Ask students: *Imagine you're a time traveler who can visit two of the eras in the exhibition.* Assign students to write a letter to a friend comparing and contrasting the foods available in the two time periods they choose. The letter should explain some of the reasons for the differences.
6. Submit the class' exhibition to your area's *Key Ingredients* hosts to complement the exhibition.

Resources

"Agriculture" Page. American Local History Network.
<<http://www.alhn.org/topic/topic/ag.html>>.

Lists links to sites on different aspects of agricultural history, including equipment and tools.

Crisp, Peter. *The Farmer through History*. Illus. Tony Smith. New York: Thomson Learning, 1993.

Davies, Eryl. *Transport: On Land, Road and Rail*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1992.

"History of American Agriculture, 1776–1990." United States Department of Agriculture.

<<http://www.usda.gov/history2/front.htm>>.

Timeline divided into specific categories of agricultural history. Updated through 1997.

Horowitz, Elinor Lander. *On the Land: The Evolution of American Agriculture*. New York: Atheneum, 1980.

O'Hara, Megan. *Pioneer Farm: A Farm on the Prairie in the 1880s*. Mankato, Minn.: Blue Earth Books, 1998.

Partridge, Michael. *Farm Tools through the Ages*. New York: Promontory Press, about 1973.

Perl, Lila. *Hunter's Stew and Hangtown Fry, What Pioneer America Ate and Why*. Pictures by Richard Cuffari. New York: Seabury Press, about 1977.

Rosenberg, S.H., ed. *Rural America a Century Ago*. St. Joseph, Mich.: American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 1976.

Schlebecker, John T. *Whereby We Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607–1972*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1975.

Shepard, Sue. *Pickled, Potted, and Canned: How the Art and Science of Food Preserving Changed the World*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Thorne, Stuart. *The History of Food Preservation*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books, 1986.

Trager, James. *The Food Chronology: A Food Lover's Compendium of Events and Anecdotes, from Prehistory to the Present*. New York: Henry Holt, 1995.

Wilson, Anthony. *A Visual Timeline of Transportation*. London; New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1995.

MUSEUM CURATORS' GUIDELINES

As museum curators, your group will create a section of an exhibition about the foods and dishes eaten by people in our state during different historical eras. Your section will focus on the time period assigned to the group. You'll use images (photos, drawings, etc), objects, and text (written explanations) to answer the following questions:

1. *What are some of the typical foods or dishes that people in this period eat?*
2. *Where are these foods grown or gathered (e.g., in individual gardens or on large farms in a different state or another country)?*
3. *What are some of the tools and techniques people use to grow or gather their foods?*
4. *What techniques do people use to preserve their foods?*
5. *How do people transport their foods?*

When researching and designing your section, remember that you won't be able to include all the information you find. There wouldn't be enough room, and people viewing the exhibition would get tired of reading. As curators, your job is to choose the most important ideas to present and then illustrate them with images, objects, and text. For example, mention a few tools used for growing foods that were important in your assigned time period instead of every one.

If you include objects in your section, they must be small and light enough to attach to a piece of butcher paper. For example, items like seed packages or empty food containers can be easily mounted by gluing them to butcher paper. If you'd like to include objects that are too large or heavy to be attached to butcher paper, ask your teacher if you can use a table or stand to display these objects. Make sure to clearly identify the objects using labels. Never stick the label on the object; if attaching the object to the butcher paper, place the label below it, or, if using a table or stand, place a "tent card" next to the object. Please do not include valuable objects in your section. Unlike a museum, you won't have a security guard protecting your exhibition.

After your group has selected images and objects and written the text for your section, experiment with laying them all out in different arrangements on your butcher paper before you glue them down. Try to find a design that is both appealing to the eye and that helps viewers understand your section. For example, you may want to create a separate heading for each of the questions answered by your section. You may also want to put these headings in larger type for emphasis. Don't forget to identify each image with a caption that names the image, gives it a date, and, if necessary, includes a short description that ties the image into the theme of your section.

If you'd like to get some ideas on designing your section, visit the *Key Ingredients* exhibition and/or look at online exhibitions on museum websites.



A section of the *Key Ingredients* exhibition