

Foods of the Middle East

Overview:

In this lesson plan, students will investigate foods of the Middle East. Students share opinions about their favorite ethnic dishes and then research the foods of the Middle East with cookbooks. Through the research of Middle Eastern cuisine, students will gain an appreciation of Middle Eastern culture and even have the opportunity to taste the cuisine, if applicable. This lesson will aid students in their examination of the Middle East, its cultures, and its peoples, and can also be paired with other units on Ramadan or Middle Eastern festivals.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Share their favorite ethnic foods.
2. Research food from the Middle East using an accessible cookbook.
3. Report on their findings.
4. Write a pretend culinary review (or real if you prepare a dish in the classroom) of a particular dish.

Activity:

1. Ask students to respond to the following prompt in their journals (written on the board prior to class): "What is your favorite ethnic food? Why?" Allow students to share their responses.
2. As a class ask students if they have ever tried food from the Middle East. Gather responses. Then ask students what types of ingredients they think people in the Middle East rely on in their foods. Have them make a list of foods they associate with the Middle East, which they will add to or remove from after their research of the region's cuisines. If necessary discuss where the Middle East is and show students on a map. Ask students to circle on the list foods that they have never tried.
3. After reviewing ideas on Middle Eastern food, divide students up into groups. Give each group a cookbook on Middle Eastern cooking and tell them to use the cookbook to find out information about the kinds of foods and recipes from that particular area. (A student accessible collection of cookbooks is available on loan from the CSAMES library.) Use the questions below as guiding questions, asking students to add to their initial list as well.
 - a. What ingredients are unique to that region that you have never heard of?
 - b. What are some typical foods and ingredients that are prepared in that region?
 - c. How are foods usually prepared in the region? (Baked, fried, boiled, stir-fry, stew, broiled, casserole, etc.)
 - d. What foods are served for special occasions? Why?

- e. Is there a food that is considered the national dish of that region? If so, what is it and why?

Cookbooks Available from CSAMES

- I. Bacon, Josephine. *Cooking the Israeli Way*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company, 2005.
This cookbook provides traditional Israeli recipes that highlight the food and ingredients of Israel that have come from different cooking traditions all over the world. The recipes combine influences from the Middle East with those of Europe and the United States. The book also includes wonderful pictures and ethnographic information about the region, as well as its holidays and culinary traditions. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - II. Behnke, Alison. *Cooking the Mediterranean Way*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company, 2005.
This cookbook provides traditional Mediterranean recipes that highlight the food and ingredients of the Mediterranean. The book also includes wonderful pictures and ethnographic information about the regions, holidays, and culinary traditions. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - III. Behnke, Alison. *Cooking the Middle Eastern Way*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company, 2005.
This cookbook provides traditional Middle Eastern recipes that highlight the food and ingredients of the Middle East, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Armenia, and Turkey. The book also includes wonderful pictures and ethnographic information about the regions, holidays and culinary traditions. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - IV. Cornell, Kari and Nurçay Türkoğlu. *Cooking the Turkish Way*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company, 2005.
This cookbook provides traditional Turkish recipes that highlight the food and ingredients of Turkey. The book also includes wonderful pictures and ethnographic information about the region, as well as its holidays and culinary traditions. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
4. Have groups give short presentations on their region's cuisine. Discuss the similarities and differences among the regions discussed, as well as with the type of cuisine they are familiar with.
 5. Have students write a “review” of one of the dishes from their group’s cookbook. (Or make one of the dishes from the cookbook for the class to taste and review.)

The additional list of festival books below, include a few simple recipes for extra options.) Give students the following questions to help with their review:

- a. What ingredients in your dish are found in many dishes of that region?
- b. Are there any ingredients that you have never had before?
- c. How is it prepared? Is it a typical type of preparation for the region?
- d. How would you describe the dish? Speculate on the dish's smell, texture, flavor, spiciness, etc.
- d. Is it an everyday dish or a dish for special occasions? What is the significance of the dish, if any?

Additional Resources for Recipes

Foy, Don. *Festivals of the World: Israel*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 1997.

This highly accessible children's book incorporates wonderful pictures, recipes, and craft ideas in order to explain festivals in Israel. Ethnographic details, geographic and religious information, as well as information about the festivals themselves are included in the book. A recipe for Hamantashen, sweet cookies, is found at the back of the book. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)

O'Shea, Maria. *Festivals of the World: Saudi Arabia*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 1999.

This highly accessible children's book incorporates wonderful pictures, recipes, and craft ideas in order to explain festivals in Saudi Arabia. Ethnographic details, geographic and religious information, as well as information about the festivals themselves are included in the book. A simple recipe for Khoshaf, a snack of sweetened fruits, is found at the back of the book. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)

O'Shea, Maria. *Festivals of the World: Turkey*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 1999.

This highly accessible children's book incorporates wonderful pictures, recipes, and craft ideas in order to explain festivals in Turkey. Ethnographic details, geographic and religious information, as well as information about the festivals themselves are included in the book. A recipe for Pumpkin Dessert is found at the back of the book. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)