

4-H 1329

# Foodways

A 4-H FOLK PATTERNS Project

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# Acknowledgments

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4-H FOLKPATTERNS is a project of the Michigan 4-H Youth Programs and the Folk Arts Division of the Michigan State University Museum. The project is partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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## Preface

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4-H FOLKPATTERNS is a project of the Michigan 4-H Youth Programs and the Folk Arts Division of the Michigan State University Museum. It was initiated with a Youth Projects Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency.

4-H FOLKPATTERNS is designed primarily for youths who are interested in learning more about themselves, their families, and their communities. It is an opportunity for youths, either as individuals or in groups, to explore in an organized way the various factors and influences that have affected and continue to affect the objects, traditions, and organizations that exist in their communities. It is an opportunity for them to explore the history of their towns, their families, and their own lives. It's also a chance to discover the unwritten history around them.

The word FOLKPATTERNS was coined to describe the traditions (patterns of life) of people (folk). 4-H FOLKPATTERNS projects should present an enjoyable challenge for youths and volunteer leaders and result in meaningful outcomes for everyone involved—youths, leaders, and members of the community.

4-H FOLKPATTERNS is a special type of 4-H activity. Some projects may take quite a bit of advance planning. Research (or finding out information in an organized way) can be fun, and you will be surprised at the skills you will learn and the experiences you have along the way.

If you are a 4-H member, leader, parent, student, or teacher interested in family history, 4-H FOLKPATTERNS, photography, food and nutrition, Passport to Understanding, careers, community history, or just plain food, you will find a morsel or two in this guide that will interest you!

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# Foodways

## A 4-H FOLK PATTERNS Project

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**NOTE:** Accompanying this booklet is a set of activity sheets. Each of these activity sheets can be used to further explore information presented in one of the sections listed above, and each is coded to the particular section. For example, "A Food by Any Other Name" is an activity about the different folk names people give to food. The section in this booklet on "Food in Folklore" (page 15) gives background information on traditional expressions, rhymes, and songs that contain food names. Following is a list of the accompanying activity sheets:

*What Do Those Words Really Mean?*  
*A Food by Any Other Name . . .*  
*Games and Songs People Play with Foods*  
*Collecting Foodways Information on Short-*  
*Item Cards*  
*Herbs and Spices Folklore*  
*Food Story Starters*  
*Food Folk Art*  
*Potato Printing*  
*Jack-O'-Lantern Party*  
*Kitchen Cosmetics*  
*Cleaning with Food*  
*Corn Husk Doll*  
*The Art of Storing Food*  
*Food Measurements*  
*"Whatsit" Game*  
*Family Foodways Keepsake Exhibit*  
*Kitchen Equipment*

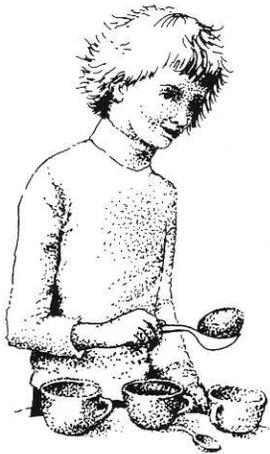
*An Old Family Recipe*  
*Eating Alone or in a Crowd*  
*Moods and Foods*  
*Thanksgiving Foodways*  
*One Person's Garbage is Another Person's*  
*Treasure*  
*Wedding or Holiday Foods*  
*Pie Crusts*  
*Family Food Traditions*  
*Setting the Table*  
*Table Makeup: Everyday vs. Special*  
*Occasion*  
*Garnishing: The Art of Decorating Food*  
*with Food*  
*Napkin Folding*  
*Traditional Tricks for Picking Produce*  
*Photographing Food Marketing*  
*Foodways Collection Center*

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# Introduction

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## Examples of Foodways Include . . .

- . . . having someone tell you to eat your carrots so that you can see better at night.
- . . . how you scrape the vanilla frosting off your sandwich cookie before you eat the chocolate wafer.
- . . . how you won't eat anything that's purple.
- . . . decorating eggs at Easter.
- . . . learning how to smoke fish.
- . . . never putting catsup on your pasty.
- . . . the recipe for the baked beans that Aunt Rosa always brings to a picnic.
- . . . the milk toast a relative made for you when you had a stomachache.
- . . . having your favorite foods on your birthday.
- . . . how someone taught you when the fish will be biting.
- . . . always having spaghetti on Sunday and fish on Friday.
- . . . how your mouth waters at the smell of barbecued chicken or chocolate chip cookies or curried vegetables or fry bread.
- . . . having someone in your family say "F.H.B." (family hold back) when company is sharing a meal.



## Why Are We Interested in Foodways?

The food you eat is, of course, necessary for the maintenance of life itself. Growing, preparing, and eating food requires a large part of your thoughts, time, and effort. Moreover, food is a source of great enjoyment because it satisfies hunger, provides pleasant taste experiences, and is generally eaten in social settings. The importance of food in your daily routine quite naturally leads to an interest in traditional food patterns.

You eat every day, but how often do you think about the ways in which you dine? The times of day you have your meals, the size of the meals, the places at which you sit around the table, the types of foods you eat, the grace you recite, and the ways you prepare meals are often based on *traditions* passed on to you. These traditions are called "folk foodways," since you learned them by watching them being done or by hearing them described. When you do stop to think about the foodways in your life, and when you collect examples of them from people, you can learn about the traditions and patterns in your families and communities.

The term "foodways" is used to describe all of the traditional activities, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with the food in your daily life. Foodways includes customs of food production, preservation, preparation, presentation, gathering, marketing (both buying and selling), uses of food products other than for eating, and food folklore.

The traditions connected with these different aspects of food will vary from region to region, depending upon such factors as geographic location, climate, cultural, or religious background, rural or urban setting, and economic conditions. Within each region or community, there will be additional variations in foodways between families, again depending upon cultural, religious, economic, or other personal preferences.



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## Foodways Goals

The goals of a 4-H FOLKPATTERNS foodways project are to:

- Develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the traditional aspects of food in your life by:
  - Identifying and meeting active tradition-bearers (people who know traditional information or skills).
  - Learning about personal, family, local, and regional food-related traditions and history.
  - Comparing personal or community food traditions with the traditions of other individuals or communities.
- Develop in the community an increased awareness of and appreciation for local history and folklore by collecting and presenting information on foodways.
- Meet other people interested in exploring history and folklore and join them in developing and carrying out projects.
- Develop an awareness of food preparation and recipe development through several generations.

While you complete activities in your foodways projects, keep in mind these National 4-H Food and Nutrition goals. Members will:

- Take responsibility for making healthful food choices and establish a fitness plan based on the knowledge of their nutritional needs, life style, and physical condition.
- Develop skills in planning, selecting, preparing, serving, and storing food.
- Gain knowledge and understanding of the psychological, social, economic, and cultural influences of food choices.
- Recognize how national and worldwide policies relate to food availability, personal food choices, and the nutritional status of populations.
- Acquire knowledge and skills for career opportunities in food and nutrition.
- Gain personal development skills for the benefit of self and others.



