THE WORLD’S FLAVOR PROFILES

OVERVIEW

Students examine the food traditions of the world’s five major inhabited continents. They learn about the broad flavor profile of each continent, and then select a country and research key ingredients, seasonings, and dishes that form the foundation of that country’s cuisine.

GRADE LEVEL: 3–5
CALIFORNIA FOOD FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS™ downloadable resource

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this report may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Center for Ecoliteracy
David Brower Center
2150 Allston Way, Suite 270
Berkeley, CA 94704-1377

For more information about this activity, email info@ecoliteracy.org or visit www.ecoliteracy.org.

Learning in the Real World

Learning in the Real World is a publishing imprint of the Center for Ecoliteracy, a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization. Created in 1997, Learning in the Real World offers resources to support schooling for sustainability, stories of school communities, and the ecological framework that informs the work of the Center.
THE WORLD’S FLAVOR PROFILES

FOOD AND CULTURE OVERVIEW

Although most people are aware that food provides nourishment, we rarely consider the geographic, historical, and cultural conditions that have influenced what we eat and how we procure, prepare, and serve it. By exploring food through a prism of culture, time, and place, we build a deeper appreciation of how regional characteristics have shaped our global food system.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students examine the food traditions of the world’s five major inhabited continents. They learn about the broad flavor profile of each continent, and then select a country and research key ingredients, seasonings, and dishes that form the foundation of that country’s cuisine.

GRADES

3-5

LENGTH

Two 50-minute class periods, plus time between for student research
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

• Become familiar with the traditional and regional foods of the five major inhabited continents.

• Understand that their cultural heritage influences the foods they eat.

• Draw from informational texts, maps, and online resources to research the flavor profiles of a country of their heritage or another country of their choice.

• Create a visual representation of that country’s flavor profile.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS

• Crosscutting Concepts — Patterns: Patterns can be used as evidence to support an explanation

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS — ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

• Writing — W.3.7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic. W.4.7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic. W.5.7. Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

• Reading Informational Text — RI.3.7. Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur). RI.4.7. Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on
Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears. RI.5.7. Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC LIFE (C3) FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

• Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools — Geography – D2.Geo.3.3-5. Use maps of different scales to describe the locations of cultural and environmental characteristics.

VOCABULARY

• Flavor profile
• Ingredient
• Traditional
• Seasonal
• Cuisine
• Continent
• African
• Asian
• European/Mediterranean
• Latin American
• Middle Eastern/Indian

MATERIALS

• Large world map
• Adhesive dots
• Flavor profile pictures
• “Flavor Profile Research” student handout
• Access to the Internet
• Poster-making materials (oaktag, markers, etc.) or access to an online poster-making application

**PREPARATION**

1. Make copies of the flavor profile pictures or plan to project the images on a screen. Make copies of the student handout.

2. Write possible search terms on the board for finding information about a country’s foods and ingredients. Among the possibilities:

   • Common (or typical) foods of _______________________*
   • Traditional foods of _______________________
   • Traditional meals of _______________________
   • Cuisine of _______________________
   • Favorite foods of _______________________
   • Common breakfasts (or lunches or dinners) in _______________________
   • Common (or key) food ingredients in _______________________
   • Food history of _______________________
   • Climate of _______________________
   • Farm products of _______________________

* The blank indicates the country’s name.
DIRECTIONS

1. Show students the world map, and ask them to think about a continent or geographic area whose cuisine interests them. It may be a geographic area from their family’s heritage or where their favorite foods come from. Give each student an adhesive dot, and ask students to place their dots in that area on the map.

2. With information from the Background, provide a quick overview of the five flavor profiles, using the world map to locate each geographic area and displaying the flavor profile picture for each.

3. Invite students to choose a flavor profile that either reflects their heritage or ethnicity or represents their favorite food flavors.

4. Direct students to choose one country within the flavor profile and find out more about the cuisine of that country. As a class, read through the directions on the student handout, making sure students understand both their task and any new vocabulary.

5. Talk about search terms students might use to find information about the foods of the country they have chosen. Point to the terms you have written on the board, and add any new ones students think of. See Resources for an additional source students may use for their research.

6. Allow time for students to conduct their research.

7. Provide poster-making materials (or access to an online poster-making application). Have students create a poster similar to the flavor profile pictures that depicts 8–10 main ingredients and seasonings used in the cuisine of the country they researched.

8. Display the completed posters and discuss how our cultural heritage influences the foods we eat and the reasons ingredients may be common in a particular cuisine.
EXTENDED LEARNING

• Challenge students to find 3–5 recipes that incorporate ingredients and seasonings commonly used in their chosen country.

• Prepare and share dishes from each of the flavor profiles.

