

What's Cooking in West Africa?

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Overview

An essential skill for survival of any people is their ability to acquire both water and food. The location in the world or even a specific region may determine many of the food and beverage options that are available. Increasingly, foods from around the world can be found in many urban centers. Modern transportation technology, migrations of peoples and other factors create demand for various international foods. These food choices are also affected by human social factors such as religion, politics and the interaction of cultures.

West African food is as diverse as the African continent itself. Traditionally in most cultures the everyday menu is a combination of locally available fruits, grains, vegetables, milk and meat products. West Africa is no different. Certain items can be scarce at times and West African cooks have learned to work with whatever foods are seasonally available. Because of the food situation in many parts of the region, West African meals are versatile and so cooks can substitute an ingredient or leave it out all together (Montgomery 10).

In West Africa, as in other parts of the continent, modern urbanization is having a major impact on what foods are available and when they are eaten. Many food products are now imported and some African family incomes have increased so people can afford more diverse menus. .

Refrigeration is nowadays more common in urban areas. All these factors have increased the variety of foods and how they are consumed in many West African countries.

Traditionally the main African meal is usually served in the afternoon or evening and typically made up of a thick stew or soup that contains a starch, a variety of vegetables and maybe a little meat, poultry or fish (Montgomery 10). The starch found in the meal may be bread, rice, fufu or another ingredient high in carbohydrates. West Africans usually eat only two meals per day, but snack often (Montgomery 11). These snacks may be roasted plantains or meat on a stick (Montgomery 11). According to the Lonely Planet West Africa guide book (2006, p. 53), many of these snacks can be bought on the street (for example, grilled fish).

Very few people in rural areas have refrigeration and the local cuisine is based on fresh foods grown at home or purchased in the local marketplace. This means that most West Africans are

likely to visit the local market for fresh fruits and vegetables on a daily basis (Montgomery 11). While fish is abundant along the West African coast, chicken and beef are not always readily available or affordable. This is one reason soups are so popular. With a little meat, a soup or stew can feed a lot of people (Montgomery 12).

Even though many of the distinctive African cooking styles can be found in America today, West African cuisine originally came to American shores during the slave trade. West African cuisine influenced American Southern cooking, including “Soul food, Caribbean, Cajun and Creole cuisine”. I will describe some of the most popular recipes from various parts of the West African region and give the students some background information about the cultures that they came from and how they are eaten.

This unit plan will culminate with a West African style feast! My students will have to plan, shop for ingredients, prepare and serve the meal. In addition to this unit plan, a teacher could add something about African music, dress, story telling and traditions during the feast.

Rationale

I am a Life Skills teacher at Overbrook High School, a 9-12 school located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I work with up to 15 students in a self-contained classroom. The main purpose is to teach my students something about food preparation and to introduce them to foods they may not have eaten before. The unit will familiarize the students with a selection of foods that originated in West Africa, along with some of the distinct regional traditions and customs associated with food production and consumption there.

This unit plan utilizes equipment usually found in a kitchen. The plan consists of traditional lectures, multimedia presentations and hands-on activities such as shopping, preparing, and tasting a delicious African meal.

The targeted students are ages 14 to 17 years old with low-incidence disabilities which place them in the life skills curriculum. Many of these students are non-readers or read only at the lower elementary level. Their mathematics skills usually range from level K through 5th grade. All of the students in my classroom are of African American descent. Many who attend the school are from backgrounds where poverty is a factor. Moreover, each student is on a different functional level. Some already know how to cook and take care of themselves, while others do not.

Students in the life skills curriculum tend to have difficulty with generalization. Generalization is the ability of a student to apply a skill learned in the classroom to a real life situation outside the classroom. Because this group of students usually has difficulties with generalization, most of the activities in this unit plan will need to be hands-on; and the shopping portion will actually be carried out in the local community.

This unit plan includes information on the various environmental zones of West Africa (coastal, forest, savanna, sahel) which have produced distinctive traditions and practices relevant to the

production, preparation, and consumption of food. The plan will also identify traditional recipes from these various regions. I want the students to learn how to present the meal, have an idea of what might be on the menu in a particular country or type of African restaurant found in the Philadelphia area, and know about local markets that carry the ingredients to create the recipes.

Historical and Environmental Context

Many Americans think of Africa and famine together. It is true that most of the food aid around the world is sent either to sub-Saharan Africa or to South-East Asia, but many people in the western world are unaware of much more than this broad generalization. In fact, Africans on the continent have for centuries prepared for periodic food shortages by storing grain in sheds or underground pits insulated from animals and insects, by establishing trading networks across ecological zones, and by protecting forests and fields which yield edible roots or nuts that can be collected in times of drought. Moreover, many foods now routinely consumed in the west are exported from Africa, such as yams, black eyed-peas, coco, plantains, limes, pepper, palm oil, and peanuts and much more.

