

Unit 3, Lesson 1: What's For Dinner

Maryland Social Studies Standards and Framework

Standard: Peoples and Nations of the World

Topic: Elements of Culture

Standard: Peoples and Nations of the World

Topic: Cultural Diffusion

Standard: History

Topic: Settlement and Beginnings of New Societies

Standard: Social Studies Skills and Processes

Topic: Write to learn and communicate social studies understandings

MCCR Grade 4

MCCR Standards: SL.4.1, SS.6.1, SS.6.6

Objective

Students will:

- Compare and describe the elements of culture of Native American societies concerning agriculture, hunting and other foodways.
- Connect key ideas to prior knowledge.
- Compare and describe the elements of culture including shelter, recreation, education, oral traditions, art, music, and language of Native American societies.

Essential Questions:

What types of foods did Native Americans eat and how do they compare to what we eat today?

How did Native Americans get their food?

Grade Level:

3rd – 5th

Overview:

Through a series of class discussions, students will learn about the foodways of Maryland's Eastern Woodland Indians. They will be asked to compare the foodways of Eastern Woodland Indians groups to their own and eventually complete a series of BCR's on the topic.

Teacher Background:

Woodland Indians had to rely on nearby natural resources to supplement their agricultural crops, which had a profound impact on what and when different foods were available. While the climate and weather conditions that existed in Maryland 500 years ago were similar to what we have today, the landscape would have appeared quite different. Maryland was covered with extensive old hardwood forests over most of the land. In the Coastal Plain, a mixture of hardwood and pine forests was interspersed with freshwater and tidal marshes. The farming villages were located on the best soils for growing corn, near freshwater springs for drinking water, adjacent to rivers and streams for ease in transportation, daily bathing and fishing. Small hunting and gathering parties dispersed on a seasonal basis to inland camps.

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This variety of forest and water-based resources allowed for a wide ranging diet. Woodland Indians in Maryland typically planted large gardens of what is commonly called the “three sisters.” Corn would be planted in a mound of earth along with squash and beans. As the corn grew, the bean vine would wrap around the stalk and the squash plants would spread out along the ground. The corn served as a bean pole and the squash helped to keep the ground moist during the hot summer.

Cultivated plants were not the only source of food for Woodland Indians. In the spring, the young shoots of many plants such as cattails, nettles, and greenbriers would be gathered as well as roots of certain plants, like Tuckahoe, which grow in freshwater tidal marshes. In the late summer, fruits ranging from pawpaws to persimmons supplemented their diet along with certain starches, like cattail pollen and flour ground from the cattail roots. In the autumn, a wide variety of nuts, including acorns, hickory, walnuts and chestnuts were gathered from the forest. Acorns needed to be boiled and rinsed before being ground into flour and made into breads. In years of drought when the corn crop failed, the Woodland Indians significantly increased their dependence on these wild plants.

Animals were as abundant as plants. Men often hunted squirrel, deer, raccoon, opossum, bear and other game. A good portion of time was also spent on the water checking the fish weirs and nets or spearing and hooking a variety of fish such as sturgeon, bass, and drum. In the Coastal Plain, oysters provided a year-round source of food while eels and crabs were often captured in the warmer months.

A variety of cooking methods, such as grilling, smoking, stone boiling, and stewing, were practiced. Large fish and game were placed on a wooden rack above a fire for long periods of time to smoke. Smoking the meat allowed Woodland Indians to preserve the meat for latter use. Stone boiling entailed heating stones in a hearth then adding them to a container to heat up its contents. Pottery vessels were placed near or in a bed of coals to cook foods by stewing them as is illustrated in the John White painting.

A typical meal might consist of a cornmeal porridge or gruel cooked in a clay pot. Meat, fish and vegetables such as beans or dried pumpkins slices were added to make a stew. Food was kept warm on the hearths all day to provide a meal whenever it was needed. The European concept of the set meals of breakfast, lunch and dinner was an alien idea to the Woodland Indians.

Although many foods that we eat today originated in the Americas, there are several types of food that did not become available to Native Americans until the arrival of Europeans and Africans.

Many of our popular “American” dishes have their origins in Woodland Indian cooking. There is a Narraganset (Algonquian) word *m'sickquatasch* , which describes a dish made of dried beans boiled with fresh corn kernels, known to us today as succotash. Today, it is commonly made with fresh lima beans and corn. Baked beans began as a Native American dish prepared by simply mixing beans, maple syrup, and bear fat that was then cooked in pots set in the coals of a fire.

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North America	South America	Europe and Africa
Beans	Beans	Barley
Corn	Chocolate	Black-eyed peas
Maple syrup	Corn	Cabbage
Pumpkins	Peanuts	Carrots
Squash	Peppers	Cauliflower, broccoli
Sunflowers	Potatoes	Fava beans
Chestnuts	Pumpkins	Green peas
Cranberries	Squash	Millet
	Tomatoes	Wheat
Turkey	Guinea Pigs	Cows
		Pigs
		Sheep

**this list is not inclusive; there are many more examples*

Lesson Procedure:

1. Begin the lesson with a discussion of a typical meal for a “21st century Maryland family.”
 - a. What did everyone have for dinner last night?
 - b. Is there any such thing as a typical meal for a 21st century family?
 - c. Why or why not? You will receive several different answers from the students. You may use this teachable moment as an opportunity to reinforce the concept of culture and the fact that we all belong to, practice, and pass it on. Answers may include contemporary fast food, my mom’s famous soup, or dad’s venison stew.
2. Agree to one “typical” food to discuss further (we suggest pizza as a good universal choice). Break down the food or meal in question and answer the following questions about the ingredients.
 - a. What are the ingredients in (pizza)?
 - b. How are these ingredients produced?
 - c. Are the ingredients grown/raised, produced, manufactured or all three?
 - d. Who grew/raised, produced or manufactured the ingredients?
 - e. Where do the ingredients come from? (How do the ingredients get from their original source to our kitchens?)
 - f. Who made the (pizza)?
 - g. Does anyone in the class know anyone who grows the foods needed to make (pizza)?
 - h. Is what we eat restricted in any way by our environment? Why or why not?
3. Lead a discussion on what “typical” foodways might be for Woodland Indians.
 - a. Could the Woodland Indians run to the nearest grocery store to purchase their food? What kinds of tools were used by the Native Americans to grow, catch or hunt

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- food? How might the Woodland Indians produce and gather food? (Growing the “Three Sisters”, Hunting and Fishing, Gathering native plants as available.)
- b. What native plants might the Woodland Indians have used for food?
 - c. Why would the Woodland Indian not have eaten pork or beef? Did the Woodland Indians have any livestock?
 - i. (*Domesticated livestock such as pigs, sheep and cattle came from Europe along with the colonists. The Woodland Indians adopted European chickens, but chose to hunt as wild game the pigs and cattle left by the English to run wild in the woods.*)
 - d. Did the Woodland Indians have refrigerators, stoves and other modern appliances? How might the Woodland Indians prepare their food?
 - e. What might happen if there were a natural disaster, such as a drought, that adversely affected the environment?
 - f. Were all foods available all year round?
 - i. When would they have fresh corn to eat?
 - ii. When might you collect nuts to eat?
 - iii. When is cattail pollen available to collect?
4. Discuss with the students the impact of Woodland Indian culture on what we now consider “American” foodways. Help them identify what foods were originated in the Americas and what were imported. Have the students consider what dishes we eat today that were originally cooked by the Woodland Indians (*succotash, baked beans, maple sugar candy, corn on the cob, roasted pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, corn pone (bread), venison jerky*).
5. Have the students construct a BCR for each of the following question.
- a. Would you have been able to prepare a pizza in Maryland 500 years ago? Why or why not?
 - b. If you lived here 500 years ago, what kind of meal would you have eaten in the summer? What kind of meal in the winter?

Materials

Hunting & Fishing Tools

- Bone fish hook
- Arrow
- Hafted Knife

Gathering and Cooking

- Pottery vessel
- Baskets
- Gourd bowl

Foodstuffs

- Corn – small ears
- Beans – red
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sunflower seeds
- Oyster shells

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- Deer vertebrae and rib bones
- Nuts – acorns, hickory, and black walnut

Images

- John White painting of Two Indians Eating
- John White painting of Ceramic Pot on Cooking Fire
- Theodor deBry engraving of Indians Grilling Fish

Extension Activities

Provide a snack using foods that would have been available to the Woodland Indians 500 years ago, such as venison jerky, popcorn, raisins, or dried cranberries.

Here are a few recipes are provided that could be made at home and brought in to sample or made in the classroom if facilities are available. These might be better cooked outside around a campfire.

Corn Ash Cakes

- hickory wood ash [use ½ teaspoon salt as a substitute]
- 1 cup corn meal*
- Hot water

Mix salt and corn meal together. Slowly add hot water until swollen corn meal can be worked into a ball. Bury the corn meal ball in the ashes of a campfire and bake until done, about 15 – 20 minutes. Rake out of ashes and wipe clean.

*1/2 cup of cattail pollen or cattail root flour can be substituted for ½ cup of corn meal.

Cattail Root Flour

Collect cattail roots and peel them while still wet. Dry the peeled roots. When completely dry, chop the roots into small pieces. Then grind or pulverize into a powder. Remove any remaining long fibers and use the powder as flour.

Succotash

- Corn kernels
- Lima beans

Mix equal parts of lima beans and corn together and heat thoroughly. Animal fat can be added as flavoring. Bacon drippings could substitute for more traditional bear fat.

Pemmican

- 5 oz. beef or venison jerky
- 1 ½ c. raisins
- 1 ¾ c. chopped nuts
- 1 c. dried fruit
- 2 ½ T. honey
- 2 T. peanut butter

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In a small pan slowly heat honey and peanut butter. Stir until thoroughly mixed. Put dried meat, nuts and fruits into a bowl. Pour the honey and peanut butter mixture over dry ingredients. Mix and roll into balls. Can keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Related Resources:

Manyfeathers, Dawn. *Cooking Wild Foods the American Indian Way*, Volume 1. Lenapehauken Educational and Research Center, Worcester County, Maryland.

Kavasch, Barrie. *Native Harvests: Recipes and Botanicals of the American Indian*

Johnson, Sylvia A.. *Tomatoes, Potatoes, Corn and Beans: How the Foods of the Americas Changed Eating Around the World*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, Simon & Schuster, New York, New York. 1997.

Walker, Herb, compiler. *Indian Cooking*. Baxter Lane Co., Amarillo, Texas. 1977.

Note: Many of the recipes in these cookbooks reflect the cultural exchange that has occurred over the last 400 years and therefore include plant and animal products that were not native to the Americas.

Rountree, Helen C. and Thomas E. Davidson. *Eastern Shore Indians of Virginia and Maryland*. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville. 1997.

Extensive appendix on plant resources used by the Native Americans in the Chesapeake Bay region.