

# Explore Our Food Traditions

## OVERVIEW

Students will explore the role that food plays in both their own lives and in other cultures.

- **Before Your Visit:** Students will write about and share a food-related item that’s important to their own families.
- **During Your Visit:**
  - o In *Our Global Kitchen*, students will explore the role of food worldwide, and reflect on how it resembles or differs from their own experience.
  - o In the Windowfarms display, students will learn about a way to grow food where space is limited.
- **Back in the Classroom:** Students will investigate how the food traditions in their family have changed over time by interviewing an older relative. Using materials from these activities and recipes from home, students will then collaborate on a class cookbook.

### NYS Learning Standards for Social Studies:

**Standard 2, Key Idea 1:** Study about different world cultures and civilizations focusing on their accomplishments, contributions, values, beliefs, and traditions.

## BACKGROUND FOR EDUCATORS

What we call “culture” is everything that makes up the way a group of people live, including how they eat, celebrate, and worship. Food is a core element of cultural identity — bringing families together for daily meals as well as communities together for rituals and celebrations. By investigating food’s place in their lives, students can enrich their understanding of their own culture. In exploring their family’s food history, students can experience the dynamic nature of culture over time. Finally, by studying global food traditions, students can broaden their knowledge of other cultures.

## BEFORE YOUR VISIT

### Activity: Looking at Our Own Food Traditions

**Objective:** Students will bring a food-related object to class and share its significance.

1. A few days to a week before the lesson, instruct students to bring in an object, photo, or drawing that relates to food. The item should relate to their family, neighborhood, beliefs, or traditions. Examples include a photo of a family meal, a drawing of a dish or ingredient, a food sample (nonperishable), a tool used to prepare food, or a recipe. Stress that items should not be valuable or fragile.
2. Have students describe their food item using the “Our Food Traditions” worksheet. Encourage them to include as much detail as possible.
3. Divide the class into small groups of three to five. Have students take turns presenting their items to each other, using the questions on the worksheet to guide their discussions.

**Plan how your students will explore the *Our Global Kitchen* exhibition using the student worksheets.**

Distribute the worksheets to the students. You may want to review the worksheets and the map of the exhibition with them to make sure they understand what they are to do.

Note that the worksheets focus the students’ attention on the Grow, Transport, Cook, and Eat sections. Students should also explore the Celebrate and Taste sections.

**Wrap Up:** Conduct a whole-class discussion about the similarities and differences among the items. Record their observations on the board in a T chart format.

**Activity: Prepare for Museum Visit**

Distribute the student worksheets and read them together as a class. Tell students that the exhibition is broken up into six sections — Grow, Transport, Cook, Eat, Taste, and Celebrate — and that they will be completing a section of the worksheet for the first four.

**DURING YOUR VISIT*****Our Global Kitchen: Food, Nature, Culture*****3rd floor (30–45 minutes)**

Students will use the worksheets to guide them in exploring the exhibition. Upon entering, walk past the videos on round screens to the theater and have students sit on the fruit and vegetable seats to watch the introductory video. Then, individually, in pairs, or in small groups, have students explore the exhibition, filling in their worksheets as they go. In the Celebrate section at the end, have the group sit and watch the short video.

**Windowfarm****1st floor, Weston Pavillion (15–30 minutes)**

Visit the vertical garden to learn about a way to grow food that doesn't require a lot of space. Have students identify the elements of this system that keep these plants alive. (*Answer: hanging containers, circulating water, lights*) Ask if they or anyone they know grows their own food. Do they think they could set up a window farm in their own home? At school?

**BACK IN THE CLASSROOM****Activity: Class Discussion of Museum Visit**

As a class, have students share the most interesting things they learned in the exhibition. Go through the sections and have students share the answers they found, and the items they chose to sketch. Where applicable, ask how those items relate to their own lives and food traditions.

Then remind students about the Windowfarm display. Ask: What would they grow if they had their own windowfarm? Why? What are some advantages and disadvantages of growing food at home this way?

**Activity: Changing Family Food Traditions**

**Objective:** Students will investigate how the food traditions in their family have changed over time by interviewing an older family member.