Across West Africa there is considerable variation in the staple foods that make up the core of local diets. These variations depend on the crops and farming systems that are suitable for particular regions (see below). Rice is important from Mauritania to Liberia and in the Sahel region. Couscous made from semolina (wheat) is a main dish in the Sahara. Along the coastal areas of West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire to Nigeria and Cameroon), root crops, specifically varieties of yam and cassava, provide the staple food. The chief crop in much of West Africa that is served in a variety of dishes is the yam (Levy M., Jens and Cristina F. Garces 1).

West African Ecological Zones

West Africa has three major ecological zones. To the north, a large horizontal band of desert, the Sahara, stretches across the continent from east to west. In the southern portion of West Africa, woodland and forest areas can be found. A transitional zone called the Sahel can be found in between: it consists of semi desert and dry savanna dotted with small areas suitable for seasonal farming (Ham, et al. 80). In addition, the coastal strip along the Atlantic Ocean consists in many places of mangrove swamps and fishing grounds with their own distinct ecologies.

The Sahara is the world's largest hot desert; rainfall and vegetation are very limited throughout the year. From ancient times to this day, caravans cross this formidable desert transporting various goods, including dates, dried meat, and the salt necessary to season and preserve foodstuffs (Ham, et al. 85). In order to learn more about these subjects please visit this website on Trans-Saharan trade at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Saharan_trade.

The transitional zone between the Sahara and the forests and woodlands to the south is known as the Sahel (from the Arabic root meaning "edge" or "shore"). The northern part of the Sahel, near the Sahara, is semi-desert; the land is dry, dusty, and sparsely vegetated. The southern Sahel is

greener and contains areas of light woodlands (Ham, et al. 81). In order to learn more about the Sahel, please visit the following website: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahel>.

The woodland and forest ecological zone in the southern part of West Africa include most of its coastal areas (Ham, et al. 84). Rainfall is plentiful in these areas and the rainforests contain trees which can reach heights of 45m (147 feet) (Ham, et al. 84). Forests and dense woodland can only be found nowadays in parts of Liberia, Sierra Leone, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire and parts of Cameroon. Small areas of woodland exist in Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo (Ham, et al. 84).

Farming Systems

For the purpose of this analysis, I will describe seven common farming systems found in West Africa. They are the following: Coastal Artisanal Fishing Farming System, Tree Crop Farming System, Root Crop Farming System, Cereal-Root Crop Mixed Farming System, Agro-Pastoral Millet/Sorghum Farming System, Sparse (Arid) Farming System and the Pastoral Farming System (Dixon, et al. 2). It is important to understand that people are constantly trading various foods and other goods all over West Africa. You can find various foods in different markets, but other factors can increase or limit the availability of certain foods during certain seasons. A map of West African farming systems can be seen at the following website: <http://www.fao.org/farmingsystems/FarmingMaps/SSA/01/FS/index.html>.

Coastal Artisanal Fishing Farming System in West Africa stretches southward from the Gambia and the Casamance region of Senegal, along the coast of Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, to Nigeria and Cameroon (Dixon, et al. 2). This farming system is based on artisanal fishing supplemented by crop production (Dixon, et al. 2). The people in this farming system sometimes use multi-storied tree crop gardens with root crops under coconuts, fruit trees and cashews. Some animal production mainly utilizing poultry and goats are common. Cattle are very rare in these areas due to the presence of the tse-tse fly. Artisanal fishing includes seine net fishing from beaches, sea fishing from boats, and the use of sewn nets and traps along estuaries and shallow lagoons. Local fishermen also catch crustaceans in mangrove swamps (Dixon, et al. 2).

Tree Crop Farming System in West Africa is found from Côte d'Ivoire to Ghana, and from Nigeria to Cameroon. A major portion of this farming system nowadays involves the cultivation of industrial tree crops. These include cocoa, coffee, oil palm, and rubber. Food crops are grown in between tree crops mostly for subsistence and there are few cattle (Dixon, et al. 2).

Root Crop Farming Systems can be found in Sierra Leone to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Cameroon. Root crops are vegetables cultivated mainly for their edible roots. Popular root crops found in West Africa include yams, cassava and sweet potatoes to name a few. Both humans and livestock eat root crops. This farming system also includes around 17 million cattle (Dixon, et al. 2).

