

Cultural Heritage: Traditional Mexican Cuisine Across Time



Totomoxtle, corn husk art, Oaxaca, MX (Weisenbach, 2011)

Lesson 1 Cultural Heritage

According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) “Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration” <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>. UNESCO’s World Heritage mission is to protect cultural heritage and, in 2010, Traditional Mexican Cuisine was listed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The goal of this unit, *Cultural Heritage: Traditional Mexican Cuisine Across Time*, is to use primary sources to trace the indigenous roots of Mexican food and to examine traditional cultivation, preparation and ritual. The lesson will begin with an overview of cultural identity and cultural heritage by completing the activities in Lesson 1 Cultural Heritage.

Lesson 1 Cultural Heritage

Activity 1 Defining Cultural Identity and Cultural Heritage

Objectives

Students will:

- define vocabulary related to cultural heritage.
- write sentences in Spanish using the new vocabulary.
- list examples of cultural characteristics associated with the United States, and other countries around the world including Mexico.
- read an article, view a slide show and watch a video about intangible cultural heritage and take notes for a class discussion about why Mexican cuisine is on the Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Essential Questions

How do we identify ourselves?

What cultural traditions are most valued by citizens of the United States? Other countries?

How are traditions preserved?

Which of our traditions are threatened to extinction?

What resources can we use to discover Mexico's important cultural characteristics?

What examples can we use to demonstrate corn's critical role in Mexican heritage?

Student Activities

In this lesson we will brainstorm the concepts of cultural identity, cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage. On Handout 1.1 Cultural Identity-Cultural Heritage Organizer:

- define and give examples of cultural identity, cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage
- write examples that include your town, state, country and examples associated with other countries around the world including Mexico
- list any of the above terms that were difficult to define or to find examples
- share your ideas during a class discussion session

For homework:

- define cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, NAFTA, patrimony, repatriation and UNESCO in your notebook and use each term in an original sentence.
- read "Intangible Cultural Heritage Traditional Mexican Cuisine - Ancestral, Ongoing Community Culture, the Michoacán Paradigm."
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-mexican-cuisine-ancestral-ongoing-community-culture-the-michoacan-paradigm-00400>
- watch the slide show that accompanies the reading, then list the different foods, utensils and food preparation pictures that you recognize.
- write five questions you may have about Mexican cuisine or five statements to share with the class
- watch the video and answer the questions on Handout 1.2 "Intangible Cultural Heritage Traditional Mexican Cuisine - Ancestral, Ongoing Community Culture, the Michoacán Paradigm"

Lesson 1 Cultural Heritage

Activity 2 Identifying Traditional Cultural Heritage: Focus on Food

Student Activities

On whiteboard tablets, students will list the different ways we can learn about what is important to a culture group, and prepare to share their ideas with the class.

Discuss homework assignment, Handout 1.2 "Intangible Cultural Heritage Traditional Mexican Cuisine - Ancestral, Ongoing Community Culture, the Michoacán Paradigm."

- **Note to Teachers**

Encourage students to discuss how we can examine art/architecture, mythology/literature, music, politics and religion in order to learn about cultural heritage.

Next, focus the discussion on food, especially maíz/corn and cacao/chocolate as the theme of the unit.

Refer to the UNESCO video and explore how students can learn about Mexican cuisine from ancient times to the present. What threatens Mexican cuisine, thereby making it eligible for the UNESCO 2010 List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity?

Initiate a discussion about themes to be explored later in this unit on cultural heritage and Mexican cuisine, such as the events that jeopardize cultural heritage.

Raise a question about why Mexico has a National Day of Corn, or the meaning behind the expression “Sin Maíz No Hay País” (without corn there is no country)

Planeta.com: September 29 is National Corn Day in Mexico #DíaNacionaldelMaíz
<https://planeta.com/dianacionaldelmaiz/>

Thousand Currents: A day to celebrate corn in Mexico
<https://thousandcurrents.org/a-day-to-celebrate-corn-in-mexico/>

Use a mix of materials from *Lesson 1 Resources* to introduce students to the importance of food, especially maíz and chocolate in Mexican culture.

Assessments

Class participation

Comprehension questions

Organizer

Reaction to video

Essay

Take home essay: Moctezuma’s Dinner

Vocabulary tests

Lesson 1 Resources

UNESCO Culture Sector. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 June 2012.

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-mexican-cuisine-ancestral-ongoing-community-culture-the-michoacan-paradigm-00400>

This site includes a description, slideshow and video of Mexican cuisine from planting and harvesting to cooking and eating.

