

Ann Benjamin Matney
Scott High School
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Ohio State University, Freeman Foundation
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Dr. William D. Hoover, U. of Toledo

CHINESE FOOD: A CULTURAL LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Several other teachers and I will be working on an East Asian unit that will take place over several days and involve several differing curriculums.

Food plays an important part in understanding other cultures. Many students have little knowledge of foods and the food culture of other countries. Their only contact with East Asian food may be the local Magic Wok fast food restaurant. With the opening of global economies, students need to better understand the cultures and customs of East Asian countries, i.e. China. Learning about the food of China, the importance of the appearance of the food, the use of different utensils and the different ingredients will introduce them to part of China's character.

PURPOSE

To explore the culture of China through food.

To give students an introduction to chop sticks and how to use them.

To familiarize students to some of the Chinese foods and the culture of food in China.

STANDARDS

Family and Consumer Sciences National Standards

Food Selection

Standard 12: Level IV (Grades 9-12)

Understand how knowledge and skills related to nutrition and food affect the well-being of individuals, families, and society

Benchmark 3:

Understands that family food choices are influenced by culture, traditions and socioeconomic factors

Knowledge/Skill Statement

1. Understands that family food choices are influenced by culture
2. Understands that family food choices are influenced by traditions.

Standard 14: Level IV (Grades 9-12)

Understand important concepts and skills related to careers in the food science, dietetics, and nutrition industries.

Benchmark 6:

Understands differences in food preferences and food marketing in relation to cultural, religious, economic, social and psychological factors

Knowledge/Skill Statements

1. Understand differences in food preferences in relation to cultural factors
7. Understand differences in food preferences in relation to social factors
9. Understand differences in food preferences in relation to psychological factors

Social Studies Standards

Peoples in Societies: Grades 9-10

Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices and products of Cultural, ethnic and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional and global settings

Benchmark C:

Analyze the ways that contacts between people of different cultures result in exchanges of cultural practices

Diffusion 3:E

Explain how advances in communication and transportation have impacted popular culture

DURATION

2-4 days

MATERIALS

Chopsticks (one pair for each student)

Paper plates

Boiled sticky rice

Various food items to practice eating with chopsticks

Chinese food dishes (some fast food, some restaurant, some frozen grocery store items)

Teapot

Green tea

VOCABULARY

<http://www.ethnicfoodsco.com/China/Glossary.htm>

A listing of Chinese food ingredients, giving detailed definitions, even the smell and texture of the food item.

<http://chinesefood.about.com/library/blrecipe.htm>

A vocabulary list of Chinese food ingredients by regions, types and methods of cooking.

WEBSITES

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chopsticks>

Wikipedia is an internet encyclopedia giving a detailed overview of a subject

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chopsticks#Chinese_etiquette

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea#China>

<http://allrecipes.com/Recipes/World-Cuisine/Asia/China/Main.aspx>

Using the key word CHINESE, this site has Chinese recipes divided by appetizers, meats, poultry, seafood and soups.

<http://chinese-recipes.chef2chef.net/>

A recipe website with Chinese recipe archives.

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~mjw/recipes/ethnic/chinese/>

Chinese recipes with full menu suggestions.

<http://www.calorieking.com/>

This site gives the calorie and carbohydrate count of fast food items. Information is retrieved by the name of the fast food chain or by the menu item.

<http://www.foodfacts.info/>

Fast food nutritional information broken down by category or restaurant.

<http://www.expertvillage.com/videos/chopsticks-history.htm>

This website has a video that shows how to use chopsticks.

<http://chinesefood.about.com/library/weekly/aa080202a.htm>

Under the heading CHINESE CULTURE, students can learn about Chinese food culture.

<http://www.uni.edu/becker/chinese2.html#food>

This website is a portal that gives access to many, many Chinese oriented websites.

PRE-ASSESSMENT

Ask student if they have been to a Chinese restaurant other than fast food places
Discuss the experiences that the students relate.