## Six Convincing Reasons for Exploring Foodways

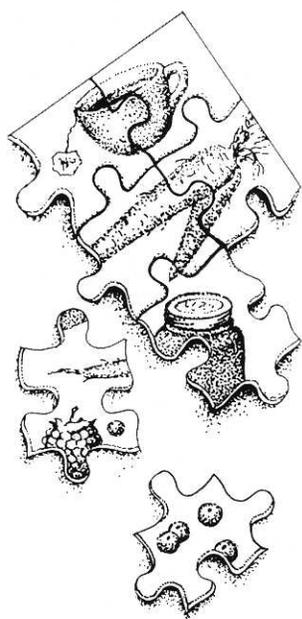
1. It's fun.
2. It's all around you. Food-related folklore is being created and passed down right this minute wherever people are getting or eating food.
3. Your food traditions are unique. Nobody else eats quite the same food as you.
4. Knowing about your foodways will help you understand how well you are treating your body. You will learn how healthy your food habits are.
5. If you like to investigate or snoop, it will help satisfy your curiosity about who you are. Remember the old saying, "You are what you eat!"
6. It's up to you! Each generation creates its own folklore and traditions. Some traditions cease to exist as new ones replace them. What traditions will you start in your lifetime?



## STOP!

Did you know that many 4-H FOLKPATTERNS projects involve some of the things folklorists and historians do? This is your chance to try doing what they do.

Folklorists work like news reporters in some ways. They observe, interview, photograph, describe, document, and report the lives of people. They preserve the past. But there's a big difference. The people folklorists report about aren't necessarily famous or influential like those in newspapers. Instead, they are everyday, common people whose lives offer a richness that is often overlooked.



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Folklorists try to answer questions about people such as: How did they learn to do the things they do? What ways of life have been passed down to them through the generations? Folklorists, like detectives, use clues to piece together a picture of traditions over time.

Historians are also detectives who piece together a picture of the past. They find their clues in archives, family photograph albums, courthouses, libraries, and the people around them.

### Why Become a Folklorist?

You're a natural-born expert! You have the advantage of knowing your traditions better than anyone. You are a part of a unique group of people.

### Why Become a Historian?

You are curious about why your world is like it is and you want to be able to contribute to the piecing together of the past!

### An Inspiring Story

Did you know that Alex Haley, author of the famous book and television series, *Roots*, began searching for his past because of the stories his family told about the African? With just these tales, Mr. Haley began his long project to discover his family background and to know about his people of long ago. Eventually, he uncovered his story through oral history (evidence and stories told to him), genealogy (official records and his family tree), and family folklore. Like an ace detective, Mr. Haley used all clues. Anyone familiar with *Roots* can imagine the sense of accomplishment Mr. Haley must feel knowing about himself and his past!

## Getting a Taste of Foodways

Activities are fun ways to learn more about the food traditions in your life. Choose two or more of the activities on pages 5-14 to do during your first group meeting. These activities can be done in a short amount of time and will help you become more aware of what foodways are.

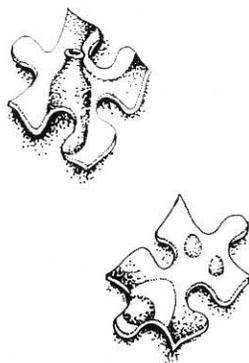
**Note to group leader:** Read the instructions for each activity before the meeting. You may need to gather a few materials or make copies of the activity sheets.

A "Now What?" section appears at the end of most activities. This section provides ideas for exploring further the information you learn as a result of the activity.

Included with this packet is a series of other foodways activity sheets. Each of these activity sheets can be used with one of the sections in this booklet. For example, "A Food by Any Other Name" is an activity about the different folk names people give to food. The section in this booklet on "Food in Folklore" (page 15) gives background information on traditional expressions, rhymes, and songs that contain food names. The activities usually take special preparation or more than one meeting time to complete. More activity ideas can be found in other 4-H food-related publications such as *Heritage Gardening—Vegetables* and *Fit It All Together II: Leader's Guide* (page 5).

For more information on photographing folk traditions, interviewing and notetaking, tape recording an interview, transcribing a tape-recorded interview, and storing collected materials, refer to the *4-H FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide*. If you want an idea of what skills you will need and how much time is required for more involved or advanced projects, refer to the leader's guide.

No matter which 4-H FOLKPATTERNS foodways project you choose, be sure to tell your county 4-H staff about it so they can let the staff at the 4-H FOLKPATTERNS office at The Michigan State University Museum know what you're doing.



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# Foodways Card Game

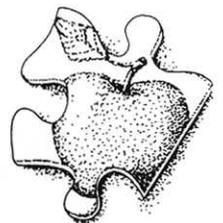
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- PURPOSE:** To learn what foodways are
- YOU'LL NEED:** 2 to 10 players  
32 index cards (3- by 5-inch) or small pieces of paper  
Pen, pencil, or typewriter
- TIME:** 15-60 minutes
- HOW YOU DO IT:** Print or type each of the following questions on the back of a 3- by 5-inch index card. Place the completed cards face down in a pile in the middle of a table. The first player picks a card and chooses a second person to answer the question on the card. After answering the question, the second player selects a card to ask a third player. This continues until all the questions are answered. This game has no right or wrong answers, and there are no winners or losers. After some of the answers are given, let others share their answers to the same questions. Players may want to develop additional food questions to include in the game.

## Questions

- What baby names do you know for foods (like “hangaber” for hamburger or “pasgetti” for spaghetti)?
- How do you eat corn on the cob (across like a typewriter or up and down)?
- When do you consult a Farmer’s Almanac?
- Have you ever participated in a baking or eating contest?
- What color of food don’t you like?
- Who prepares barbecues at your house?
- What food do you eat when you are sick?
- What foods remind you of weddings?
- Can you think of a folk saying that has food in it (for instance, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away”)?
- Where does your family buy fresh vegetables?
- What spice do you use most often?
- What food makes your mouth water?
- How do you decorate the top of a pie?
- Do you eat the cake or the icing first?
- Who serves the meal at your house? Why?
- What is your remedy for a bee sting?
- What makes a pie a pie?
- Have you ever said someone looks like or acts like a type of food (for instance, “a carrot top” or “stringbean”)?
- Have you ever traded food you’ve made for money, supplies, or other items?
- Have you ever attended a potluck dinner? What did you take to pass?
- How does your family prepare fresh fish?
- What kind of bread do you eat most often?
- What family gathering stands out as the most memorable to you? Why?
- Does your family have a special name for a food or dish? How did it get this name?
- Does your family have any special home remedies that involve food? What is the remedy and what purpose does it serve?
- What is your family’s favorite snack or treat and when is it served?
- Who sits where around the table for a family meal?

*This card game has been adapted from the “Feeling Good” game developed by Gloria Jeanne Itman Blum and Barry Blum, 507 Palma Way, Mill Valley, California, 1977.*



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# Foodways Icebreaker

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- PURPOSE:** To introduce a group of people to each other and to a form of folklore
- YOU'LL NEED:** 10 to 50 people  
Index cards (3- by 5-inch) or small pieces of paper  
Pen, pencil, or typewriter
- TIME:** 15-20 minutes
- HOW TO DO IT:** **Before** you meet with a group of people, prepare the cards. For every two people, print or type one of the following sentences minus the word or words in italics on a card. On another card, print or type each italicized word(s). Refer to the examples below.
- At your meeting,** give half of your group the cards with the italicized words and give the other half the cards with the sentences. Make sure you hand out the same number of “sets” of cards as there are pairs of people in your group. Tell each member to find his/her “mate.”