Suggested sources for Lesson 1 Activity 2 enrichment are:

Artifacts in Museum Collections

Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History

Yale University Art Gallery

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
American Museum of Natural History, NY

Archives and Databases

FAMSI (Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc.)
<http://www.famsi.org/>

Mesolore <http://www.mesolore.org/scholars/portraits/14/Ellen-Messer> , scholar Ellen Messer discusses chile, chocolate, and corn in the Mexican diet

The Mapas Project: A Project of the Wired Humanities Projects
<https://mapas.uoregon.edu/>

Virtual Mesoamerican Archives: A Project of the Wired Humanities Projects
<http://vma.uoregon.edu/>

Music

Carlos Mejia Godoy” Somos hijos del Maiz” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpP2AZcTz_g

Lila Downs: "La Cumbia del “Mole”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=K61yhtVNYRs#!
Music about traditional Mexican food with slide show of Oaxacan cuisine.

"Palomo Del Comalito” (a song about corn)
<http://liveonletterman.radio.com/music-videos/Lila+Downs/Palomo+Del+Comalito/MXV011100488>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8o6QUwsadP8&feature=player_embedded#!

Kinto Sol -Los Hijos de Maiz <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GaNTBdqj5A>

Mythology/ Literature

Asturias, Miguel Angel, and Gerald Martin. *Hombres De Maiz*. Paris: Allca XX, 1992. Print.

González, Pedro G. *Sq'anej Maya' Palabras Mayas: Poemas En Maya Q'anjob'al Y Español*. Rancho Palos Verdes: Yax Te' Foundation, 1998. Print. “El Maíz”, poem by Gaspar Pedro González

Legends about Maiz/corn <http://yucantoday.com/es/topics/mitos-mayas-dziu-y-el-maiz>
(Spanish) <http://yucantoday.com/en/topics/mayan-myths-dziu-and-corn>

Legends about cacao/chocolate <http://sinalefa2.wordpress.com/2010/01/22/la-leyenda-del-cacao/>
or <http://cocinatlacuani.blogspot.com/2008/04/la-leyenda-del-cacao.html>

The Legend of Quetzalcoatl <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6soW6PixKJ8> (an animated version of the Legend of Quetzalcoatl)

Montejo, Victor, and Luis Garay. *Popol Vuj: Libro Sagrado De Los Mayas*. Toronto: Greenwood, 1999. Print. English available.

Videos

MAMAZ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8w13qxZbFc&lr=1> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q434I0frTWO&feature=relmfu>

(women artists talk about corn and the resistance) Spanish with subtitles in English.

Mesolore- Scholars <http://www.mesolore.org/scholars/portraits/14/Ellen-Messer>
(Ellen Messer discusses ethnobotany with focus on corn and chocolate)

Mesoweb- <http://mesoweb.com/resources/resources.html>, scroll to “The Lords of Creation and Sacred Maya Kinship”, a video that highlights the importance of maíz in Mesoamerica)

Proyecto Trilingue: Preparing Champurrado

<http://www.schooltube.com/video/c57fdbacc4f4414382d0/How%20to%20make%20ChampurradoI>

(A student from Colegio Superior para la Educación Integral Intercultural de Oaxaca (Nov 07, 2011) created a video for Branford High School, Branford, CT and Los Alamitos High, Long Beach, CA in which she demonstrates how to prepare champurrado, a Mexican hot chocolate thickened with masa and flavored with piloncillo and anisee)

PBS When Worlds Collide Video chapters 2 and 4

Miscellaneous

Cano, Mirtha. "Sacred Food and Drinks." *Asociacion Flaar Mesoamerica* (2008): n. pag. Web. http://www.wide-format-printers.org/FLAAR_report_covers/705528_Sacred_drinks_and_food.pdf

"Cultura Gastronomica De Mexico." Web log post. N.p., n.d. Web

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cultura-Gastron%C3%B3mica-de-M%C3%A9xico/188626847815417>

Google Image searches for Mexican National Day of Corn, Sin Maíz no Hay País or Monsanto.

Zea Mays <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/corn/> La Gran Aventura del Maíz. Corn related games and activities.

Lesson 1 Handouts

1.1 Cultural Heritage- Cultural Identity Organizer

1.1 Patrimonio Cultural-Hoja para Identidad cultural

1.2 UNESCO Traditional Mexican Cuisine –Video- Questions

1.2 UNESCO Traditional Mexican Cuisine -Video-preguntas; Español

1.3 Moctezuma's Dinner English

1.4 Cumbia del Mole- Lila Downs-preguntas; Español

1.5 El Maíz, poema de Gaspar Pedro Gonzalez- preguntas; Español