1. Have students choose a tradition in their family that involves food (e.g. a favorite dish or holiday meal) and fill out the first part of the “Our Changing Food Traditions” worksheet.
2. Ask students to choose a family member who is *at least* 20 years older than them (e.g. a parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle) to interview. The interview can be conducted in person or over the phone. Tell students they'll be discussing the tradition they chose above and what it was like when the relative was the same age the student is now. (For example, if an eight-year-old student chooses Thanksgiving dinner and interviews a grandparent, the interview should focus on how the grandparent celebrated Thanksgiving at age eight.) Have students ask the questions in the second part of the “Our Changing Food Traditions” worksheet and write down the answers.
3. Afterwards, have students write one to two paragraphs about how their family traditions have changed since their relatives' childhoods and which aspects have remained the same.
4. Have students rejoin their groups and take turns presenting their findings, using their written work to guide them. Encourage them to talk about any differences and similarities they discovered.

**Wrap Up:** After all students have presented, conduct a whole-class discussion about how family traditions change, noting any recurring themes on the board.

### **Activity: Create a Class Cookbook**

**Objective:** Students will use materials from the activities and recipes from home to collaborate on a class cookbook.

1. Have students bring in recipes from home (ideally related to either the item they brought in or the interview they conducted).
2. Have students decide how to group the recipes and which other text, photos, and drawings from previous activities to include. Be sure to include your own favorite recipes and memories of your family food traditions!

Your class can also take part in the “What Does Food Mean to You?” interactive featured in the Cook section of the exhibition. Post food-related photos on Instagram with hashtag #CelebrateFood. Include a caption about what makes this moment special. Your photo may be featured in the exhibition or on amnh.org.

# *Pre-Visit Worksheet*

## **Our Food Traditions**

What is your food item?

Why did you choose it?

What is its significance in your family?

What makes it important in your culture?

# Student Worksheet

Use the questions below to explore four sections of the exhibition. Record your observations.

## 1. GROW

Look at all the foods represented on the walls.

Which of these foods would you be the most likely to share with your family?

Sketch the food that you'd most likely share with your family.

## 2. TRADE

Look at the large scene of a marketplace. What place does this scene represent?

When is it taking place?

Which products in this scene seem important to the people of the time? (Use clues you see and information from text panels.)

Sketch one of the items that seem important to the people.

## 3. COOK

Look at the food preparation and serving tools in this area. Choose one item that you find interesting.

What is it called?

How is it used?

Where does it come from?

Do you have something like this in your house?

If not, do you have anything that serves the same purpose?

Sketch the item.

**4. COOK**

Look at the meals represented in both the large scenes around the room and the smaller meals in the center. Choose the meal that you think is the most interesting.

Who’s eating this meal?

What meal or part of the meal is depicted (for example, breakfast, dinner, dessert)?

In what time period is this meal being served?

Which food items do you recognize?

Which food items are unfamiliar?

Sketch the meal.

Why did you choose this meal?

# Post-Visit Worksheet

## Our Changing Food Traditions

**Part 1: Fill in the following information before you begin your interview.**

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Your age: \_\_\_\_\_

What family tradition have you chosen?

When does your family practice this tradition?

What food or foods do you associate with this tradition?

Why did you choose this tradition?

What is your relation to the person you're interviewing (for example, parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle, old family friend)?

Why did you choose this person to interview?

**Part 2: Ask your family member following questions, and write down this or her responses.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ In what year were you my age? \_\_\_\_\_

When you were my age, describe how you celebrated [fill in tradition you chose]

\_\_\_\_\_:

What food or foods were served?

Were they always the same?

Why were those particular foods important serve every time?

How has this tradition changed since you were my age?

Why do you think it changed?

How has this tradition remained the same?

# Student Worksheet

## ANSWER KEY

Use the questions below to explore four sections of the exhibition.  
Record your observations.

### 1. GROW

Look at all the foods represented on the walls.

Which of these foods would you be the most likely to share with your family?

Sketch the food that you'd most likely share with your family.

### 2. TRADE

Look at the large scene of a marketplace. What place does this scene represent?

*(Answer: Tenochtitlan, capitol of the Aztec Empire)*

When is it taking place? *(Answer: 1519)*

Which products in this scene seem important to the people of the time? (Use clues you see and information from text panels.)

Sketch one of the items that seem important to the people.

### 3. COOK

Look at the food preparation and serving tools in this area.  
Choose one item that you find interesting.

What is it called?

How is it used?

Where does it come from?

Do you have something like this in your house?

If not, do you have anything that serves the same purpose?

Sketch the item.