ACTIVITIES

Have students read the handouts Chinese Cuisine Overview and Chinese Food Philosophies.

Hand each student a menu from a Chinese restaurant. Have the students discuss which items they think are traditional Chinese food items. Discuss the ingredients of some of the Chinese foods.

Give the students a list of Chinese food websites. Have the students pick a recipe of one Chinese recipe that looks good to them and download it with a picture of the recipe on a one page format. In small groups, have the students share the recipes they picked. In their small group, have each student explain why they chose that recipe. Have each group pick one recipe they would be willing to try eating.

Give each student a chance to sample Chinese green tea. Explain its importance.

Have students view the websites listed for a lesson on how to use chopsticks. Give each student a set of chopsticks. Have them practice holding the chopsticks. Then, have students divide into groups of 2-3 and practice using the chopsticks on several food items that the teacher will hand out on a small paper plate.

Explain to students how climate, population and resources have influenced food and drink in China. Discuss with student the importance of presentation and manners to the Chinese. Have student discuss these customs to their own local food customs.

Have students compare and contrast the calories and nutrition in a fast food hamburger meal and a fast food Chinese meal, including drinks. Have them use a Compare-and Contrast chart to analyze the information they find.

ASSESSMENT

Using a collaboration rubric, grade the students on their participation in the class and group discussions.

Using websites, listed or their own choices, have student look at Chinese recipes. Have students make a fold-out menu or power point presentation showing a Chinese appetizer and 3 dishes.

Using chopsticks have students try at least 2 of several Chinese dishes that the teacher will make available.

REFERENCES

Coronado, Rosa. (2002). *Cooking the Chinese way*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Co.

Part of a series of cook books designed for students, the book introduces the land of China, then moves on to what you would need to cook Chinese food.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner menus are covered, along with holiday and festival foods. Bright and colorful photographs add to the appeal of the book

Yee, Rhoda. (1975). *Chinese Village cookbook*. San Francisco: Yerba Buena Press.

The first part of this book covers kinds of woks, then visits life in a Chinese village. Typical fare is discussed. The book then examines the recipes that are used during special holidays, weddings, etc.

CHINESE FOOD PHILOSOPHIES

Ancient Chinese philosophy has an important influence on Chinese food culture.



This is the traditional symbol for the forces of **yin** and **yang**, sometimes described as two fish swimming head to tail. The left half is yin and the right half is yang. Taken literally, yin and yang mean *the dark side and sunny side of a hill*. People commonly think of yin and yang as opposing forces. However, it is really more appropriate to view them as complimentary. The Chinese believe problems arise when there is an imbalance between them.

How does the concept of yin and yang relate to food?

This philosophy can be found in any Chinese dish, from stir-fried beef with broccoli to sweet and sour pork. There is always a balance in color, flavors, and textures.

Certain foods have yin properties, while others have yang properties - Cooling or warm, fat or non-fat, high-calorie or low-calorie, and etc.

Almost no food is purely yin or yang - it's more that one characteristic tends to dominate. Cooking methods also have more of a yin or yang properties, as listed below

Cooking Methods:

Yin Qualities

Boiling
Poaching
Steaming

Yang Qualities

Deep-frying
Roasting
Stir-frying

Types of Foods:

Yin Foods

Cabbage
Carrots
Cucumber
Tofu
Water

Yang Foods

Beef
Chicken
Eggs
Glutinous Rice
Wine

Chinese food emphasizes on a diet that is a balance between yin and yang. You'll find most Chinese dishes are made of a mixture of ingredients and each meal is made up of a combination of dishes.

CHINESE CUISINE OVERVIEW

In the west, people are used to takeout Chinese food such as fried rice, or chicken balls or sweet and sour whatever, etc. This is a small sample of Chinese food and is usually quite westernized.

There is an enormous variety of Chinese food that differs greatly from region to region. Food is a central part of the Chinese culture. Chinese cuisine is one of the greatest methods of cooking. A delightful and delicious meal creates happiness, harmony, mental and physical well-being.

