

Louisiana Foodways Curriculum Unit

Purpose: This unit introduces Louisiana foodways by giving students "insider" and "outsider" perspectives. Its main aim is to allow students to examine one of the most important parts of their daily environment, food. In this unit, teachers will be able to utilize interdisciplinary activities based on many aspects of Louisiana food and find resources on the foodways of all regions.

Time Required: 3 class periods

Louisiana Content Standards: ELA-7-M1, H-1A-M2, SI-E-B2, H-1C-E4, H-1A-M6, ELA-5-M2, SI-M-B6, ELA-7-M4, SI-E-A6, ELA-7-M2, SI-E-A5. (Individual standards delineated in **Appendix A.**)

Materials

1. Print out and duplicate any worksheets or rubrics that you will be using as well as appropriate fieldwork forms.
2. Pictures, postcards, cookbooks, restaurant menus, and articles on Louisiana foodways.
3. If your students will be doing fieldwork, you may want to use cameras, tape recorders, or notepads and pencils.

Lesson Objectives

Background: What if a cultural outsider came to dinner at a student's home tonight? What would the meal say about the student's culture? Would the meal say anything about the region of the state? Louisiana's unique, varied foodways are renowned and the subject of many publications. Folklorists study all aspects of food, from acquiring ingredients to serving. Because Louisiana is famous for excellent and diverse foods, you'll find many ways to integrate Louisiana foodways into your curriculum throughout the year in science, math, visual art, music, social studies, and English language arts.

Preparation

1. Accumulate materials on Louisiana foodways such as photos, postcards, cookbooks, local restaurant menus, and articles.
2. Read the background article. You can also review online articles in Internet Resources section and print out and/or bookmark any that you plan to use.
3. Decide on a schedule for the project including a deadline for students' fieldwork, giving them several evenings to choose a meal preparation to document. Handout 4A or 4B may help you.
4. Do the activity yourself. This will provide you with stories to tell your students.
5. Send a letter home with students explaining the assignment. (Handout 1)

Handouts

1. Letter to Parents and Caregivers for Louisiana Foodways Projects
- 1B. Written Release Form
2. Recipe Sheet
3. Recipe Interview Worksheet
- 4A. Response Journal
- 4B. Response Journal
- 5A. Recipe Self-Checksheet
- 5B. Recipe Self-Checksheet
- 6A. Preparing a Louisiana Meal - a Cloze Activity
- 6B. Preparing a Louisiana Meal - a Cloze Activity
- 7A. Rubric for Observing Meal Preparation
- 7B. Rubric for Observing Meal Preparation-Blank
8. Louisiana Voices Venn Diagram, page 1, page 2
9. Independent Research Worksheet
10. Concept Mapping/Graphing
- 11A. Things I've Learned
- 11B. Things I've Learned
12. Peer Evaluation for Interviews

Level 1 Activities

1. Brainstorm with students about the phrase, "Louisiana Foodways." You may want to record their responses on poster board or large paper, so that you can compare it with students' responses after the lesson. You could also utilize the topic in a K-W-L exercise. Through this assessment activity, you help the students to see what they know (K), what they want to learn (W), and later what they learn (L) from the project.

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|-------------|--|---------------------|--|----------------|
| K | | W | | L |
| What I Know | | What I Want to Know | | What I Learned |

2. Talk about aspects of foodways that folklorists study: gathering ingredients, recipes, equipment, cooking, presenting, cleaning up. Introduce traditional Louisiana foodways by noting that many folk groups contribute to the diverse foodways of the state from Native Americans to recent immigrants. Regional foodways within the state vary and relate to the geography and ecology as well as the folk groups of a region.

3. Ask students to write down what they ate for dinner the previous night. As a class or in groups discuss their lists. Did any foods seem traditional to Louisiana? If so, why? Make sure you discuss what you ate also.

