

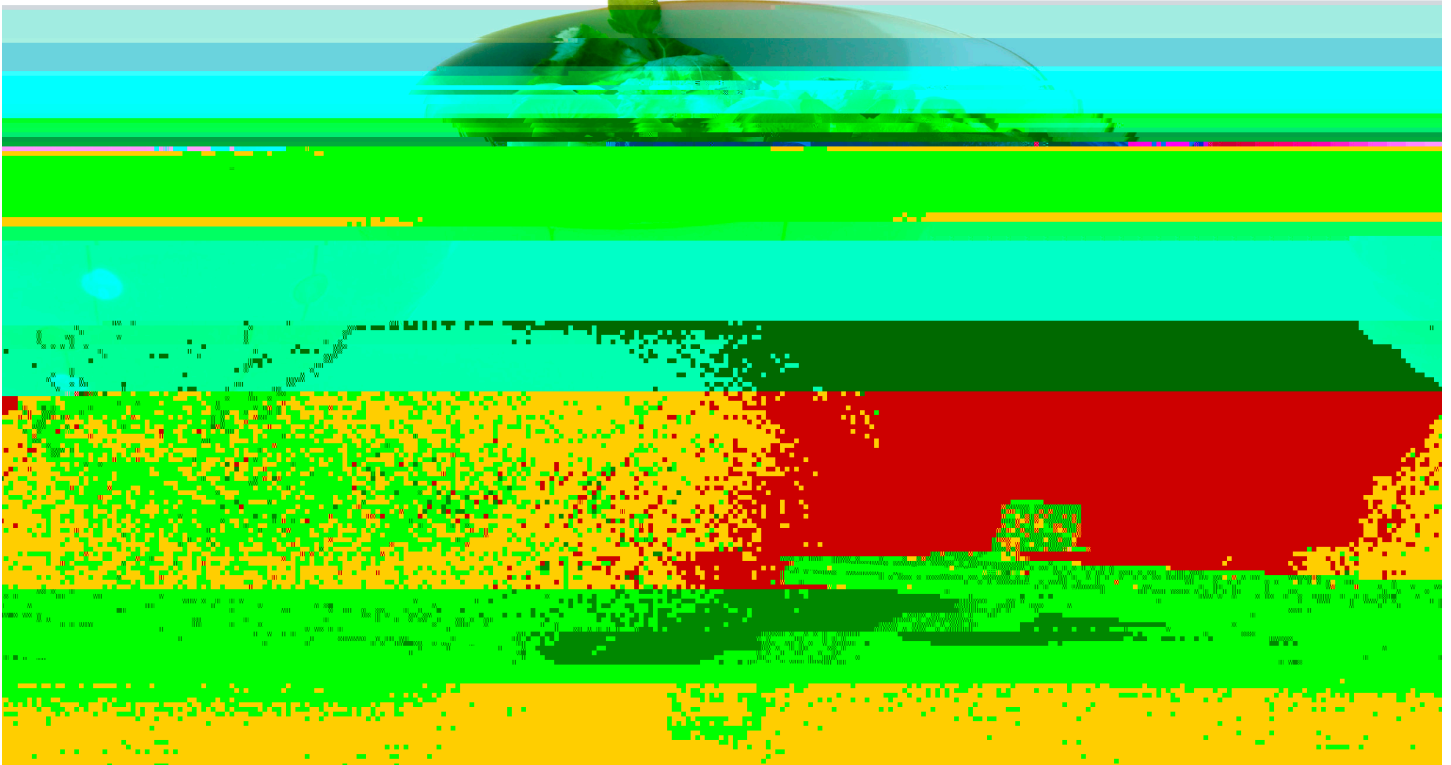
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OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students interview an elder or someone from another culture to learn about foods in different times or places. This gives students broader insight for thinking critically about their own food choices.



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PURPOSE

Cross-generational exchanges can be deeply enriching for both students and elders. They give older adults a chance to share some of their life experiences with children, and expose children to the information and guidance older people can offer. Likewise, having a conversation about food with someone from a different culture can be enlightening. There are many countries where families eat little or no processed food and some countries where people grow the majority of what they eat. In this lesson, an elder or someone from another culture provides a unique and personal perspective on foods and food traditions, giving students a basis for examining their own eating habits with a critical eye.

