



Where did our food originate?

Subjects Social Studies, Biology, Botany, Nutrition

Grades 4-7

Brief Description

This research and video activity invites students to learn about the ancient origins of the foods we eat. Students will keep a food diary, noting all foods (major ingredients only) they eat for one week. Armed with a list of plant foods originally domesticated by the indigenous peoples of Central and South America, students will highlight those foods they have eaten that come from Central and South America. They will create a video 'infomercial' about one of these foods. Optional activity: Try to go for one entire day without eating any, or only eating foods domesticated in Central or South America. Think about these domesticated plants as gifts the indigenous people of Central and South America gave the world.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about plant domestication and relay that knowledge through a variety of activities/projects
- Learn about plant taxonomy by looking up Latin plant names in a web site
- Work with peers to assemble meaningful infomercials

Keywords

History, ancient, nutrition, prehistoric, botany

Materials Needed

- access to the *¡Hola Canada! The Latin-American Collections at the Simon Fraser University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology* web site
- writing tools
- video camera

Lesson

Invite students to learn about the ancient origins of the foods we eat. First, view the two food videos on the web site; 'Chocolate' and 'Foods of Latin America'. From the videos, make a list of common plant foods that were domesticated in Central and South America. (Note that some plants were independently domesticated in several parts of the world.) A more complete list follows below. You may print this list for your students to use as a reference. They should be directed to look up any foods with which they are unfamiliar. 'Plants for a Future' <http://www.pfaf.org/index.html> is a good place to start, but not all the cultivars listed below are in that database. This site has an interactive database in which students can type the Latin name and read information about each genus and species. The information on each species includes edible and medicinal uses, cultivation details, etc. Students may use this information as a springboard for other activities involving plants, food and nutrition.

Students will keep a food diary, noting all foods (major ingredients only) they eat for one week. (See example below). Armed with a list of plant foods originally domesticated by the indigenous peoples of Central and South America, students will highlight those foods they have eaten that come from Central and South America.

Groups of students will do additional research and create a video 'infomercial' about one of these foods. Or, write a short story or play set in the historical past about someone tasting a Central or South American food for

the first time. For example, imagine the first Italians who ate a tomato – did they think of tomato sauce and pasta right away?

Optional activity: Try to go for one entire day without eating any foods, or eating only foods, domesticated in Central or South America.

Evaluation

Observe how students work together and stay on task.

Students are graded on the completeness of their food diary and the detail they put into researching the ingredients that comprise the foods they ate.

Those that do an infomercial or write a story will be evaluated on the quality of the acting, the creativity of their writing and accuracy of their information.

Common plant foods domesticated in Central and South America
(partial list)

Corn
Runner Bean
Lima Bean
Common Bean
Sweet Potato
Potato
Sunflower
Peanut
Cashews
Pineapple
Papayas
Avocados
Guava
Peppers
Chili
Squash
Pumpkin
Tomato
Vanilla
Sisal
Cotton
Cacao chocolate

Food diary

Keep a list of all the foods you eat. If the foods are made up of several ingredients, write out each of the major ingredients. You do not have to measure how much you eat, just note the list of ingredients. Highlight those that came from Central or South America.

Example:

Breakfast	Toast	wheat
	Strawberry jam	strawberries, sugar
	Hot chocolate	chocolate, milk
Lunch	Pizza	wheat, cheese, tomatoes, sausage
	Salad	lettuce, tomatoes, celery, avocado
After school	Apple	apple
Dinner	Roast chicken	chicken
	Baked potato	potato, sour cream, chives
	Broccoli	broccoli
	Corn on the cob	corn