Famine and hardship played a large role in the development of the cuisine. China has been an agricultural civilization for thousands of years and has suffered from poor harvests. During lean years, people would explore everything eatable to stay alive. Many strange and incredible ingredients such as wood ears, lily buds, etc. were added to Chinese recipes. The scarcity of food also taught people how to avoid waste. Various fruit and vegetable peels and even shark fins turned out to be delicacies in Chinese food.

The lack of cooking fuel from thousands of years of settlement and clear-cutting prompted the development of stir-frying. The need to save fuel became so influential that most Chinese dishes require a lengthy preparation but only a few minutes cooking time. With the current energy crisis the Chinese cooking method offers a practical way to conserve fuel while it delights the taste buds.

Beijing Food

Beijing food is the most famous food of China, known for Beijing Duck. Much of this fame comes from the fact that the Imperial cuisines were based out of there. Beijing Duck is a time consuming dish to prepare. Thin slices of oven roasted duck with a crispy brown skin are cut off and put onto a plate where it is wrapped with a fresh flour tortilla with plum sauce, cucumber, and green onion. The northern part of China has a cold climate unsuitable to grow rice, so wheat is the primary grain consumed.

Cantonese Food

Cantonese food is typically steamed, boiled or stir-fried. It is a very healthy food since it uses minimum of oil. The main ingredients of this type of Chinese food are seafood, pork, chicken and vegetables, but could include almost anything. You need white rice to accompany the meal to make it complete.

Sichuan Food

What is typical of this southwestern province of China is the spicy taste of its food. Many Sichuan dishes are prepared using chili pepper oil, which gives a special taste to the food. The most famous Sichuan dish is the Kung Pao chicken, fried with peanuts and chili pepper.

Noodle Knowledge

There are egg noodles, wheat noodles, and rice flour noodles. Wheat noodles are often found in Shanghai noodle dishes. These are round wheat noodles that are cooked then stir-fried in a savory sauce with chicken, pork and shrimp. Rice flour noodles are often found in Singapore-style noodle dishes and are cooked with curry powder, shrimp, barbecued pork and ham. Egg noodles are often found in Cantonese restaurants as noodle soup (like won ton) or stir-fried in a dish. There are two types of noodle dish. The first is lo mien which is a plate of cooked (boiled) noodles with some barbeque pork or duck and some vegetables on the side of the plate, and accompanied with a bowl of broth. The second is Chow mien in which the noodles are pan fried and then mixed with stir-fried vegetables, meat, and seafood.

Chinese Tea

Tea drinking is an integral part of Chinese life and the Chinese food experience. Tea is believed to be good for you. The Chinese were the first to discover the tea leaf and have been drinking tea ever since in many varieties.

Student Name _____

Period: _____

Collaboration Rubric

This is what you will be graded on for group discussions

4 - Thorough Understanding

- Consistently and actively works toward group goals.
- Is sensitive to the feelings and learning needs of group members.
- Willingly accepts and fulfills individual role within the group.
- Consistently and actively contributes knowledge, opinions, and skills.
- Values the knowledge, opinion and skills of all group members encouraging their contribution.

3 - Good Understanding

- Works toward group goals without prompting.
- Accepts and fulfills individual role within the group.
- Shows sensitivity to the feelings of others.

2 - Satisfactory Understanding

- Works toward group goals with occasional prompting.
- Contributes to the group with occasional prompting.
- Shows some sensitivity to the feelings of others.

1 - Needs Improvement

- Doesn't work toward group goals.
- Participates only when prompted.
- Needs reminders to be sensitive to the feelings of others.

CHINESE FOOD

Name _____ CLASS _____

Observation Chart

List 3-5 descriptive details for each sense in the correct column.

Sight

Taste

Smell

CHINESE/AMERICAN CUISINE
COMPARE-CONTRAST

Name: _____ Date: _____

CHINESE

AMERICAN

Characteristics:

	CHINESE	AMERICAN

CONCLUSIONS _____