They are like two _____ in pod.	Card 1	peas	Card 2
She's bringing home the _____.	Card 3	bacon	Card 4
Ten and 20 blackbirds baked in a _____.	Card 5	pie	Card 6

### Foodways Sayings

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— I heard it through the <i>grapevine</i>.</li> <li>— It's 10 <i>carrot</i> (carat) gold.</li> <li>— It's a hot <i>potato</i>.</li> <li>— Life is a bowl of <i>cherries</i>.</li> <li>— <i>Milk</i> is a natural.</li> <li>— A spoonful of <i>sugar</i> helps the medicine go down.</li> <li>— You can lead a horse to <i>water</i> but you can't make him drink.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Say "Pretty please with <i>sugar</i> on top."</li> <li>— You're a good <i>egg</i>.</li> <li>— Variety is the <i>spice</i> of life.</li> <li>— It's <i>peachy</i> keen.</li> <li>— He's cold as <i>ice</i>.</li> <li>— <i>Bread</i> is the staff of life.</li> <li>— You're cool as a <i>cucumber</i>.</li> <li>— <i>Sugar</i> is sweet and so are you.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

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- 
- He acts like a bump on a *dill pickle*.
  - It's as sticky as *peanut butter*.
  - It's as flat as a *pancake*.
  - I scream, you scream, we all scream for *ice cream*.
  - Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man.
  - The *cake* is as light as a feather.
  - An *apple* a day keeps the doctor away.
  - Never eat *apple peels* or you will get straight hair.
  - *Coffee* will stunt your growth.
  - If you eat *carrots*, you won't need glasses.
  - The first things to be taken into a new home are *sugar, butter, and milk*.
  - Eat your *bread crusts* to get curly hair.
  - *Apples* don't fall far from trees.
  - If you eat *cornbread*, your hair will curl.
  - If two people break *bread* together, they will be friends for life.
  - No problem—it's a piece of *cake*!
  - You have to eat a pinch of *salt* with an acquaintance before he or she will really be your friend.
  - To remove grass stains from your hands, rub them with green *tomatoes*.
  - You're the *salt* of the earth.
  - If you eat *cabbage* on New Year's Day, you'll have wealth that year.
  - One *potato*, two *potato*, three *potato*, four . . .
  - If you are suffering from high blood pressure, tie a garland of *garlic* around your neck.
  - Happiness is like *potato salad*: when you share it with others, it's a picnic.
  - Eating *celery* will improve your hair.
  - A watched pot never *boils*.
  - I'm a little *teapot*, short and stout.
  - Pinch, poke, you owe me a *coke*.
  - It's as easy as *pie*.
  - You can't have your *cake* and eat it too.
  - Be like Popeye and eat your *spinach*.

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# People in Foodways

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**PURPOSE:** To identify people with information on food traditions. Examples include people who are involved in food-related occupations, people who are good cooks or gardeners, and people who just plain love food.

**YOU'LL NEED:** Pen or pencil

**TIME:** 10-15 minutes

**HOW TO DO IT:** Review the list of categories below. Where you can, fill in the names of people you know next to what they do. Put a check next to people you'd like to meet.

- School food service supervisor \_\_\_\_\_
- Trapper \_\_\_\_\_
- A cook in your family \_\_\_\_\_
- Exchange student \_\_\_\_\_
- Museum curator \_\_\_\_\_
- Restaurant owner \_\_\_\_\_
- Fisherman \_\_\_\_\_
- Health food store owner or clerk \_\_\_\_\_
- Hospital dietitian \_\_\_\_\_
- Cooperative Extension staff person \_\_\_\_\_
- Roadside market owner \_\_\_\_\_
- Farmer \_\_\_\_\_
- Gardener \_\_\_\_\_
- Caterer \_\_\_\_\_
- Food column writer \_\_\_\_\_
- Home economics teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Fruit picker \_\_\_\_\_
- Hunter \_\_\_\_\_

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## NOW WHAT?

Arrange to visit one of the people you have identified. Pick some aspect of food traditions to discuss, such as holidays, preparation, decoration, or serving. For example, if you interview a caterer, you might explore the relationship between food and tradition in weddings. A caterer will be familiar with many different traditions and requests for particular foods. Prepare a list of questions to ask the person. Find out if you can take pictures of the person that illustrate his/her relationship with the food tradition. Prepare an exhibit on this tradition and its impact on food in our lives.





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# Foodways Checklist

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**PURPOSE:** To identify foodways that might be explored as a 4-H FOLKPATTERNS project

**YOU'LL NEED:** Pen or pencil

**TIME:** 5-10 minutes

**HOW TO DO IT:** This checklist includes many different areas in our lives where food traditions exist. Read through the checklist, and then put a check next to the ones that are a part of your life. If you can think of others, add them to the list.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Farm co-ops                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food gathering                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Locally-produced cookbooks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food at county fairs           | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food at church bazaars         | <input type="checkbox"/> Roadside markets           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food eating contests           | <input type="checkbox"/> Measuring of food          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food judging contests          | <input type="checkbox"/> Trapping                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historical cookbooks           | <input type="checkbox"/> Folk sayings               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Food-related occupations   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home beauty treatments         | <input type="checkbox"/> Household care hints       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mushroom gathering             | <input type="checkbox"/> How to set a table         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying edible wild plants | <input type="checkbox"/> Home remedies              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday foods                  | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How people store foods         | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                      |

**NOW WHAT?** See if any of the people you checked on the "People in Foodways" checklist know anything about the areas you checked above.

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# It's Time to Eat (and Collect Folklore)

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- PURPOSE:** To discover good times to observe and record food traditions.
- YOU'LL NEED:** Pen or pencil
- TIME:** 10-15 minutes
- HOW TO DO IT:** Check off events and places at which you'd like to collect foodways information. Add your own ideas.

## At School or 4-H

### Events

- Pancake dinner
- Spaghetti or chili dinner
- Ice cream social
- Fruit or popcorn sales
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Places

- School lunchroom
- County fairgrounds
- Church kitchens
- \_\_\_\_\_

## In Your Family

### Events

- Passover
- Birthdays
- Ramadan
- Family reunions
- Weddings
- Graduation open house
- Funerals
- New Year's Day
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Places

- Deer hunting camp
- Your kitchen
- A relative's smokehouse
- Family camp or cottage
- \_\_\_\_\_

## In Your Community

### Events

- Potluck
- County fair
- Harvest festival (like Asparagus or Maple Sugar Festivals)
- Service club barbecues
- Pioneer Days
- Sidewalk sales
- Centennial celebration
- Church bake sale

### Places

- Bakery
- Roadside market
- Senior citizens' homes
- Farm market
- Friend's kitchen
- Health food store
- Restaurant
- Parades
- \_\_\_\_\_

### NOW WHAT?

Attend one of the events you checked. Write down everything you can about the manner in which food is prepared, served, and eaten. Take pictures. Make a display for the county fair.

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# Historical Foods

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**PURPOSE:** To identify some places where you could find information on historical foodways

**YOU'LL NEED:** Pen or pencil

**TIME:** 5-10 minutes

**HOW TO DO IT:** This checklist contains ideas of some places where you could find information on ways people used to grow, prepare, and eat food. First read through the list. Then put a check next to ones you think you'd like to explore. If you can think of other places you've already looked or you could look, list them below.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your family's old cookbooks             | <input type="checkbox"/> A library's clipping file              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your own recipe file or box             | <input type="checkbox"/> A local museum                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper food or gardening columns     | <input type="checkbox"/> Local archives                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Extension Service bulletins | <input type="checkbox"/> Old Sears or Montgomery Wards catalogs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                                  |

**NOW WHAT?** Investigate one of the above sources. Share any funny, surprising, or interesting discoveries with your group at your next meeting.