Cereal-Root Crop Mixed Farming System extends from Guinea through Northern Côte d'Ivoire to Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria to Northern Cameroon. This system is practiced in the zone between the northern woodlands and savanna. Cereals such as maize, sorghum and millet are widely cultivated, while root crops such as yams and cassava are also important and intercropping is common. There are also an estimated 42 million head of cattle included in this farming system (Dixon, et al. 2). While this mixed farming system yields a wide range of products that are marketed throughout the region, the area is vulnerable to localized drought (Dixon, et al. 2).

Agro-Pastoral Millet/Sorghum Farming System is generally found in the semi-arid areas of West Africa from Senegal to Niger. Sorghum and millet are the main sources of food, while sesame and pulses are also grown. Hoe cultivation is very common, while some farmers use oxen or camel for plowing. Cattle, sheep and goats are also very common, providing subsistence foods such as milk and milk products. Camels and donkeys are used for transportation and camels and oxen for land preparation. Most of the farmers live in villages, while full-time herders migrate with their animals and erect temporary shelters near watering points and rain-fed pastures. The area is also very vulnerable to drought (Dixon, et al. 2).

Sparse (Arid) Farming System is found in West Africa in the countries of Niger, Mauritania and Mali. There are some scattered irrigation systems, but they are very limited. There are some cattle included in this system, but they are not significant from the point of view of farming (Dixon, et al. 2). The Sahara desert and the ever present danger of drought make farming very difficult.

Pastoral Farming System in West Africa is located in the arid and semi-arid areas from Mauritania to northern Mali and Niger. Camels, sheep, goats and cattle are found in the Pastoral Farming System. During dry periods some cattle are moved to the Cereal-Root Crop Mixed System areas and then are returned north during the rainy season (Dixon, et al. 2). The high incidence of drought and great climatic variability are the main sources of vulnerability to this farming system (Dixon, et al. 2).

It is important to understand these farming systems in order to appreciate the variety of foods that are available in different areas of West Africa. For more information on farming systems, visit this website at http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/Y1860E/y1860e04.htm#P1_2

Preparation and Serving of Foods in Africa

In Africa, most of the subsistence farming and almost all of the food preparation is completed by women (Gordon 300). Women and girls on average spend 3 to 4 hours a day preparing food, pounding millet, cooking, and collecting firewood and water (Gordon 301). Many women work in the local markets or as street vendors to supplement their families' income (Ham, et al. 41). Women also handle the majority of the child-rearing activities.

A traditional African kitchen is usually located in a separate building apart from the sleeping and living quarters of the household. In a traditional African kitchen, large swing black pots can be seen filled with meat, vegetables, and spices simmering over a fire. The pot usually sits on three

stones arranged in a triangle (The African Guide: African Cooking And Recipes). Many people in rural areas do not have refrigeration and so have developed various methods to protect their foods. Trans-Saharan salt along with special drying methods are used to preserve coastal fish and other perishables. For more information on food preservation please visit the following websites: <http://www.sflp.org/eng/007/pub1/131.htm> and http://www.birdflumanual.com/resources/Food_Preservation/foodPreserve.asp.

After the food is prepared, visitors must wait to be seated. Generally the family elders are served first, followed by other guests, with women doing most of the work of serving the food and clearing the table. Etiquette is important. In Nigeria, for example, finishing everything on your plate is a sign that you are still hungry and you will be given another serving. If dining with Muslims, one must take particular care to use only the right hand to eat. A basin of water may be brought out before the meal is served for people to wash their hands. Utensils may not be available and so hands are used to eat. When food is served in a communal bowl, one must eat only from the section of the bowl in front of him or her (Nigeria - Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette).

African foods from the Americas, American foods from Africa

Following their first journeys across the Atlantic, European explorers brought several indigenous American food crops back with them to the Old World. Among them were beans, cassava, groundnuts, maize, tomatoes and sweet potatoes, all of which had been grown in the Americas and eventually became important staples in Europe, Africa and Asia. Several indigenous African food crops in turn found their way to the Americas, including upland rice, okra, sorghum, millet, and sesame (see below). For additional information visit the following website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbian_Exchange.

Many American foods and cooking styles can trace their origins to the continent of Africa. In North America, Soul Food & Creole Cuisine have roots in West African cooking. Most African foods and cooking styles were brought to the Americas via the slave trade, when countless Africans were forced to leave their homelands behind, but then brought their knowledge and skills with them. Many African Americans are descendents of those slaves from West and Central Africa who made such important contributions. From past to present, African Americans, have contributed to American culture in literature, art, clothing styles, music, language, social and technological innovations, agricultural skills and most importantly for this unit plan, food.