• Visit a grocery or ethnic food store to see what ingredients and seasonings from students’ countries may be available locally.

ASSESSMENT

Use students’ posters to assess their understanding of the concepts.

RESOURCES

• foodbycountry.com: this website provides information on food history, food customs, geography, and politics related to food — as well as sample recipes — for most countries around the world.


BACKGROUND

A flavor profile includes the overall attributes and tastes of a particular food product or cuisine. The broad, general flavor profiles explored in this activity represent the world’s major continents. Due to trade and globalization, numerous cuisines around the world use many of the same basic foods, but may season those foods in distinctive ways. Within each of these profiles are very significant regional differences, but the choice of seasonings—and in some cases, ingredients—allows us to talk in broad terms about flavor profiles.
FLAVOR PROFILE: AFRICAN

For this lesson, “African” refers primarily to the countries of the African continent and islands south of the Sahara. The cuisine is diverse, showing the influences of colonizers, explorers, and traders over the centuries, interwoven with diets based on indigenous foods.

In the United States, enslaved Africans brought their native foods such as okra, black-eyed peas, and yams, and also incorporated corn and other local ingredients. Especially in the South, many typical foods have strong ties to this African tradition. The African profile includes the following ingredients:

- Beans
- Black-eyed peas
- Collard greens
- Corn
- Millet
- Molasses
- Okra
- Paprika
- Peanuts
- Peppers, chili
- Peppers, sweet
- Sassafras
- Sweet potatoes
- Yams

Familiar foods in this profile include gumbo soup, black-eyed peas with collards, and sweet potato pie.
Collard Greens

Peanuts

Corn

Chili Peppers

Okra

Black-Eyed Peas

Paprika

Sweet Potatoes
FLAVOR PROFILE: ASIAN

The Asian continent includes countries as culturally and culinarily different as China, Japan, the Koreas, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and the Indonesian archipelago. Most of them use—in one way or another and to greater and varying degrees—the following spices, herbs, and ingredients:

- Coriander
- Coconut
- Cumin
- Curry
- Fish sauce
- Ginger
- Lemongrass
- Mint
- Mung beans
- Peppers, chili
- Peppers, sweet
- Rice vinegar
- Saffron
- Sesame seeds and sesame oil
- Soy flavorings: miso paste, fermented soybeans, soy sauce
- Thai basil
- Tofu
- Turmeric

Familiar foods in this profile include Asian noodles, pho soup, and rice bowls.
TOFU

LEMONGRASS

SAFFRON

CHILI PEPPERS

CORIANDER

MUNG BEANS

COCONUT
FLAVOR PROFILE: EUROPEAN/MEDITERRANEAN

This profile traces its origins to North American settlements in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially of immigrants from the British Isles, Northern Europe, and Spain. Later immigration throughout the first part of the twentieth century brought additional Northern and Eastern Europeans, as well as Italians, Portuguese, Greeks, and other Mediterranean peoples. This profile includes the following ingredients:

- Barley
- Basil
- Capers
- Couscous
- Dill
- Fennel
- Garlic
- Horseradish
- Mint
- Olives
- Olive oil
- Oregano
- Paprika
- Peppers, chili
- Peppers, sweet
- Rosemary
- Saffron
- Thyme
- Tomatoes

Familiar foods in this profile include risotto, lasagna, and vegetable soup.
**FLAVOR PROFILE: LATIN AMERICAN**

Mexico, the Central American and South American countries, and the islands of the Caribbean have elements of a distinct New World cuisine based on indigenous ingredients that has also been heavily influenced by colonizers from Spain, Portugal, Holland, and France, and by the African traders. The Latin American profile includes the following ingredients:

- Achiote
- Bananas
- Beans
- Chocolate
- Cinnamon
- Corn
- Cumin
- Garlic
- Hibiscus
- Mangoes
- Nopales (cactus pads)
- Oregano
- Papaya
- Peppers, chili
- Peppers, sweet
- Plantains
- Quinoa
- Tomatoes
- Vanilla

Familiar foods in this profile include tacos, tamales, and arroz con pollo (rice with chicken).
FLAVOR PROFILE: MIDDLE EASTERN/INDIAN

This profile encompasses cuisine from the Middle East, also known as Western Asia (including Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan), as well as countries of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. The Indian subcontinent is sometimes included in geographical references as part of Western Asia, and sometimes as part of Southern Asia. Culinarily, India and the Middle East use many of the same herbs and spices, as well as such ingredients as yogurt. This profile includes the following ingredients:

- Allspice
- Cardamom
- Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- Cilantro
- Cinnamon
- Coriander
- Cumin
- Fennel
- Garlic
- Ghee (clarified butter)
- Mint
- Nutmeg
- Peppers, chili
- Peppers, sweet
- Pine nuts
- Pomegranates
- Rose water
- Sesame oil
- Tamarind
- Turmeric
- Yogurt

More specific to India:

- Curry
- Garam masala
- Kaffir lime leaves
- Mangoes

Familiar foods in this profile include falafel, tabbouleh, pita bread, and curried potatoes.

