

Sourcing Cultural Foods:

Where do the Ingredients for Traditional Appalachian Recipes Come From?

- Subject:** Science, Agriculture
- Age Range:** Intermediate elementary (3–5)
- Topic:** Sources of foods
- Objective:** To examine the source of ingredients for traditional Appalachian recipes; to understand that many of these ingredients are produced locally; to recognize that some ingredients must travel long distances to reach Appalachian grocery shelves; to recognize the different people involved in food production
- Materials:** Chart paper, markers, recipes (included here, or you can provide your own or ask students to bring them in)

Introduction

Ask students to consider the role of food in our lives. They know that food fuels our bodies and is necessary for survival, but what else? Encourage students to consider the economic and social connections to food (i.e., food sets a rhythm to our days, families and friends gather around food, cooks show love by preparing food, many cultural traditions are food-based, a huge part of our economy is based around food). Record students' answers on a piece of chart paper, and invite students to add illustrations at a later time.

Instruction and Activities

Pass out [recipe cards](#) to students at random; be sure there are an equal number of each recipe. You can use the included recipes (below), provide your own, or ask students to bring them in.

Ask students to form groups according to their assigned recipe. Give each group a large piece of construction paper. Have students write down possible sources for each ingredient listed (e.g., eggs come from chickens on a local farm or factory farm; milk comes from dairy cows; sugar comes from sugar cane).

Invite the groups to share their findings with the class.

Then, hold a brief whole-group discussion about where the various ingredients may have originated. On chart paper, make a list of the various people who would be involved in growing, producing, packaging, transporting, selling, marketing, and preparing the food that ends up on our kitchen tables. On the list, include jobs like dietitians, food scientists, food photographers, restaurant owners, food bloggers, food allergy doctors/researchers, etc. in

addition to the more “obvious” answers like farmers, cooks, truckers and so on. (Teachers could look at [this PDF from Ag in the Classroom](#) for guidance on leading this type of discussion.)

Share this definition of the Food Supply Chain: “The system by which food is produced on farms, makes its way to consumers, and is eventually disposed.”

Finally, show this [food supply chain short video](#) (3 minutes) and discuss.

Extensions

- Have students research the actual path of a particular ingredient (e.g., cheddar cheese, sugar, corn) from farm to table. Have them prepare a brief Powerpoint presentation illustrating this process.
- Invite students to write about a favorite family recipe and a special memory about a time the dish was served.
- Invite students to record a video tutorial of how to prepare a favorite family recipe.
- Invite students to sign up to bring a favorite dish to share with the class!

Mary Todd Lincoln's White Cake

Ingredients

1 cup blanched almonds, chopped in a food processor until they resemble a coarse flour
1 cup butter
2 cups sugar
3 cups flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
1 cup milk
6 egg whites
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
confectionary sugar

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a Bundt cake pan. 2. Cream the butter and sugar. Sift the flour and baking powder 3 times. Add to the creamed butter and sugar, alternating with milk. Stir in the almonds and beat well. 3. Beat the egg whites until they are stiff; then fold them into the batter. Stir in the vanilla extract.
4. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan and bake for 1 hour or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Turn the cake out on a wire rack and cool. When cool, sift confectionary sugar over the top.

Historians note that Mary often served the cake plain, with no frosting, but a basic white frosting sprinkled with almonds was also popular.

The recipe from *Lincoln's Table* by Donna D. McCreary was adapted by Janice Cooke Newman.

<https://www.simplyappalachian.com/article/2014/11/mary-todd-lincoln%E2%80%99s-kentucky-white-cake>

Biscuits with Chocolate Gravy

Biscuit Ingredients

3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface
2 tablespoons sugar
2½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup vegetable shortening, plus more for pan
1 cups buttermilk
¼ cup melted unsalted butter

Chocolate Gravy Ingredients

⅓ stick butter
⅔ cup sugar
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
⅓ cup cocoa
2 cups whole milk

Directions

To make the Chocolate Gravy, heat the butter in a cast iron skillet over low heat. Mix in the sugar, flour and cocoa. Slowly pour 1 cup of milk into the skillet and whisk well to remove lumps. Whisk in remaining milk, stirring constantly, until mixture is thick, being careful not to scorch. Keep it warm over low heat.