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# Food in Folklore

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ONE area of foodways that you might like to explore is food in folklore. Not only are there songs and stories about food, but there are numerous traditional expressions, proverbs, nursery rhymes, children's songs, and superstitions that contain food names or terms.

Some of these sayings apply to the production, preparation, or presentation of food itself. For example, the expression, "a cool wet May will fill the barns with wheat and hay," refers directly to food production. Other sayings may have dual meanings, referring both to food production and to situations that have nothing to do with food. "Make hay while the sun shines," is a good example of a traditional saying that can have more than one meaning.

Food is also often used in expressions of speech that describe situations or things other than food. For example, twins might be described as being as "alike as two peas in a pod," or someone might say that a task was "as easy as pie." These expressions of comparison use food as analogies to other things. Listen to the speech of those around you. You will find many other examples of such references to food in comparative sayings.

Sometimes sweet food terms are used as affectionate names, such as "sugar," "honey," "sweetie," "cookie," or "cupcake." Food terms are also often used to describe personal traits. For instance, reddish hair might be called "carrot-top" or "strawberry blond." Someone's speech might be described as "dripping with honey." A person might be called "cool as a cucumber," while another with a rosy complexion could be described as "apple-cheeked." How many other food terms can you find that are used as terms of affection or description for people?

Many old sayings or proverbs refer to food in expressing traditional beliefs. Here are just a few:

- The proof of the pudding is in the eating.
- Don't put all your eggs into one basket.
- An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
- Too many cooks spoil the broth.
- Half a loaf is better than none.
- It's no use crying over spilled milk.

You have probably heard most of these bits of folk wisdom, but there are numerous other lesser-known proverbs that include references to food. Ask your relatives and friends to recall some of the old sayings for you. If the true meaning of the saying is not clear to you, ask for an explanation and record it along with information about the person who said it. This is a good opportunity to use short-item cards to record the information. See the activity sheet, "Collecting Foodways Information on Short-Item Cards," for instructions on how to do this as a group activity.

Another way in which food appears in language is through nursery rhymes and games. The following nursery rhymes represent just a few of the many verses that are a part of our lives. You probably remember some of these from your own childhood.

One potato, two potato  
Three potato, four  
Five potato, six potato  
Seven potato, oe'r.

Little Miss Muffet  
Sat on a tuffet,  
Eating her curds and whey;  
There came a big spider,  
And sat down beside her,  
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,  
Eating his Christmas pie;  
He put in his thumb, and pulled out a plum,  
And said, "What a good boy am I!"

Jack Sprat could eat no fat,  
His wife could eat no lean;  
And so, betwixt them both,  
They licked the platter clean.



## Accompanying Activity Sheets:

*What Do Those Words Really Mean?*

*A Food by Any Other Name . . .*

*Games and Songs People Play with Foods*

*Collecting Foodways Information on Short-Item Cards*

*Herbs and Spices Folklore*

*Food Story Starters*





**Accompanying Activity  
Sheets:**

*Food Folk Art*

*Potato Printing*

*Jack-O'-Lantern Party*

*Kitchen Cosmetics*

*Cleaning with Food*

*Corn Husk Doll*

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# When Food Doesn't Make a Meal

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**T**HE use of food or food products for purposes other than simply eating can also be part of your investigation of foodways. These include food used for decorative or play items, useful objects, healing purposes, beauty care, and special social purposes.

Decorative or play items would include such toys as dolls made from apples, corn cobs, corn husks, and bread dough. Colored eggs at Easter time and oranges studded with cloves at Christmas time are examples of how food is used to make the home look or smell pleasant. Photographing these Easter, Christmas, or other holiday traditions and including a written description of the tradition would make an interesting project. One foodways project might be to photograph all of the decorated pumpkins or jack-o'-lanterns that are made on your block or in your community at Halloween. Sometimes bowls of colorful fresh fruits and vegetables become table decorations; later they function as food to be eaten. Some people hang Indian corn or sprays of wheat on their front doors in the autumn.

Food used for decoration often has symbolic value also. The pineapple is a symbol of hospitality and is occasionally used as a table centerpiece. Carved representations of the pineapple can also be found over doorways and as decorative knobs for bedposts and stairway posts. Painted, carved, or needlework images of food often take the place of the actual fruit or vegetable.

Food can also be made into useful objects, such as corncob pipes and gourd birdhouses, dippers, or dishes. Old-time uses of food products for practical purposes other than eating would include corn husks for mattress stuffing and skim milk as a base for paint.

Many home remedies and beauty treatments call for food ingredients. For example, some people believe that warts will disappear if they are rubbed with a cut potato which is then buried. Some people use walnut juice to dye their hair. Another old remedy involving food is the use of onions to make a poultice, a medicated spread which is put on cloth and is then applied to an injury. Many of the traditional folk remedies called for foods as the main ingredients. Such uses of food for healing purposes may also be investigated as part of research into folk medicine. **Be sure to check with your leader or another adult before you attempt to try any home health remedies.**

These examples are just some of the ways food has been used for purposes other than eating. During your investigation of foodways, you will undoubtedly find other unusual uses for food and food by-products.



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# Food Gathering

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CERTAIN foods are not cultivated but are gathered directly from their natural source. Nuts, mushrooms, berries, honey, maple syrup, wild rice, and sassafras are a few examples. Learning to identify edible foods and the locations where they are found is usually done through traditions. Friends teach friends, and families teach their children. Sometimes the locations of these food sources are closely-guarded family secrets! For instance, some people will only tell their nearest and dearest friends the locations of a favorite morel mushroom picking spot.

One food gathering project might involve writing down where those favorite spots are, how they are located, and what traditional customs are attached to the day of gathering or picking. Another project might be to collect recipes for foods that are gathered.

Some people gather food out of necessity for survival. Others gather food from nature because it isn't available from the market. Still others gather food from nature as a social outing. Berry-picking parties, for instance, were once very popular forms of family or community leisure time activities. These parties are still common in northern Michigan.





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# Food Preservation

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**T**

HE preservation of food involves the different processes that are used to keep food from spoiling and the various types of food storage.

The processes of food preservation include procedures such as drying, smoking, salting, spicing, canning, and freezing. By looking at the traditions associated with these methods, you can understand why these methods developed, why some are still used today, and why some have been discontinued.