One such food that was brought to the new world from Africa was rice. While the Portuguese introduced Asian rice to Africa in the mid 16th century, indigenous African rice or “Gold Seede” (*Oryza glaberrima*) was already being grown on the “Grain Coast” of Africa (modern-day Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia) at that time. Slaves from these regions of West Africa were familiar with the techniques of cultivating both the African and Asian species of rice (West 1). Spanish explorers first introduced Asian rice to Mexico, the Caribbean and South America. Then, the English brought rice to North America. African slaves were brought into these areas as laborers to replace the many Native Americans who had succumbed to smallpox, yellow fever and other old world diseases. Both Africans and Europeans had some immunity to these diseases, but it was African slaves who worked the Carolina rice plantations and probably

perfected the techniques of planting, tending, and harvesting rice in the New World. Rice cultivation was a very unhealthy and dangerous process, with high mortality rates among the slaves. American planters showed a clear preference for buying slaves that had been captured along the Grain Coast of West Africa, not simply for their labor, but once again, for the knowledge they brought with them about rice cultivation (West 1). To learn more about the African slave trade and rice, please visit the following website at http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_rice.htm.

The delicious Creole Cuisine of New Orleans is a combination of European and Native American cuisines together with African cooking techniques. One meal from Creole Cuisine is called Gumbo. Gumbo or Okra, which it is called in Africa, is a popular stew or soup that is made up of vegetables mixed with chicken, pork, shrimp, or crawfish along with okra as the main ingredient. Sassafras leaves are made into a powder that is used to thicken the stew. This is an easy meal that teachers could prepare in the classroom with their students.

West African foods have had a great impact on the southern cuisine (Soul Food) of the United States. Soul Food is an American cuisine which has been influenced directly by African tastes and cooking styles. In addition to okra, other foods native to Africa such as watermelons, guinea corn (sorghum or durra), and sesame were transported to the Americas. Some traditional African foods became commercially raised crops in America, notably yams and watermelons. Sesame seeds, originally grown in West Africa and parts of India, are used today in many American recipes for soups and puddings and as oil for cooking. For more information about Soul Food please visit this website at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul_food.

Objectives

The Life Skills Curriculum does not follow the core curriculum. It is made up of 6 domain areas. The Philadelphia Life Skills Curriculum instructional domains are defined as follows with an objective following each in italics:

1. Personal Maintenance skills are those skills necessary to care for themselves, including eating, grooming, dressing, toileting and health care. During this unit plan my students will feed themselves. *They will learn about how people in different cultures in Africa eat according to customs and traditions.*
2. Domestic Maintenance skills are those necessary to participate in home life in the community. This includes skill areas associated with food preparation, shopping, cleaning, laundry and other domestic tasks. A large part of the unit plan will address many of these skills. *During the course of this unit plan, the students will plan, shop, and prepare various African meals.*
3. Vocational Skills are skills that are necessary to secure and maintain employment. This includes skills involved in specific jobs (i.e., office & clerical skills, restaurant & kitchen skills) as well as work habits and other job related behavior. *The students will not only prepare and serve the meal, but will of course clean up afterwards and thus demonstrating skills from this instructional domain area.*

4. Functional Academics are skills which represent an application of an academic skill (i.e., reading, writing and mathematics) to a real life situation at home, on the job, or in the community. This includes skills such as handling money, telling time, reading sight words and other related skills. *During this unit plan, the students will ample opportunities to use these skills (Math & Reading) as they plan, shop and prepare their meals.*
5. Interpersonal Communication and Social Skills are necessary to communicate and interact with others. *This includes skills required to respond to others, follow directions, indicate preferences and express ideas.* Once again, these practical skills that are needed in order to complete tasks in this unit plan.
6. Recreation & Leisure skills are used to engage in free time activities for pleasure. This includes such areas as individual sports, travel, spectator activities, hobbies, games and other activities. *Cooking can be a leisure time activity for some students. Learning and reading about travel to country in Africa could also be a related recreation and leisure time activity.*

Strategies

Teaching students with low incidence disabilities requires techniques and strategies which may vary considerably from how information would be presented to other learners.

This unit plan will utilize a lot of hands-on learning and multiple locations to help the students grasp the information. Generalization is the ability for a student to learn a concept or skill in one place and use that same concept or skill somewhere else. Students with low incidence disabilities traditionally have difficulty transferring skills learned in the classroom to the outside world. For the purpose of gathering supplies for cooking any meals in this unit plan, students with low incidence disabilities will visit the markets and other locations in order to help them generalize. This is a major strategy when working with low incidence populations.