GRADE LEVEL

3-5

ESTIMATED TIME

One 30-minute period to plan the interview, one to conduct the interview, and one for discussion and wrap-up

BACKGROUND

From a societal point of view, the American diet has changed dramatically in the last 50 years. Advances in agriculture, transport, and production, as well as greater cultural diversity, have brought us food that is much more varied than it used to be. Technological advances have also increased the efficiency of food production, making food cheaper and more convenient.

However, many of these changes have taken a toll on personal and public health. Pre-packaged and processed foods have decreased meal preparation time and

- Explain to your guest the purpose of the interview, and arrange a suitable time for the interview. If you would like to record the interview, ask permission to do so.
- If you will be recording the interview, set up the necessary equipment.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Ask students to picture a grandparent or other older person in their lives and think about these questions: How do you think the foods he or she ate as a child were different from what you eat today? Do you know someone from a culture that is different from yours? When you compare your family's foods and eating customs to theirs, how do they differ?

Explain that you have invited a guest to speak to the class about foods and food preparation from the guest's childhood days. Share some information about the guest, and ask students what they might want to learn from him or her.

CONDUCTING THE LESSON

- 1 Give students a copy of the sample interview questions, and read over the questions together.
- 2 Work with students to determine which of the sample questions would be appropriate for your guest, and whether there are any they would like to add or change. Explain that strong interview questions are typically open-ended and elicit stories that are more interesting than one- or two-word responses. Discuss boundaries for questions, making clear what should and should not be asked.
- 3 Plan a logical order for the interview questions, and decide who will ask each question. Point out that the best interviews are typically a combination of planned and spontaneous questions. Encourage students to listen carefully

during the interview so that they can ask further questions about the guest's stories.

- 4 Model good interviewing strategies such as making eye contact, taking notes, and asking follow-up questions (“How did you feel when that happened?” or “Can you tell us more about that?”) to probe for more information. Allow time for students to practice interviewing each other using some of the planned interview questions.
- 5 Discuss expectations for appropriate behavior throughout the guest's visit.
- 6 On the day of the interview, introduce your guest to the class. Have students ask questions as planned. If you are recording the interview, be sure the equipment is ready to go.
- 7 As the interview unfolds, pay attention to student questions and guest responses, and guide further questioning as appropriate. Also notice what aspects of your guest's experiences seem to capture your students' interest, and plan to build on those in the wrap-up.

DISCUSSION AND WRAP-UP

Lead a discussion about the interview, with questions such as:

- What did you learn from the interview?
- How were our guest's foods and eating habits different from yours?
- What was most interesting or surprising to you?
- What food or preparation technique from the interview would you want to try?
- Did the interview help you understand – or make you question – anything about the foods you eat?

Direct students to write personal thank you letters to your guest. In their letters, students should include at least one thing they learned from the interview and one thing they would like to try.

EXTENSION IDEAS

Class Cookbook. Families often pass down favorite recipes from generation to generation or from friend to friend. Have students talk with their family members about family favorites, and bring in a recipe to share with the class. Collect the recipes into a class cookbook, and give each family a copy. Encourage students to try one or more of their classmates' recipes.

Community Salad. Ask each student to bring a piece of fruit (or several pieces of small fruits like grapes or cherries) to make a community salad. Be sure to note any food allergies. Collect the fruit the day before you plan to make the salad, and supplement with additional fruit as needed. On salad-making day, have students wash their hands and cut up the fruit. Toss all the fruit together in a large bowl, and serve.

¹ "Americans Weigh in Over Time - Why Are So Many Americans Overweight?" <http://www.libraryindex.com/pages/2709/Americans-Weigh-in-Over-Time-WHY-ARE-SO-MANY-AMERICANS-OVERWEIGHT.html#ixzz28MDECJ14>.

² Cordain, Loren, S, Boyd Eaton, et al. "Origins and Evolution of the Western Diet: Health Implications for the 21st Century" *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. February 2005, 341-354. <http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/81/2/341.full>.

³ Pollan, Michael. "Unhappy Meals." *New York Time Magazine*. January 29, 2007. <http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/unhappy-meals/>.

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