4. Now ask students to categorize what they ate: salad, main course, side dish, dessert, beverage, and so on. Again, working as a class or in groups, ask students to create a table or graph of food categories or display results using computer software. Look at the individual foods again. What percentage of the foods fits this category?
5. Give students a time frame in which to choose a meal to document from start to finish and send a letter home explaining the assignment, (**Letter to Parents and Caregivers, Handout 1**). Students should observe meal preparation and interview the cook about how and when ingredients were acquired, recipes, whether this is a Louisiana dish, cooking tips, how the meal is served, clean-up. (**Written Release Form, Handout 1B, Recipe Sheet, Handout 2, and Recipe Interview Worksheet, Handout 3**). Note: Adapt the level of fieldwork to fit your curriculum. Students can design surveys, record interviews, transcribe, map meal preparations, and so on. Or, make this a simple exercise emphasizing observation skills and merely collecting enough data to continue the activity.
6. Print and duplicate the **Response Journal (Handout 4A or 4B)** and **Recipe Self-Checksheet (Handout 5A or 5B)** and distribute to students. The Response Journal is an exercise designed for the students to reflect on the activity. The Recipe Self-Checksheet is a checklist of steps to include, things to prepare, and products to present, and should be used as a guide and self-evaluation tool to help them conduct a good interview and prepare an outstanding report. At the end of the lesson, they will be evaluated using the checksheet and a score will be assigned.
7. After students have completed their interviews, they should review the things they wrote down during the process. Duplicate **Preparing a Louisiana Meal -- A Cloze Activity (Handout 6A or 6B)** and distribute to students. Tell them to read the worksheet all the way to the end to get a "sense" of what the completed story will tell. Then they should return to study their notes, maps, recordings, and so on and find answers that would fit in the blanks to make a true story about the interview they conducted. If students have worked in pairs or groups to conduct the interviews, have them complete the Cloze Activity together. The stories could be illustrated and combined into a book titled "Louisiana Cooks," or a title students think represent their comments. You may choose to have students read their completed stories to the class.
8. Students may display fieldwork results in several ways: oral or written reports, portfolios that include recipes, drawings, interviews, and photos. Use **the Rubric for Observing Meal Preparation (Handout 7A)** to evaluate the projects and assign points. A blank Rubric (**Handout 7B**) is given so you can design your own evaluation.
9. Redo the original brainstorming activity about the term foodways and compare the two. Have the students write a sentence or short paragraph defining foodways.

10. Compile a cookbook of the classes' recipes. Different colored paper could represent the different types of dishes; desserts, main dishes, etc.

Level 1 Explorations and Extensions

1. Have a potluck dinner with the tradition bearers preparing the meals the students observed. Students can make short presentations and sign their cookbooks as authors.
2. Take a class field trip to a local bakery, specialty food store, farm, dairy, fishery, or market.
3. Invite a tradition bearer, guest chef, or food producer to class for students to interview. Your school's food service personnel are an excellent resource.
4. Look for traditional foodways in literature throughout the year and keep a class master list of the foods you read about from around the world.
5. Utilize **Things I've Learned (Handout 11A and 11B)** as a further self-assessment tool.

Level 2 Activities

1. Review activities listed above under Level 1 Activities and Explorations and Extensions. Choose those you feel would help introduce the unit to your students.
2. To prepare your students for the exercise, you can have them read the background information and/or check out the Internet Resources listed below.
3. Give students a week or more in which to document in detail the preparation of a meal at home or elsewhere. They can tackle more observation and analysis than Level 1 students. Brainstorm things they should observe and questions for the cook in addition to the list in **Recipe Interview Worksheet (Handout 3)**: special ingredients or equipment, gender roles, use of space, timing, comparison of daily meal with a holiday meal. Students should document food preparation, service, and clean-up. They might work in pairs. **The Rubric for Observing Meal Preparation (Handout 7A)** offers a checklist of the steps outlined on that webpage and can be printed, duplicated, and used for self-evaluation and scoring. There is also a blank rubric so that you can design your own evaluation criteria (**Handout 7B**).
4. As a class, share results. Discuss the traditional elements of food preparation. What have cooks learned **traditionally** by word of mouth, observation, and imitation? What have they learned from **popular culture** media such as magazines or TV shows? What have they learned academically in cooking school? What variations have they made on recipes? What unwritten rules govern food preparation, mealtime, clean-up? What are gender and age group roles? What if anything seems traditional to Louisiana about this meal? To your region of the state? Why?