After generalization, another strategy used with students with low incidence disabilities is Task Analysis. Task analysis utilizes a detailed description of all activities and includes all the other factors involved in or required for one or more people to perform any given task. Because some of my students can read and others can not, I will use a few graphic organizers, including a sequence chart for planning the meal and preparation. The graphic organizer will use both written words and pictures. Task Analysis will be utilized for the preparation of all sequenced events planned for the unit.

Next, because all students learn in different ways, I always employ strategies that utilize the theory of multiple intelligences developed in 1983 by Dr. Howard Gardner. Many of my students are visual learners, so in addition to the use of graphic organizers discussed above, I will also utilize the chalk board, pictures and other appropriate visual media. The students will have to use their other intelligences in the course of gathering and preparing meals, such as linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligence. During the feast at the end of the unit plan, even musical intelligence can be utilized in various ways.

Classroom Activities

This unit plan will consist of three lesson plan activities. In the life skills program, students may be with the same teacher several years and changing the recipes every year will help the students remain interested. Each unit plan could be taught in a day or stretched over weeks depending on the teacher's specific situation.

In order to teach this unit plan you will need access to the following:

- This unit plan will require funds for transportation to and from places in the community (Markets with supplies to create recipes).
- A kitchen or food preparation area is needed with a refrigerator, sink, and stove and all the other tools needed for cooking.
- Funds to purchase ingredients.
- Various internet and printed sources for information on background information and recipes.
- African music, movies, traditional clothing and other resources that you may want to add in addition to the lessons' various activities.

This unit plan will be highly interactive and challenging, but well with-in the parameters of the life skills curriculum. Students will learn something about the cultures and foods of the continent of Africa.

1. Lesson Activity One: Where is West Africa and What is Cooking There?

The first lesson will provide an introduction to the continent of Africa along with the various regions which have produced different cooking styles. The website http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuisine_of_Africa provides a very good overview of each region and its main staple foods. The unit plan will focus on West Africa.

Background:

West Africa is located south of the Sahara desert and is bounded on the west by the Atlantic Ocean and on the south by the Gulf of Guinea. In the south-eastern corner of West Africa are the Cameroonian Mountains and highlands that run along the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. West Africa is composed of the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo (Ham 9). A large proportion of African Americans are descended from West Africa, most notably from the regions known during the Atlantic slave trade era as the Gold and Slave coasts, part of the modern-day countries of Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria (Atlantic Slave Trade 2). West Africa has a variety of climates. In this region of Africa you will find thick forests with gigantic tropical trees, the savanna grasslands dotted with thorn trees (acacias), and the semiarid area known as the Sahel between the Sahara Desert and the savanna.

West Africa is home to a wide variety of societies and cultures, but some similarities do exist. Extended families and respect for the ancestors are important everywhere in West African life. Similarities in dress, cuisine, musical genres and social etiquette also exist. The predominant religion of the West African interior and far west coast is Islam, while Christianity predominates in the coastal regions of Nigeria, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire. At the same time, elements of many indigenous religions continue to be practiced throughout West Africa. With regard to dress, the boubou, a long white robe, is mostly worn by followers of Islam in West Africa, but it is also popular among some Christians in Nigeria. The boubou has its origins in the clothing of nobility of various West African Empires in the 12th Century (Boubou: Clothing 2). The game of football (soccer) is very popular through out West Africa, and African teams have played well in recent World Cup matches. The modern musical genres of Mbalax, Highlife, Fuji and Afrobeat are enjoyed by Africans throughout the region (West Africa 1).

While each region of West Africa has its own preferred cuisine, there are many similarities in methods of food preparation and choice of foods throughout West Africa. Recipes and/or information about the cuisines of West African Countries can be found in a variety of sources. For the purpose of this Unit plan, two sources that I find really helpful are listed in the materials section.

Objectives:

- Students will learn where West Africa is located on a map of the world.
- Students will learn about African foods found in America.
- Students will learn about West African culture and foods.

Standards:

Life Skill Domain Areas:

- Functional Academics: Mathematics, Reading and science skills are included.
- Domestic Maintenance
- Personal Maintenance
- Interpersonal Communications
- Vocational Skills
- Recreational and Leisure skills

Materials:

Books:

Chandler, Lynda. Fruits and Vegetables Coloring Book. Minneola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001. This book has pictures of food for students to color.

Ham, Anthony, et al. Lonely Planet: West Africa. Victoria, AUS: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2006. This book is a complete travel guide of West Africa that includes the history, food and lots of cultural information about the region

Montgomery, Bertha V. and Constance Nabwire. *Cooking the West African Way: Revised and Expanded to Include New Low-Fat and Vegetarian Recipes (Easy Menu Ethnic Cookbooks)*. Minneapolis, MN: Learner Publishing Company, 2002. Great book about everything you need to know about West African cooking.

