

# You Are What You Eat?

## Cultural Identity and Food

**Subject:** History/Geography/Culture/Global Connections/Nutrition

**Grades:** K-12

<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Research</li><li>● Writing</li><li>● Math</li><li>● Geography</li><li>● Health/Wellness</li><li>● Nutrition</li></ul> <p>Connections to Maine Learning Results listed below</p>	<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Paper</li><li>● Pencil</li><li>● printer</li><li>● See details below for further material suggestions</li></ul>
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### Goal:

Students will gain an understanding of the cultural importance of food in world cultures and attach a personal or family identity to the food/dish chosen to study.

### Instructions:

**Note:** This lesson can be tailored to work with any age and ability level. For each step suggestions will be provided for differentiated instruction.

1. Begin with a “Pair and Share” activity. Ask students to think about a favorite food or special meal they share for holidays or celebrations (i.e. birthday cake for their birthday, turkey for Thanksgiving, etc.) and share with their partner. Then have partners share with the large group. Keep track of answers on whiteboard/projection. As a group, have students point out any patterns they see in celebrations/holidays/everyday norms helping students to make connections with others and encouraging questions/clarifications for those foods or celebrations they are unfamiliar with.
2. Grade level suggestion/differentiation in instructional choice:

**Grades K-3+:** Select a book(s) from [our list](#) of recommended books spotlighting food traditions and culture or read a favorite of your own.

**Grades 4 and up:** Give students the following prompt: In 1826, French author Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote in his book The Physiology of Taste “Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are.” What do you think he meant by this? Do you agree with him? What do you think you can learn about someone from what they eat?

3. Share a favorite traditional food of your own, share how to make it and show a picture. Share how this food connects to you/your family and its cultural significance. (i.e. “Every year on St. Patrick’s Day my family makes a traditional Irish Soda Bread that is from my grandmother’s recipe. She immigrated to the United States from Ireland in the 1920’s...” or “In my family it is a tradition for my mom to make my favorite cake and dinner for my birthday. That means each year I have pasta for dinner and carrot cake for my celebration cake. Her mom used to do that for her too.”)
4. Explain that food has a story to tell. What a person eats is often closely associated with a person's, or a region's culture, climate and is influenced by the foods our ancestors ate before us. The food that someone makes for you when you don't feel well is often the same food that was made for them when they were young and didn't feel well. Someday you may make it for someone too, passing the food tradition on to the next person. What may seem like a common food to one group (it isn't hard to find lobster when you live in Maine) might be something that someone from another part of the world has never heard of or tried before. When someone moves to a new country where the food and/or language is different they may prepare traditional foods they grew up eating as a way of maintaining their own culture and connection to their country of origin. Trying food from another country or culture is a great way to experience a little piece of someone's food story.
5. Grade level suggestions/differentiation in instructional choice:

**Grades K-1:** Distribute [handout](#) This may be completed in class or sent home for homework if guidance from guardians at home is desired

**Grades 2-5:** Distribute [handout](#) - This may be completed in class or sent home for homework if guidance from guardians at home is desired.

**Grades 6+:** Project [this](#) article from National Geographic onto the board. Have students take turns reading portions of the article aloud. As a class scroll through the photos at the top of the page, selecting students to read the captions beneath the photos. Encourage students to look closely at each photograph and share things they notice/things that stand out to them/what they find interesting and what they might like to know more about. Following class discussion distribute [handout](#) - This may be completed in class or sent home for homework

6. Follow up and extension activities:

**Grades K-1:**

Display the completed handout on a bulletin board in the room. Have students identify other students who share similar traditions and have them share one new thing they learned about a classmate or a food.

Host a class potluck lunch where students can bring traditional foods from home to share and/or create a “Class Cultural Cookbook” of recipes.

### **Grades 2-5:**

Host a class potluck lunch where students can bring traditional foods from home to share

Have students use their handout to create a Google slide with the recipe, photograph and paragraph descriptions. Assemble these into a slideshow to share with the class and parents as a “Class Cultural Cookbook.”

Display a map on the board. Highlight all of the places in the world where your students' recipes originally came from.

### **Grades 6+:**

Students may complete the activity for grades 2-5 found [here](#) and any of the extension activities above.

Use the Maine MILL website to learn more about immigrant groups in the Lewiston/Auburn area throughout history and today. Have students learn more about each of the countries of origin and have them research foods these immigrant groups traditionally prepare.

### **Maine Learning Results Standards:**

English/Language Arts Anchor Standard: L.1-.5; SL.1-.2; R.2-.8; W.2-.3

Health Education: HE 1.1-.2;

Social Studies:

Geography Strand: Students draw on concepts and processes from geography to understand issues involving people, places, and environments in the community, Maine, the United States, and the world

History Strand: Students draw on concepts and processes using primary and secondary sources from history to develop historical perspective and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, the United States, and world.