To make the biscuits, preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. In a medium bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Cut in the shortening with a fork until it looks like cornmeal. Add the buttermilk, a little at a time, stirring constantly until well mixed.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead lightly 2 or 3 times. Roll out the dough with a floured rolling pin to ½-inch thickness. Cut dough into circles with a 2-inch cutter.

Place the biscuits in a greased iron skillet. Gently press down the top of the biscuits. Brush the biscuits with half the melted butter and bake for 14 minutes or until golden brown. Brush the hot biscuits with the remaining butter. Split the hot biscuits in half and ladle the Chocolate Gravy over them.

Recipe courtesy Paula Deen

<https://www.simplyappalachian.com/article/2015/01/biscuits-chocolate-gravy>

Special Garlic & Cheese Potato Casserole

Ingredients

3-4 large potatoes, uncooked
1 cup grated aged cheddar cheese (to taste)
4-5 garlic cloves, crushed
1 cup milk
1 egg, beaten

Directions

1. Peel (or not) and slice potatoes to no thicker than a dime.
2. Layer the bottom of your oven dish with 2-3 layers of potatoes.
3. Cover potatoes with a thick layer of grated cheese.
4. Crush one clove of garlic over the top of the cheese, spreading out evenly.
5. Continue to do this 3-4 times, depending on how deep your oven dish is.
6. End up with a cheese and garlic layer to finish, not a potato layer.
7. Mix the milk and egg together and pour over the top of the cheese.
8. Bake at 350°F until the potatoes are soft and the cheese topping is brown. Cooking time will vary depending on number of layers and thickness of potato slices.

VARIATION: Add meat or vegetables in the layers to make it a main

dish. Recipe compliments of Dan Angell, CEO of Copper River Grill

<https://www.simplyappalachian.com/article/2015/02/copper-river-grill-potatoes-menu>

Brown Sugar Black Walnut Cake

Ingredients

1 cup shortening
1 stick butter
1 pound brown sugar
5 eggs
3 cups sifted plain flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup evaporated milk
1/2 teaspoon maple flavoring
1 cup black walnuts, chopped into medium pieces

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Cream the shortening, butter and brown sugar together. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well. Sift the flour with the baking powder and salt. Alternate adding the dry ingredients and the milk to the sugar mixture. Add the flavorings and mix well.

Bake in a greased and floured tube pan for 1 hour and 30 minutes. Cool.

From a local cookbook printed in 1983 by the Leicester community of WNC, west of Asheville, NC.

<https://www.simplyappalachian.com/article/2016/01/brown-sugar-black-walnut-cake>

Cheesy Crock Pot Potato Soup

4 med. potatoes, peeled, washed and cubed
1 small onion, chopped
4 C. chicken broth
3 T. all purpose flour
1 C. half & half
1 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 tsp. smoked paprika
8 oz. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
salt and pepper to taste
crumbled bacon
chives

Put the potatoes and onions in the crock pot, add the broth, cover and cook on high for 2 1/2 hours. Whisk together the flour, half & half, garlic and paprika. Pour into the soup and stir to combine. Cover and cook for 30 minutes. Stir in the cheese and salt and pepper to taste. Cook for 15 more minutes. Serve with crumbled bacon and chives.

<https://jcrow216.wixsite.com/janetsaplcnkitchen/single-post/2017/01/06/cheesy-crock-pot-potato-soup>

Nannie's Skillet Corn

7 ears of fresh corn, shucked and silt removed
3 T. butter
1 T. bacon grease
1 1/2 C. water
3 T. all purpose flour
2 T. sugar
salt and pepper to taste

In a large bowl, cut the corn from the cob and then scrape down each ear of corn to get the milk, set aside. Whisk together the water, flour and sugar, set aside. In a heavy bottom skillet melt the butter and bacon grease over med. high heat. Add the corn and stir to coat in the butter/grease mixture. Pour in the water mixture and bring up to a boil. Reduce the heat to med. low and cook for 30 minutes, stirring from the bottom often to prevent sticking. Season with salt and pepper before serving.

<https://jcrow216.wixsite.com/janetsaplcnkitchen/single-post/2017/07/26/nannies-skillet-corn>