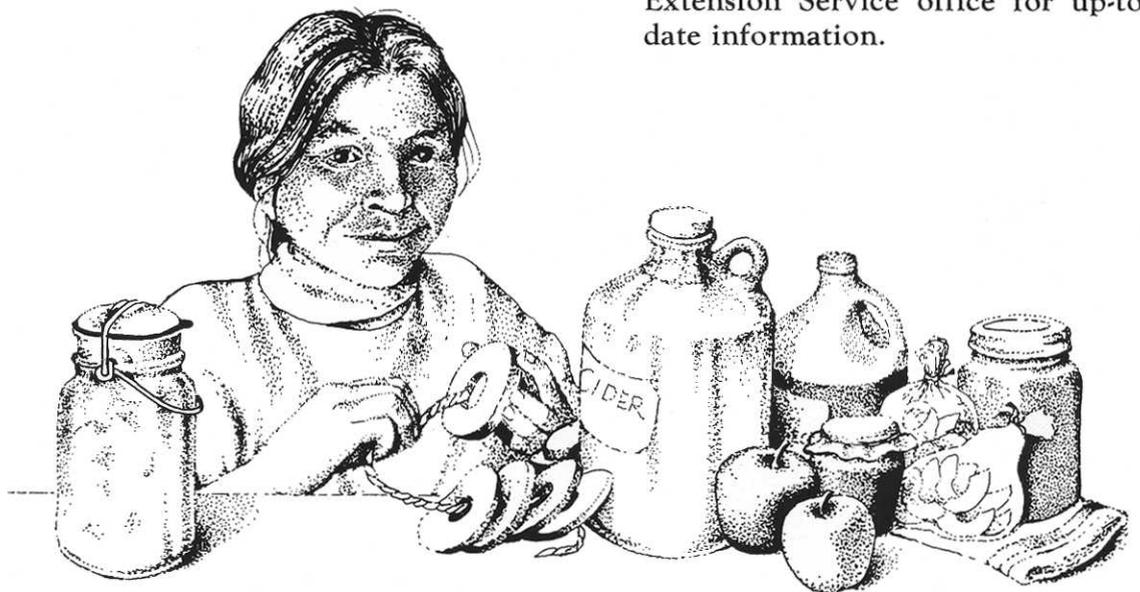
The processes used for food preservation are very important to all of us, since freshly harvested food is not always available. If it is not sold or used soon after harvest, garden and field produce must be preserved to last through the winter as long as possible. Because some crops, such as potatoes, store easily, they became staples for early American settlers.

Before canning developed and year-round freezing became possible, the supply of stored foods sometimes ran out before the next season's gardens began to produce. To prevent this from happening, people used many methods to prolong the life of stored foods.

Even in this era of quick-freezing, the old methods of food preservation are still being used. For example, apple slices can be dried on strings. Meats can be smoked in smokehouses of stone or brick, in special chambers of fireplaces, or even in hollow logs. Meats and corn can also be "salted down." In this process, thin strips of meat or thin layers of corn are sprinkled with salt and then packed together in large quantities. Cucumbers can be pickled in a salt and vinegar brine. Fruit juices can be spiced and jelled. Cabbage can be fermented into sauerkraut, and various juices into wine. Milk can be made into cheese. Potatoes and whole cabbages will keep in dark, cool cellars for several months.

These are just some of the food preservation processes used in the past and still in use today. See if you can uncover other methods in your foodways project.

**WARNING: Some food preservation and storage methods can be unsafe. Contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office for up-to-date information.**



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# Food Storage

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**F**

OOD storage is very important. Food must be stored out of the way, yet it must be handy. It must be kept under controlled conditions of light, temperature, and moisture. There are many facilities available for foods. By exploring traditional storage methods, you can become more aware of the necessity of proper storage and the reasons why the traditional methods developed.

Food is stored in many special places and containers. Many older farm houses have root cellars either under the house or nearby with access through a sloping door. The cellars often have different rooms for different purposes. There might be a milk or dairy room for straining milk, churning butter, and making cheese. There will probably be a dry room for storing potatoes and cabbages, and perhaps a moist room for foods that need humidity. These rooms are lined with shelves to hold jars, crocks, bins, crates, barrels and kegs. Bags and nets can be hung from overhead beams.

Sometimes foods such as root crops are stored in pit storage sites right in the garden. The vegetables are layered on straw in a shallow pit and covered with a mound of dirt. A temperature of just above freezing is maintained. If the pit is opened, the vegetables must be brought in and stored in the root cellar.

Attics are also used for food storage. Pumpkins, squash, and onions can be piled on the attic floor. Herbs can be hung from the rafters to dry.

Containers for particular foods include barrels for salt pork; bins for carrots, cabbages, and apples; crates for potatoes; jars for preserves and jellies; crocks for pickles and sauerkraut; sacks for nuts; nets for onions; firkins (small wooden vessels) for butter; and cheesecloth casings for cheeses.

Pound cakes are often kept in crocks, with an apple added to keep them moist. Bread may be put into bread boxes to be kept dry. Cookies, of course, go into the cookie jar. Many homes have cookie jars, many of which are very unusual, humorous, or attractive. In the past, some people had pie safes for the storage of pies. These were cupboards with pierced tin inserts in the doors to permit ventilation. Cakes also were stored in the pie safes, out of the reach of insects and children's fingers!

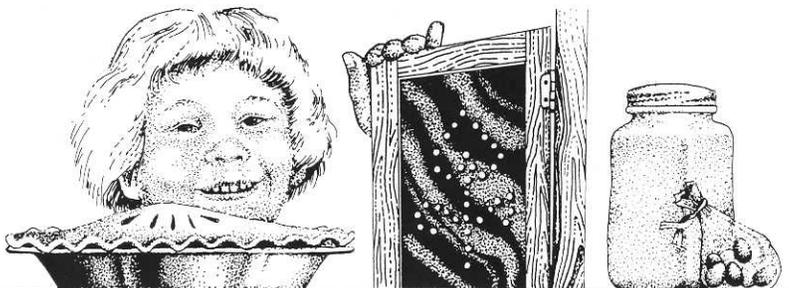
One suggestion for a foodways project would be to photograph all of the ways that food is stored in your community or all of the ways that one kind of food item is stored. These photographs could then be made into a display for the fair.

Many of these storage methods would be found only in farm homes. If you live in town or an urban area, a foodways investigation will probably focus upon the freezing and canning processes, with the freezer and pantry as the main storage areas. In fact, most modern farm families also rely mainly upon freezing and canning processes to preserve their food. However, you will want to find and record the older, traditional methods of food preservation and storage wherever they exist.



**Accompanying Activity Sheet:**

*The Art of Storing Food*





**Accompanying Activity  
Sheets:**

*Food Measurements*

*"Whatsit" Game*

*Family Foodways Keepsake  
Exhibit*

*Kitchen Equipment*

*An Old Family Recipe*

*Eating Alone or in a Crowd*

*Moods and Foods*

*Thanksgiving Foodways*

*One Person's Garbage is*

*Another Person's Treasure*

*Wedding or Holiday Foods*

*Pie Crusts*

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# Food Preparation

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**T**

HE methods of food preparation depend upon the food itself and the way it is to be used. Food preparation encompasses what people do to food before it's cooked, how they actually cook it, where preparation takes place, the different tools used, and how food is handled after it is cooked.

Family traditions determine such things as whether a food is to be peeled or unpeeled, sliced or grated. The way an older relative fixes food may not be the way you like to fix your food.