Video:

West African cooking (Liberian style). Dir. Antony Kovilparambil. Perf. Maria Antony, Vashti Taylor, Darling Taylor Bello. 2006. DVD. USA: CookingOnDVD, 2006.

Internet Websites:

The following internet websites are useful for background information or graphic organizer:

Blank World Map: http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/world_country.pdf

Blank Map of Africa: http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/afr_asia_polnl.pdf

Blank Map of West and Central Africa:

http://www.phschool.com/curriculum_support/map_bank/pdfs/w_c_africa_physicalA.pdf

Other Materials:

- KWL Chart that is appropriate for the students being instructed (various skill levels).
- Pencils.
- Copies of chosen coloring book pages.

Procedures:

First set up a map of the world and Africa on the wall in the classroom (The graphic organizers in the materials section could be utilized). Set up a KWL Chart on a chalk board or flip chart. Introduce the subject of cooking in West Africa. There are many ways to introduce any subject, but I find utilizing a KWL Chart to be most useful. With life skills students who may not be able to read, I will use both pictures and words. An example of a KWL chart can be found at the following website:

<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/kwl/>.

Have students as a group fill out what they know about West African food. Then ask them what they would like to learn. Discuss foods found in America from Africa and how they influenced American cuisine. In this discussion with students you could discuss the effects of culture and religion on food choice in this region of Africa. For example, Muslim Africans will not eat pork, monkey, dog or cat, as these animals are *haram* (unlawful). Muslims will only eat meat slaughtered in a special way. For the meat of an animal to be halal (lawful) it must be one of the declared halal animals, it must be slaughtered by a Muslim, facing Mecca and quickly cutting its throat, while saying "bismallah" (in the name of god). If an animal is killed or dies in any other way, it is

considered haram or unlawful (Islam 1). Complete the first two sections of the KWL chart. Write the information on the KWL chart.

Next, answer their questions and introduce the book “Cooking the West African Way” written by Montgomery and Nabwire. Read from pages 7 to 17. Utilize maps and other picture that you might be able to acquire as your read and explain things found in the reading. Introduce and show the video “West African cooking (Liberian style)” directed by Antony Kovilparambil. Review all previous information. Have students as a group tell you what they have learned and write it on the KWL Chart in the “L” section.

For the purpose of my students I will utilize a handout with a KWL Chart for my students. My students will be able to practice handwriting by copying the information that the group has accumulated. After the KWL Chart, I will have students color pictures of West African foods and culture. The book “Fruits and Vegetables Coloring Book” by Lynda E. Chandler could be utilized for this task. At the end of this lesson I will give the students an overview of the next lesson in the unit plan and review what they have learned.

2. Lesson Activity Two: Choosing a Recipe and Planning a Meal.

Background:

This lesson will utilize various recipes and allow the students to choose which meal they would like to prepare.

Objectives:

- Students will pick a traditional West African recipe and develop a shopping list.
- Students will shop to acquire ingredients needed for recipe.

Standards:

Life Skill Domain Areas:

- Functional Academics: Mathematics, Reading and science skills are included.
- Domestic Maintenance
- Personal Maintenance
- Interpersonal Communications
- Vocational Skills
- Recreational and Leisure skills

Materials:

Books: (see Lesson Activity One above)

Internet Websites:

The following is a limited list of internet websites that may be useful for finding recipes:

http://www.knowledgehound.com/topics/west_african_recipes.htm

<http://www.africaguide.com/cooking.htm>

<http://www.globalgourmet.com/destinations/westafrica/>
<http://gambia.i-dss.de/about0-2-0.phtml>
<http://www-sul.stanford.edu/africa/africanrecipes.html>
<http://www.congocookbook.com/sitemap.html>

Other Materials:

- KWL Chart that is appropriate for the students being instructed (various skill levels).
- Pencils.
- Money to purchase ingredients.
- Any other things that are needed to acquire ingredients for the recipe. I teach the Life Skill curriculum and may need tokens and other things in order to take students out into the community to acquire ingredients. Another teacher may choose to acquire the ingredients and explain to the students how he or she found them.