5. Work with students to determine how to present fieldwork findings. They can make an oral presentation, produce an audio or visual presentation, invite a cook to class, compile a project portfolio, or create a class exhibit in addition to the activities listed under Level 1, No. 4., 5., and 6. Use the **Rubric for Observing Meal Preparation (Handout 7A)** or **Recipe Self-Checksheet (Handout 5A or 5B)** to evaluate the projects and assign points.

Level 2 Explorations and Extensions

1. Interview Louisiana cooks who are well known in your community or who you identify in their fieldwork. Ask about how and when they learned to cook, recipes, ingredients. Do they garden, fish or trap game? Where do they shop? What tricks of the trade will they share, and which are considered a secret?
2. Collect and compare recipe variations collected in fieldwork for a single dish or compare recipes for Louisiana specialties in several regional cookbooks. Use **Venn Diagrams (Handout 8)** or other means to analyze commonalities and variations.
3. Read one of the Louisiana Folklife Articles listed in Internet Resources or magazine articles or cookbooks about regional foodways of the state and summarize it for your foodways portfolio or other final product.
4. Document a produce stand or a farmer's market, interviewing vendors and customers, mapping traffic patterns, identifying produce, noting produce arrangement, contrasting variations on how a single item is displayed. Talk to customers at the market and ask them what they plan to do with their purchase.
5. Document a community food event such as a pancake supper, crawfish boil, or potluck using photography or audio or video recording. Or catalog special festival foods. Write a short essay or poem about what these events "say" about your community or region.
6. Visit the online lesson **Nutritional Value of Fast Food** to find information about the Food Guide Pyramid and the nutritional value of most of the fast foods that students eat. Compare these nutritional values to those in the traditional foods, then make a list of "other values" that accompany meal times, such as family togetherness, passing on of family traditions, surroundings, and so on, and compare the two types of meal times. If desired, use **Venn Diagrams**.
7. Have students research topics about Louisiana food. (**Handout 9**)
8. Utilize **Concept Mapping/Graphing (Handout 10)** to assist students in analyzing activity.

9. Peer Evaluation for Interviews (**Handout 12**) can be used for student input in the evaluation of students.

Internet Resources go to the Louisiana Voices website, www.louisianavoices.org, for direct links. Select **Units and Lessons Outline**, then **Unit VII Lesson 3**.

Louisiana Folklife Articles, http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/creole_articles.html

All-Day Singing and Dinner on the Ground,

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/creole_art_allday_singing.html

Customs, Traditions, and Folklore of a Rural, Southern Italian-American Community,

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Virtual_Books/Fla_Parishes/book_florida_italian.html

From Custom to Coffee Cake: The Commodification of the Louisiana King Cake,

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/main_misc_king_cake.html

From Evangeline Hot Sauce to Cajun Ice: Signs of Ethnicity in South Louisiana,

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/main_misc_hot_sauce.html

Folklife in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana,

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Virtual_Books/Fla_Parishes/book_florida_overview.html

Louisiana Cooking: A Way of Life,

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/creole_art_cooking_life.html

Louisiana Foodways in Ernest Gaines's *A Lesson Before Dying*,

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/main_misc_gaines_foodways.html

Louisiana's Food Traditions: An Insider's Guide,

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/CSE/creole_food_trad.html

The Piney Woods, excerpt from *Folklife in the Florida Parishes*,

http://www.louisianavoices.org/Unit7/edu_unit7w_piney_woods.html

Mapping Space: A Meal in the Making,

<http://www.louisianavoices.org/pdfs/Unit7/Lesson3/MappingSpace.pdf>

Nutritional Value of Fast Food,

<http://www.challenge.state.la.us/edres/lessons/HighSchool/lesson7.htm>

Adaptive Strategies to Using Folklife Articles

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Resources

Cajun Men Cook: Recipes, Stories, and Food Experiences from Louisiana Cajun Country. Beaver Club of Louisiana, 1994. Walter S. McIlhenny Community Cookbook Hall of Fame.