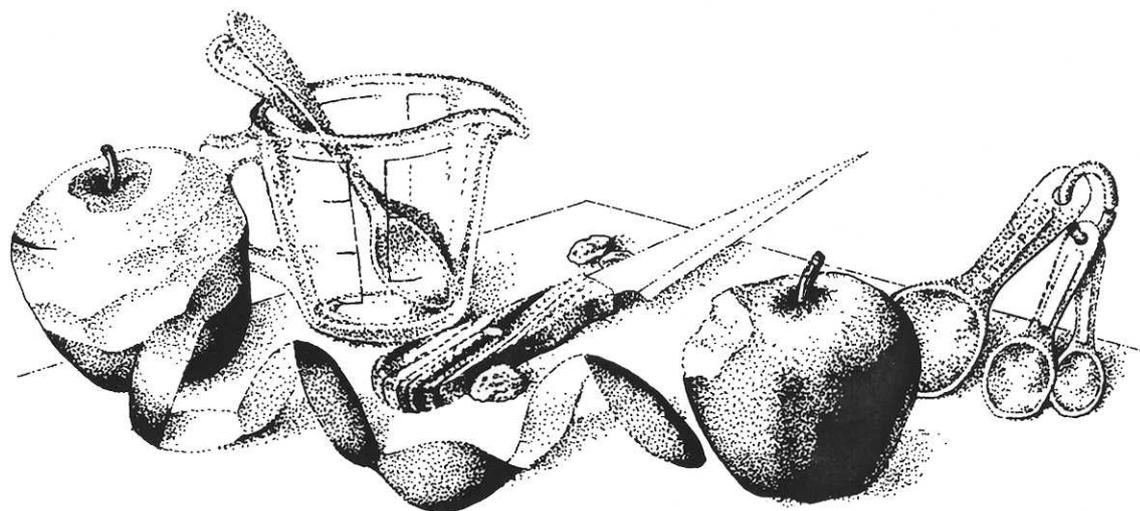
Some foods can be treated in many ways. For example, the versatile potato can be sliced for frying or casseroles, diced for salad, chopped for hash, grated for hash browns, or cut into strips for fries.

Often there are traditional beliefs associated with precooking methods. For example, if you peel an apple and have a continuous, unbroken apple peel, it is said you will have good luck, a long life, or a delicious pie. When the peel is dropped, its design is supposed to reveal the initial of the person the cook will marry.

After the food is cleaned and cut up, it can be measured and combined to make it ready for the cooking process. Before the days of standardized measuring units, recipes often called for amounts like a "dash," a "pinch," a "handful," or something the size of a pea or walnut. Modern recipe books specify uniform measurements such as the standard tablespoon. However, many people still use old family recipes that are much less precise. One example of a foodways project would be to photograph all of the steps that go into the preparation of a favorite recipe. These photographs could then be assembled into a display for a fair or school.

The actual cooking procedure includes applying heat to the raw food. Among the most common methods are boiling, frying, broiling, grilling, baking, roasting, and steaming. The cooking method used depends upon the food itself, the equipment available, and the personal preference that has developed over the years.

Food can be prepared both indoors and out. Garden produce is often trimmed or washed near the garden. Tedious jobs like shelling peas or cutting up beans might be done on outside porches



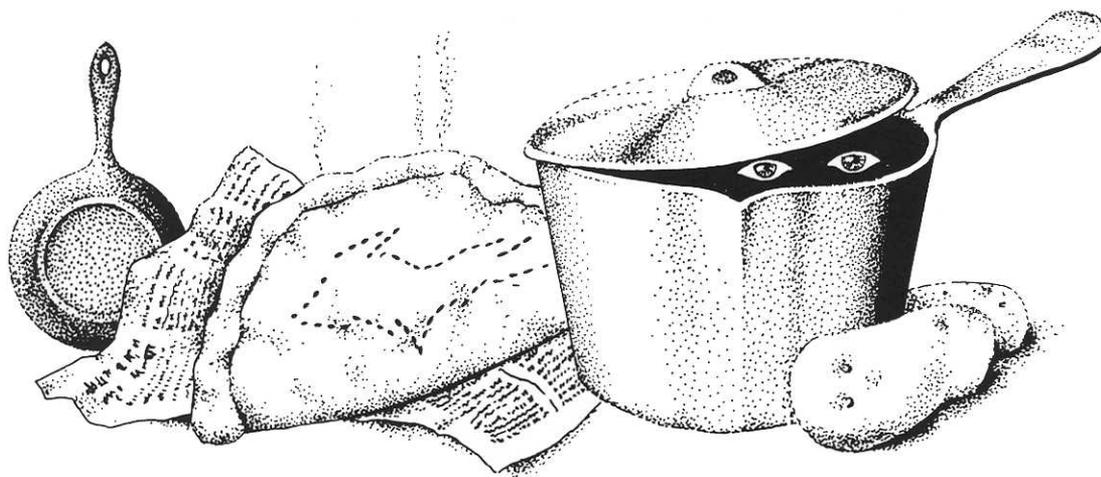
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or in a room other than the kitchen. In the past, some people even had summer kitchens which they used when the weather got hot. Summer kitchens were rooms attached to the back of the house or they were small buildings situated a short distance from the main house. By separating the stove from the main house, the family was able to keep the main house much cooler. Some foods, such as sauerkraut, might be prepared in the cellar because of the mess or smell produced. Fish might be cleaned or smoked outdoors. However, most food preparation takes place in the kitchen where the cooking itself occurs.

The tools used for cleaning and cutting up foods include vegetable brushes, colanders, scrapers, corers, knives, cleavers, graters, mortars and pestles, and cutting boards. Mixing tools include wooden and metal spoons, pastry cutters, bowls, beaters, spatulas, and wire whisks, as well as electric mixers and blenders. Measuring equipment includes cups and spoons in various standard sizes. Rolling pins and pastry cloths aid the cook in making pies and cookies. Many tools serve dual purposes and some, like a homemade grater, are contrived as needed. Some cooks prefer to use a few all-purpose tools, while others like to have specialized tools for each step of the cooking process.

Food preparation also includes methods of handling the foods after cooking. Usually foods are served immediately, but some foods, such as pies and puddings, are set aside because they must be eaten cool. Other foods, such as cakes, breads, and cookies, are cooked so that they may be eaten over an extended period. Today many of these foods are cooled and stored in the refrigerator or freezer, but there are also traditional cooking and storing places still being used.

Some foods are cooked a little ahead of time and kept warm, rather than cooled. Sometimes these foods were said to be “set back,” a term derived from the practice of setting cooked foods at the back of the wood-burning range where it was less hot. Some modern stoves have warming ovens for this same purpose. Covered casseroles or containers are especially suited for keeping food warm because they do not lose moisture. They can also be wrapped in towels or newspapers and carried to potluck dinners, picnics, hungry field hands, or other places without getting cold.





**Accompanying Activity Sheets:**

*Family Food Traditions*

*Setting the Table*

*Table Makeup: Everyday vs. Special Occasion*

*Garnishing: The Art of Decorating Food with Food*  
*Napkin Folding*



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# Food Presentation

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OOD presentation includes those traditions that surround the serving of food. These may be family traditions that determine the numbers of meals each day, seating arrangements, procedures for passing foods, combinations of foods, the use of prayers or blessings, and the choice of table linen and dinnerware. Traditions can also evolve from a community and may include the customs followed at church and community dinners, potlucks, picnics, funerals, weddings, and open houses. A foodways project might include attending one of the above events, then writing a description of all of the traditions surrounding the day. Photographs could also be taken to help illustrate your story. All of these occasions are excellent times to talk to other people about your foodways interests.

Family traditions of food presentation can be separated into those used for everyday meals and those used for holidays or special occasions. Everyday traditions include the number of meals that a family normally eats each day, as well as the order of those meals. The meals can include breakfast, lunch, and dinner, or breakfast, dinner, and supper. Mid-morning or mid-afternoon coffee breaks are other eating times. Perhaps your family enjoys a regular late evening snack. These established eating times are part of your family's foodways.

Meals may vary in size, content, formality, and location. Dinner, whether at mid-day or evening, is usually the largest meal of the day and may be more formal than other meals. Sometimes dinner is served in a separate dining room. Dinner is sometimes the only meal when all members of the family are present. In some families, the dinner cannot start until all family members have arrived at the table. Each person may have a specific place to sit, with the parents at the "head" of the table.