Procedures:

Before this lesson you should complete your own search for West African recipes and only offer 4-7 recipes for students to review. Review information from previous lesson plan with the students. Read and show pictures (if available) of the recipes for the students to consider from books, internet sites and other sources. Have students decide how to select which recipe to create. Have them consider some forms of decision making found in various places. For example, have the oldest student decide, a vote, a council or dictator. I have found that a vote or democratic method is usually chosen here in the west. After the students have picked their recipe, review it with them and then plan and execute shopping trips to acquire ingredients for the recipe. Many of the ingredients are available in local supermarkets, while specialty stores can often be found that carry more hard to find items. After you and/or your students acquire the necessary ingredients, they need to be brought to school and stored properly. The students should be shown that foods which require refrigeration need to be stored first; then the other ingredients can be stored. Briefly review with student what they have learned so far and have them record additional information on their KWL Chart if appropriate (some of my life skills students may or not be able to write).

The following is a short list of websites that may help you in your search for ingredients:

<http://www.afranchop.com/index.html>
<http://www.jbafricanmarket.com/>
<http://www-sul.stanford.edu/africa/africanrecipes.html>

There are many places to find the basic ingredients in West African cooking. The following two specialty markets I have visited in the South-West Philadelphia Area:

Baltimore African Market
4533 Baltimore Avenue

Freetown Market
6634 Woodland Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19143
215-387-5705
215-387-5706 (fax)

Philadelphia, PA 19142
215-724-0100
215-724-0100 (fax)

Lesson Activity Three: Cooking a Recipe from West Africa

Background:

This lesson plan will utilize the recipe that was chosen to create a traditional West African meal.

Objectives:

- Students prepare a traditional West African meal.
- Students will serve meal in a traditional way.
- Students will clean-up and store material and foods.

Standards:

Life Skill Domain Areas:

- Functional Academics: Mathematics, Reading and science skills are included.
- Domestic Maintenance
- Personal Maintenance
- Interpersonal Communications
- Vocational Skills
- Recreational and Leisure skills

Materials:

Books: (see Lesson Activity One above)

Recipe, equipment and ingredients:

Everything needed to create the chosen recipe and serve it (for example, oven, barbeque grill, electric grill, refrigeration, etc...).

Procedures:

Depending on the recipe chosen, different cooking tools and ingredients need to be present before this lesson is begun. Begin cooking lesson by giving everyone a copy of the chosen recipe. Review the recipe to the students and go over safety issues before allowing students to actually start to prepare a meal. There are general safety guidelines in “Cooking the West African Way” by Montgomery and Nabwire. These guidelines can be found on page 20 and the cooking terms on pages 21, 22 and 23. Make sure you review all terms found in the recipe. Next, assign tasks to everyone. For example have 4 people peel potatoes and onions, 4 people grate the potatoes, etc... Continue to prepare meal by following directions and general safety procedures. After meal is completed, read or explain information on serving and eating in West Africa. Information can be found on page 54 on “minding your manners” in the book “*Lonely Planet: West Africa*”. After the meal, all students will be instructed to safely clean and store both cooking

equipment and food. Review with students the whole process from choosing a recipe, gathering ingredients and preparing a meal. Assist students to update their KWL charts for things that they have learned. Collect KWL charts from students. Utilize observations of students while they complete tasks and participate in discussions as an assessment. Use KWL charts as an additional assessment of student learning where appropriate. For life skills students, collect data that are related to students' individual IEP goals and record. These lesson plans can be utilized and repeated throughout the school year to teach and introduce the students to several West African foods and to reinforce what they have learned before.

Appendix

The Life Skills Curriculum does not follow the core curriculum. It is made up of 6 domain areas of Personal Maintenance, Domestic Maintenance, Interpersonal Communications and Social Skills, Vocational Skills, Functional Academics, Recreation & Leisure skills as defined previously. However, there are some Academic standards that do apply and the Life Skills Curriculum does follow them to a certain extent. The following are those standards:

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently (A, B)
- 1.2. Reading Critically in All Content Areas (A)
- 1.6. Speaking and Listening (A)
- 1.8 Research (A)

Note: A few of my students will be able to read some of the text and most will be able to talk about some of the topics presented.

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Science and Technology

- 3.7. Technological Devices (A)

Note: Most of my students will be able to use various culinary tools and equipment to prepare a meal.

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Science and Technology

- 8.1. Historical Analysis and Skills Development (A)
- 8.4. World History (A)

Note: My students will learn something about the history, cultures and foods in relation to West Africa.

Atlantic Slave Trade. 2007. Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2007. 12 June 2007 < http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761595721/Atlantic_Slave_Trade.html>. This website has information on the parts of Africa from which many African-Americans originate.

African American. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. 16 April 2007 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American>. This website has background information on the links between foods found in Africa and the Americas.

Boubou (clothing). 2007. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. 16 April 2007 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boubou_%28clothing%29>. This website is about the popular gowns worn in West Africa.

