

# What Did They Eat?

Today we have ranges, ovens and microwaves to cook food. We have refrigerators, metal cans and plastic containers to store food. But what did people do about food in the past?

The American Indians of the Great Lakes would come to the Straits of Mackinac to fish. They also would grow and harvest foods such as corn, squash, rice and sunflowers. In the winter, they would move further south and hunt and trap different animals for meat and pelts. Then in the spring they would gather sap from maple trees. The sap was boiled down to make maple sugar. This was easily carried with them when they moved in the birchbark containers called mo-kuks.

In the summer, the American Indians would cook over a fire outside. The fire was brought inside their home in the colder times of the year, so they could not only cook, but heat their homes at the same time.

The traders, trappers and families who came from Europe to the straits area used a lot of the same foods the American Indians did. They would trade for the food the American Indians grew. These were new food to eat for many Europeans! The Europeans also brought different foods and new spices to add to meals they would make.



People at Michilimackinac and in the early days on Mackinac Island would cook over an open fire in a fireplace, or hearth. They would hang pots over the fire to cook like you would on the burners on a stove. They would bake in heavy iron pots with coals from the fire on top of and underneath the pot to bake a cake, bread or anything else inside, just like a gas or electric oven in your house.

The easiest meals to make were soups and stews. You could add any vegetable or meat that you had available. Food had to be bought from local growers, grown yourself or hunted or caught, like meat and fish. Herbs grown in the garden and spices purchased from the supplies coming from the east could be added to make the meal tastier.

## RECIPES

Adapted from History from the Hearth

### Bouillabaisse

#### *Fish Soup*

2 lbs. Fish, gutted and salted  
1/4 lb. Bacon or salt pork, cubed  
2 small Onions, chopped  
4 Carrots, chopped  
4 small Potatoes, cubed  
Salt and White Pepper  
Water

Cut the fish into chunks. Historically, the bones and head were included for taste and then strained out afterward—it's much easier to filet the fish first, although you may want to add vegetable stock for flavor. Add fish to pot, cover with water and stew until tender. Add vegetables and seasonings. You can substitute turnips, celery or any chopped vegetable. Season as desired. Serve hot.

### Baking Powder Biscuits

2 c. Flour  
1 tsp. Salt  
3/4 c. Milk  
3 tsp. Baking Powder  
1/3 c. Shortening

Mix dry ingredients. Cut shortening into mixture. Add milk and stir quickly. Turn out on a floured board. Roll out the dough to 3/4 inch thick and cut with biscuit cutter. Bake at 450 degrees for 12-15 minutes.

DROP BISCUITS: Increase milk to 1 cup. Do not knead. Drop by spoonfuls and bake 10 minutes.



### Maple Bread Pudding

3/4 c. Maple syrup  
3 slices Buttered bread, cubed  
2 Eggs, beaten  
2 c. Milk

Grease a crock. Put syrup in bottom. Place bread as a second layer. Add milk to beaten eggs and pour over bread. Do not mix layers. Place on trivet in a Dutch Oven or in regular oven. Add water to the bottom of the pan to steam or add pan of water in regular oven. Cover and bake until set, about 1 1/2 hours at 325 degrees. Dish up pudding and top with sauce formed in the bottom of the pan.

### Corn Soup

2 oz Salt Pork or Bacon  
1 large Onion, chopped  
4 c. Corn  
4 Potatoes, cubed  
2 c. Chicken Stock  
2 c. Milk (2% or Whole)

Cook bacon and dice. Save grease to sauté onion. Add bacon, corn, potatoes, stock and milk. Simmer till cooked, but do not boil. Add salt and pepper to taste.

# Lesson 9

## Using What Did They Eat

☞ Read the “What Did They Eat.”

☞ Discuss the following questions with students during or after reading.

1. What did the American Indians do each season? Why?  
*The American Indians would move place to place for different types of food. They would come north to the straits area for fish and harvest foods during the summer. They would go south to hunt and trap animals for meat and clothing. In the spring they would gather sap to make maple sugar.*
2. How would people cook foods without a stove or microwave?  
*They would cook over a fire or with the coals of the fire. They would hang pots over the fire to act as a range. They would cover iron pots with coals to bake things in like an oven.*
3. What do you think happened to foods when the Europeans and American Indians met?  
*They exchanged foods. Many foods of the Europeans were different than the foods of the American Indians were different than the foods of the Europeans. Each culture brought new foods to the other culture.*

## GLCEs that may be reached in Lesson 9:

- 3-H3.0.5** Use informational text and visual data to compare how American Indians and settlers in the early history of Michigan adapted to, used, and modified their environment.
- 3-H3.0.6** Use a variety of sources to describe interactions that occurred between American Indians and the first European explorers and settlers in Michigan.
- 3-H3.0.7** Use a variety of primary and secondary sources to construct a historical narrative about daily life in the early settlements of Michigan.
- 3-G4.0.2** Describe diverse groups that have come into a region of Michigan and reasons why they came.
- 3-G5.0.1** Locate natural resources in Michigan and explain the consequences of their use.

☞ Ask students about cooking today versus cooking in colonial/regency times.

Discuss the differences between cooking now and then. Have a group discussion and write the answers on an overhead or chalkboard.

### NOW

- microwaves and stoves
- ovens to bake
- buying sugar at the store
- white sugar (brown)

### THEN

- open fire and fireplaces
- iron pots with hot coals for baking
- gathering sap
- maple sugar

☞ Have a cooking day.

Try cooking with the recipes provided. Bring in foods, but even better make the foods at the school. Each recipe can be made the traditional way with cast iron and fire or on a stove. Taste history! Add it to other activities like making games, playing music and dancing or acting out the play (see other lesson plans) for the whole day of living out history.

**Vocabulary Words:** mokuk                      salt pork