Prayers are said by many families before the food is passed or after the meal. Sometimes one person will give the prayer while the others wait quietly. In some families, each person participates in the prayer, either in unison with the others or singly in turn. Other families sing their mealtime prayers.

Traditions of passing food vary from home to home. In some families, food is passed around the table in large serving bowls and each person takes a portion. In other families, the individual plates are filled by an adult member of the family and are then passed around to the various members. The food itself may be served in a specific order—perhaps salad first, then meat and vegetables, and finally dessert. Often all of the food courses are on the table at the same time. In some homes, however, the courses are placed on the table at certain intervals.

Many people have traditions which call for specific foods at every meal (such as bread) or at a particular meal (such as potatoes at dinner). Other traditions require that certain foods must be served together. For example, ham is served with scalloped potatoes, honey with biscuits, and bacon with eggs.

Traditions can also determine how tablecloths, napkins, dishes, silverware, utensils, and decorative items are used. The placement and use of spoons, forks, knives, chopsticks, water glasses, cups, salt and pepper shakers, napkins, and other table accessories depend upon family customs that often have regional or cultural origins.

Foodways for special events or holidays differ from everyday customs. Special meals are sometimes served in a different setting, such as a separate dining room. The table linen, dishes, silverware, and other serving utensils may also be different—they're probably the best in the household.

The menu for a special occasion will be more elaborate; it will probably include traditional holiday foods that are seldom prepared for everyday meals. For example, Thanksgiving dinner

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might call for roast turkey or venison and pumpkin pies. The Christmas menu might include roast goose and plum pudding. Black-eyed peas might be served on New Year's Day.

Holidays or special events are times when relatives and friends are also present. If the group is large, the serving might be done "buffet" style, with all the food placed on a separate table where each person can take portions before sitting down to the meal at the dining table.

During your next family holiday meal, or the next time you eat at a friend's house, try conducting a foodways project. You might bring in old photographs of past gatherings or prepare some questions that will help people talk about the traditions connected with that meal or holiday. Make sure that you are ready to record the information they give you by having some note paper, short-item cards, a camera, or a tape-recorder ready. At next year's event, you might even want to share with them what you recorded. Who knows—maybe this will become an annual project!

Community traditions for serving food differ depending upon the type of event. Picnics, potluck dinners, box socials, church suppers, and wedding receptions are some of the community gatherings where meals are served according to recognized customs. One serving tradition often associated with wedding receptions is the custom of having the bride and groom cut the first piece of the wedding cake to feed to each other. You may discover other serving traditions that are used by cultural or religious groups at events in your community.

Food presentation also involves practices that affect the appearance of food. Because our enjoyment of food is influenced by how it looks, cooks have traditionally used methods that produce pleasing visual effects. The colors of foods often determine which color serving dishes are chosen. Many families use special dishes for certain foods because of their color, shape, or texture. For instance, gelatin desserts are frequently put into glass containers so that the colors are visible through the sides.

Sometimes foods are given an extra dash of color and flavor by being garnished with small amounts of another food or an herb seasoning. Common examples are meats or vegetables with parsley, deviled eggs with paprika, ham with cherries or pineapple, iced tea with lemon, and apple pie with cheese.

Food can also be arranged or "sculpted" so that its appearance is more appealing. For example, individual salads will have carefully arranged patterns of tomatoes, cucumbers, eggs, and other ingredients. Hams may be "scored" with a knife into diamond-shaped designs. Frosting is swirled into peaks on cakes. Butter is rolled into balls, shaved into curls, or molded into pats with various designs.

Pie crusts offer the cook many opportunities to add to the appearance of the pie. Edges may be fluted or crimped with fingers, a fork, or special pastry wheels. Crust centers can be pricked or cut into many shapes. For instance, some cooks like to cut an "A" for an apple pie or a "C" for a cherry pie. These decorative center cuts also provide vents for steam to escape. Top crusts can be "woven" into a lattice arrangement of pastry strips. Milk brushed on the pastry gives it a honey brown color when baked. Sugar sprinkled on the crust adds sparkle.

Other forms of decoration include molding or cutting cookies into various designs, carving radishes into "roses," and shaping rolls and breads into swirls, braids, bowknots, and cloverleaves. You will recognize many of these customs from your own family experience. However, there will be other special food arranging traditions in your family or among your neighbors that you will want to discover and record that haven't been mentioned here.





**Accompanying Activity Sheets:**

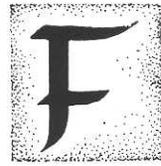
*Traditional Tricks for Picking Produce*

*Photographing Food Marketing*

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# Food Marketing

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FOOD marketing includes trading or selling raw produce. Produce can be sold at places such as grocery stores, auctions, bake sales, cooperatives, health food outlets, farm markets, roadside stands, or restaurants. Some food is marketed as a source of regular income. Other food is sold as a part of special fundraising events, such as school bake sales or service club barbecues. Some food items (such as pizza, milk, eggs, butter, popsicles, and cookies) can even be delivered right to your door.

Some aspects of food marketing might be interesting to explore. Consider the following:

- At what time of the year are certain foods marketed? Why?
- How are different foods advertised?
- Who does the selling of different foods? How did marketers get their experience?
- How did the local farm market get started?
- What community groups organize food sales and why?
- Why are only certain foods sold at some events?

Traditions surround each of the ways food is marketed. By looking at how food is bought and sold, you'll learn more about your family and community life.



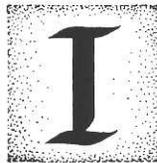
**Accompanying Activity Sheet:**

*Foodways Collection Center*

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# Community Food Events

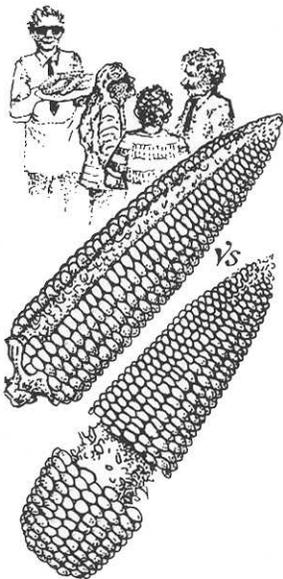
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IN many communities, there are special food-related events. Some of these events are the yearly celebrations of a local harvest, food industry, or open season for hunting or fishing. For example, Michigan celebrations include festivals for asparagus, maple sugar, cherries, strawberries, melons, and trout. At each of these community celebrations, there might be floats, parades, a king and queen, and of course, lots of the featured foods.

Other community events which feature food are the fundraising barbecues, pancake suppers, fish fries, or bake sales put on by different groups. Churches, 4-H clubs, schools, political organizations, or service clubs all use food events to raise funds for their programs.

Another important community food event is the annual county or state fair. These are excellent locations to learn about local foodways and to share your own findings. These are especially good times to try setting up a foodways collection booth. See the activity sheet, "Foodways Collection Center," for instructions on how to do this.



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# Suggestions for Further Reading

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## **For more information related to food traditions and folklore, refer to the following:**

"Culture and Cuisine: Some Food for Thought" by Debra Connor, pages 2-7 in *Camp Fire Leadership*, Volume 61, 1982. Available from Camp Fire Inc., 4601 Madison Ave., Kansas City, Missouri 64112.