Levy M., Jens and Cristina F. Garces. *Africans, Diets of*. 12 June. 2007. <<http://www.faqs.org/nutrition/A-Ap/Africans-Diets-of.html>> This website gives you some information on food staples and nutrition in Africa.

Anderson, Rebecca, and Jessica Foote. *Kadzutsa (food): Malawian Recipes*. Abwenzi African Studies. 1996 <<http://www.lettersfromafrica.org/dir/subjects/recipes.html>>. This website contains a few interesting recipes, for example, caterpillar snacks. The snacks are made with the salted and dried out skin of caterpillars.

Chandler, Lynda. *Fruits and Vegetables Coloring Book*. Minneola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001. This a coloring book that provides pictures of food.

Crosby, Alfred W. Jr. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. West Port: Praeger Publishers, 1972. This book is about the exchange of ideas, plants and animals and disease between Africa, Europe and America.

“Cuisine of Africa.” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. 16 Apr. 2007. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuisine_of_Africa> This website is a very good overview of the different regions and their main staple foods.

Gibbon, Ed. *The Congo Cookbook*. Ed Gibbon. 1999-2006 <http://www.congocookbook.com/index_55.html>. The Congo Cookbook site lists many links and other information about food in every region of Africa. It has many recipes and a great deal of cultural information.

Gordon, April A. and Donald L. Gordon. *Understanding Contemporary Africa Fourth Edition*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007. This book is a current analysis of issues facing the continent of Africa.

Ham, Anthony, et al. *Lonely Planet: West Africa*. Victoria, AUS: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2006. This book is a complete travel guide of West Africa that includes the history, food and lots of cultural information about the region.

Holloway, Joseph E. *African Crops and Slave Cuisine*. Slavery in America Educational Outreach Team. California State University Northridge, 12 May 2007.
< http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_cuisine.htm >.
This website page has a list of the major African foods brought to America.

Islam. 2007. Evolution Education Wiki. 16 June 2007
<<http://wiki.cotch.net/index.php/Islam>>. This website has information on dietary laws for Muslims.

Jackson, Elizabeth. *African Chop: Enjoy the tropical foods of Africa*. Elizabeth Jackson. 2007 <<http://www.african Chop.com>>. This site has a glossary, recipes and lists of both African restaurants and markets.

Montgomery, Bertha V. and Constance Nabwire. *Cooking the West African Way: Revised and Expanded to Include New Low-Fat and Vegetarian Recipes*. Easy Menu Ethnic Cookbooks. Minneapolis, MN: Learner Publishing Company, 2002. Great book about everything you need to know about West African cooking.

Sandler, Bea. *The African Cookbook*. Diane & Leo Dillon (Illust.). New York: Carol Publishing Group. 1993. Extracts from this book can be accessed from the African Studies Website at the University of Pennsylvania at
http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Cookbook/about_cb_wh.html.
This book not only describes the foods eaten in many of the countries in Africa, but also contains information on traditions and customs when serving these meals.

“Soul Food.” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. 11 June. 2007.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul_food>.
This website has background information and links about soul foods.

The African Guide: African Cooking And Recipes. 2007. Africaguide.com. 15 June 2007 <<http://www.africaguide.com/cooking.htm>>. A brief description of African foods and links to recipes.

West, Jean M. *Rice and Slavery: A Fatal Gold Seede*. Slavery in America Educational Outreach Team. 11 May 2007
<http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_rice.htm>.
This website has links on slavery related issues. It tells the story of the rice trade and its effects on slavery.

“West African cooking (Liberian style).” Dir. Antony Kovilparambil. Perf.

Maria Antony, Vashti Taylor, Darling Taylor Bello. 2006. DVD. USA: CookingOnDVD, 2006. This video shows step by step instructions on how to create some West African recipes.

Annotated Bibliography for Students

Montgomery, Bertha V. and Constance Nabwire. *Cooking the West African Way: Revised and Expanded to Include New Low-Fat and Vegetarian Recipes* Easy Menu Ethnic Cookbooks. Minneapolis, MN: Learner Publishing Company, 2002. Great book about everything you need to know about West African cooking.

Nigeria - Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette. 2007. kwintessential. 15 June 2007 <<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/nigeria.html>>. This website gives you information on etiquette related to eating in this West African country.

“West African cooking (Liberian style)” Dir. Antony Kovilparambil. Perf. Maria Antony, Vashti Taylor, Darling Taylor Bello. 2006. DVD. USA: CookingOnDVD, 2006. This video shows step by step instructions on how to create some West African recipes.