Cane River Cuisine. Service League of Natchitoches, 1974. Walter S. McIlhenny Community Cookbook Hall of Fame book.

The Cotton Country Collection. Junior Charity League of Monroe, 1972. Includes both North and South Louisiana traditional recipes.

Fontenot, Mary Alice. *Lunch Louisiana Style.* Nutrition Education Training Program, State Department of Education, reprinted in 1995. This practical guide went to all libraries in the state and copies are available on request, Box 94064, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064. A glossary defines and gives correct pronunciation of many Louisiana food terms, and an overview summarizes regional foodways well. Lessons include family recipes, class tasting parties, food story prompts, and spice smelling. A 30-minute companion video gives historical look at various groups' contributions to Louisiana foodways. Video is available through the **Louisiana Department of Education Resource Center Audio/Visual Lending Library, Nutrition Education and Training (NET) Program.** From the menu, select "Cultural Foods."

Guste, Jr., Roy F. *The 100 Greatest New Orleans Creole Recipes.* Pelican Publishing, 1998.

Gutierrez, C. Page. 1992. *Cajun Foodways.* University Press of Mississippi. Order from the Press, 3825 Ridgewood Rd., Jackson, MS 39211, 800/737-7788.

Jambalaya: A Collection of Cajun and Creole Favorites from the Junior League of New Orleans. 1983. A Walter S. McIlhenny Community Cookbook Hall of Fame book.

Kirlin, Katherine S. and Thomas M. Kirlin. *Smithsonian Folklife Cookbook,* Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. Find recipes from North and South Louisiana and around the country as well.

Louisiana Cookin'. A magazine that features food traditions throughout Louisiana. Published six times a year, 129 S. Cortez St., New Orleans, LA 70119, 888/884-4114, 504/482-3914, subscriptions@louisianacookin.com, <http://www.louisianacookin.com/>.

Louisiana Office of Tourism. *Spirit of Independence: The St. Joseph Day Celebration.* This free 38-page booklet includes an explanation of the tradition and recipes of foods traditionally placed on the altar. For a copy, contact Sharon Calcote, scalcote@crt.state.la.us, Heritage Tourism Program, Office of Tourism, PO Box 94291, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, 225/342-8142,

Mitcham, Howard. *Creole Gumbo and All that Jazz: New Orleans Seafood Cookbook*. Pelican Publishing Co., 1978.

Recipes and Reminiscences of New Orleans. Parents Club of Ursuline Academy, 1971. A Walter S. McIlhenny Community Cookbook Hall of Fame book.

River Road Recipes III: A Healthy Collection. The Junior League of Baton Rouge, 1994. This volume includes the traditional recipe from Volumes I and II and adds a more healthy version. It also includes helpful hints from the cooks and some stories about the recipes. A Walter S. McIlhenny Community Cookbook Hall of Fame book.

Schweid, Richard. *Hot Peppers: The Story of Cajuns and Caspicum*, revised edition, University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Sunstein, Bonnie and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research*. Prentice Hall, 2002. Valuable teacher resource with lessons for reading, writing, fieldwork, and teaching students to "read" landscape and culture. Website has a community bulletin board for teachers and opportunities to share class projects online.*

Smith, Andy, compiler. *Louisiana Proud Collection of Home Cooking*. Louisiana Proud, 1991. Divides the state into five sections and includes recipes from 276 towns with sketches of local buildings.

Tell Me More: A Cookbook Spiced with Cajun Traditions and Food Memories. Junior League of Lafayette, 1993. Includes sketches by artist Floyd Sonnier.

Wilson, Charles, et al. *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. UNC Press, 1989. This large, accessible volume covers hundreds of topics, including many on foodways, useful for older students and teachers, available in many public libraries, 1,656 pages.

Wilson, David and Angus Gillespie, eds. *Rooted in America: Foodlore of Popular Fruits and Vegetables*. University of Tennessee Press, 1999. The real deal on Johnny Appleseed and the social history of foods of every day life. Chapters examines common fruits or vegetable and various cultural norms regarding food, including Tabasco sauce.

*These resources are available from the *CARTS Catalog*, www.carts.org, 800/333-5982, or online.