*4-H FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide* by Marsha MacDowell, 1982. Available from your county Cooperative Extension Service office or the Michigan State University Bulletin Office, P.O. Box 6640, East Lansing, Michigan 48826-6640.

*Food and Food Habits Bibliography: The Midwest and Its Roots*, Living History Resource List #8, by Ed Hawes and Linda Oelheim. Published by Sangamon State University (in cooperation with Clayville Rural Life Center and Museum), Springfield, Illinois, 1978.

"Foodways and Eating Habits: Directions for Research." Edited by Michael Owen Jones, Bruce Guiliano, and Roberta Kress in *Western Folklore* (special issue) Volume 6, 1981. Published by the California Folklore Society, Los Angeles, California.

*Foods of the World*, a 27-volume series with accompanying recipe books. Published by Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Virginia, between 1968-1971.

*Heritage and Horizons: Foods—4-H Leader's Guide* (L-9-4), 1975. Available from the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853.

*Heritage Gardening—Vegetables* by Jane L. Taylor and J. Lee Taylor, 1983. Available from your county Cooperative Extension Service office or the Michigan State University Bulletin Office, P.O. Box 6640, East Lansing, Michigan 48826-6640.

*It's Your Move!—4-H Teen Nutrition Education Program* by Susan E. Travis, Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University. (The sections on "Values and Food" and "Culture and Food" are especially appropriate.) Available from the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service, Division of Nutritional Services, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853.

*Our Michigan: Ethnic Tales and Recipes* by Carole Eberly. Published by Eberly Press, East Lansing, Michigan, 1979.

"Say It With Food" by the Center for Southern Folklore in *Center for Southern Folklore Magazine* (special issue on foodways), Fall 1980. Available from Center for Southern Folklore, 1216 Peabody Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee 38104.

*The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction* (2nd edition) by Jan Brunvand. (See the chapter on "Folk Foods.") Published by W. W. Norton, New York, 1978.

Also check with your county Cooperative Extension Service office for information on how to secure loan copies of these Michigan resources: "Cooking Tools of Yesteryear" (display), "Food: Traditions in Our Lives" (slide set), "Jaraslawa" (film on Ukrainian cooking traditions), and "Spice of Life" (display).

## **For up-to-date nutrition information, refer to:**

*Fit It All Together I—Food For Fun & Fitness: Member's Guide and Leader's Guide* by the National 4-H Council, 1982. Available from your county Cooperative Extension Service office, the National 4-H Council, or the Michigan State University Bulletin Office, P.O. Box 6640, East Lansing, Michigan 48826-6640.

*Fit It All Together II—Food & Fitness Choices for You: Member's Guide and Leader's Guide* by the National 4-H Council, 1983. Available from your county Cooperative Extension Service office, the National 4-H Council, or the Michigan State University Bulletin Office, P.O. Box 6640, East Lansing, Michigan 48826-6640.

*Fit It All Together III—Member's Guide and Leader's Guide* by the National 4-H Council, 1986. Available from your county Cooperative Extension Service office, the National 4-H Council, or the Michigan State University Bulletin Office, P.O. Box 6640, East Lansing, Michigan 48826-6640.

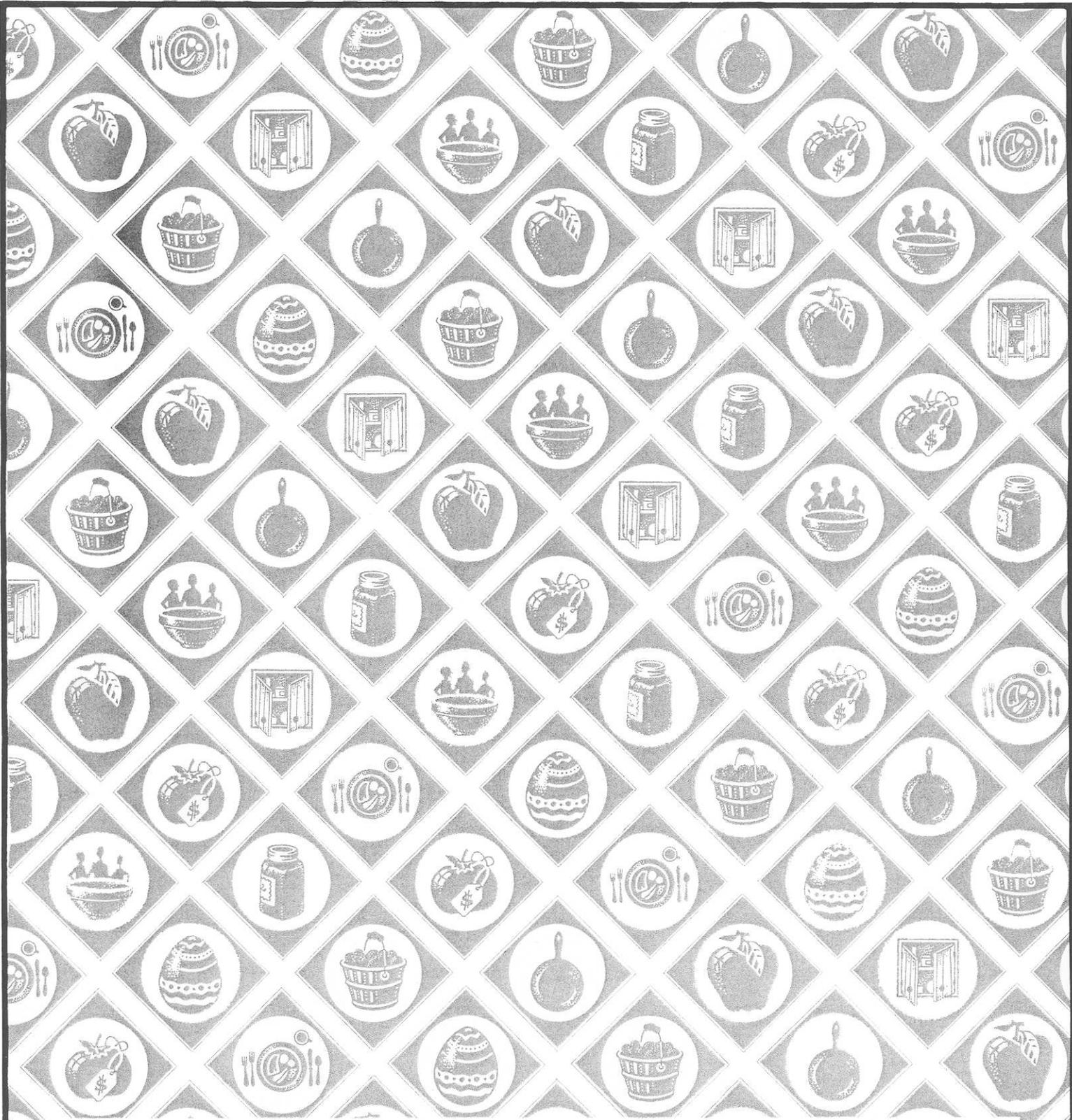
*Michigan 4-H Food and Nutrition Notebook* by Patricia A. Hammerschmidt and Rhonda Walker-Buckingham, 1982. Available on loan only (not for purchase) from any Michigan county Cooperative Extension Service office.

*Understanding Nutrition* (4th edition) by Eleanor N. Whitney and Eva May Nunnelley Hamilton. Published by West Published Co., St. Paul, Minnesota, 1987.

**Your county Cooperative Extension Service office also carries publications with current food and nutrition information.**

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