[Source: Flavor profile information was slightly adapted from pages 35–45 in Cooking with California Foods in K–12 Schools (2011, Learning in the Real World).]
CILANTRO

CINNAMON

CURRY

YOGURT

MANGOES

PINE NUTS

TAMARIND

POMEGRANATES

CHICKPEAS
FLAVOR PROFILE RESEARCH

1. What country did you choose to research?

2. On which continent is it located?

3. Color in your chosen country on the world map below.

4. What ingredients and seasonings are commonly used in this country’s food?

Meats: ________________________________________________________________

Fruits: ________________________________________________________________

Vegetables: ____________________________________________________________

Grains: ________________________________________________________________

Dairy: _________________________________________________________________

Spices: ________________________________________________________________
5 Briefly describe the typical daily meals in this country.

- Breakfast: ________________________________________________________________
- Lunch: _________________________________________________________________
- Dinner: ________________________________________________________________
- Other: _________________________________________________________________

6 Choose a common ingredient of your country’s foods, and find out why it is used so much there. (For example, the country’s climate, history, or location may be part of the reason.)
ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ECOLITERACY

The Center for Ecoliteracy is an internationally recognized leader in systems change innovations in education for sustainable living. Since 1995, the Center has engaged with thousands of educators from across the United States and six continents. The Center offers publications, seminars, academic program audits, coaching for teaching and learning, in-depth curriculum development, keynote presentations, and technical assistance. Books authored or coauthored by the Center for Ecoliteracy include *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social, and Ecological Intelligence* (Jossey-Bass, 2012); *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability* (Watershed Media, 2009); and *Ecological Literacy: Educating Our Children for a Sustainable World* (Sierra Club Books, 2005).

CREDITS

Authors  Carolie Sly, Leslie Comnes

Editor  Michael K. Stone

Designer  Karen Brown

PHOTOS

Cover  coconut: istockphoto 11204027, isailorr; chilis: istockphoto 4710381, magnetcreative; olives: istockphoto 337080, susib; corn: istockphoto 13967505; cinnamon: istockphoto 15689149, popovaphoto

World map  www.digital-vector-maps.com

African flavor profile  collard greens: istockphoto 2408145, vtupinamba; black-eyed peas: istockphoto 6976274, tfazevedo; peanuts: istockphoto 8258761, RedHelga; paprika: istockphoto 11766151, AngiePhotos; corn: istockphoto 13967505, JoeBiafore; chilis: istockphoto 4710381, magnetcreative; okra: istockphoto 10294583, CherylEDavis; sweet potatoes: istockphoto 11170307, Floortje
Asian flavor profile  tofu: istockphoto 12704422, KevinDyer; ginger: Istockphoto 10862599, Dar07; lemongrass: istockphoto 3355929, sasimoto; saffron: istockphoto 11766674, AngiePhotos; chilis: istockphoto 4710381, magnetcreative; coriander: istockphoto 15335886, Jamesmcq24; mung beans: istockphoto 12339657, JonnyJim; coconut: istockphoto 11204027, isailorr

European/Mediterranean flavor profile  fennel: istockphoto 10659058, KevinDyer; barley: istockphoto 11478909, AntiMartina; oregano: istockphoto 15730560, annaia; olives: istockphoto 337080, susib; olive oil: istockphoto 8988248, eurobanks; sweet pepper: istockphoto 15317965, vicm; garlic: istockphoto 14186271, AlasdairJames; couscous: istockphoto 10463258, AlasdairJames

Latin American flavor profile  tomato: istockphoto 6974625, cinoby; plantains: istockphoto 14693727, fcafotodigital; cumin: istockphoto 11933156, AngiePhotos; vanilla: istockphoto 5791952, amriphoto; hibiscus: istockphoto 12552432, moppet; achiote: istockphoto 9215515, Atelopus; quinoa: istockphoto 12306408, AlasdairJames; beans: istockphoto 6976271, tfazevedo

Middle Eastern/Indian flavor profile  cilantro: istockphoto 4585508, YinYang; cinnamon: istockphoto 15689149, popovaphoto; mango: istockphoto 15689149, popovaphoto; chickpeas: istockphoto 14067709, galaiko; pomegranate: istockphoto 10884055, alxpin; pine nuts: istockphoto 7729295, timsa; tamarind: istockphoto 4018067, Devonyu; yogurt: istockphoto 8636220, vikif