FOODS OF THE PIONEER FAMILY

By Lois Shelton

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA
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for
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INTRODUCTION

The goals and purpose of this lesson is to understand and appreciate the foods the early settlers ate in Indiana. The students should realize how many of our foods we take for granted today were eaten by Indians in one of the Americas thousands of years ago. They will also learn and understand that many of the foods we eat are not native American food or "weeds" but were brought by the settlers to the unknown land where they wanted to be sure they had their herbs for medicinal purposes.

After studying this unit, 4th and 5th grade students should appreciate the heritage we have from the native Americans. The students should understand they had developed civilizations where agriculture was a skill and they freely taught the white man their knowledge. The "red men" were not just savages who attacked the white man. For many colonists in early times, starvation would surely have come if Indians had not taught the white settlers what to eat and how to prepare it. Students should realize that foods we consider "Spanish or Mexican" today were originated by ancient Indians long before Columbus.

Many foods we accept as American were brought over by the colonists from their home country. Students will have the opportunity to learn about these and the reasons they were brought. They will learn also about some of our "weeds" which were brought as herbs by the colonists.

As the children study this unit, in conjunction with their Indiana or American History texts, they will see how the Indiana pioneers ate and survived.
The difference in winter and summer meals varied greatly as fresh foods were never available in the winter except for meat. Children can see how the pioneer wife "made-do" with whatever was on hand. They should be able to understand that though pioneer life may sound exciting, it was a very harsh and difficult life. Everyone had to work and even small children had little time for play as all worked toward survival.

By doing this unit on "Pioneer foods", children should not only get the feel of monotony of eating beans, pork and cornbread for months on end, but should feel the thrill of spring coming with green herbs once again, and variety in meals. They need to understand the green foods also broke up diseases that made many sick from lack of Vitamin C which we now take for granted.

Children should get the opportunity to collect recipes from their own families that have been passed down through generations as well as try some of the old recipes that are included in the unit. A tasting party could let children taste food pioneers sought diligently to make variety such as different kinds of berries, paw-paws, and persimmons. The children should be allowed to make and eat several of the corn recipes to see how the pioneer wife tried to add variety to the same old food.

By studying this unit, children should have a greater appreciation for the lives of those who opened this land for settlement. By experiencing activities that go with the unit, they can get the feel of what it was really like to live in the early 1800's. By working out the questions, they are practicing comprehension skills as well as problem solving. As children love to eat, this can succeed in being a very enjoyable unit as well as a learning experience.
Lesson Plans for Unit - Pioneer Foods

Objectives

1. The children of 4th and 5th grade levels learn about what Indiana Pioneers are in the 1800's.
2. Children learn the ancient tribes of Indians gave us many of our foods.
3. They compare the vast variety of food we have today with the sparse meals settlers sometimes endured for weeks.
4. Children find what foods came directly from Indiana as the pioneer wife improvised to find a healthy variety for her family.

Opening of Unit

1. Have each child make a list of foods eaten in one day's time, three meals and snacks.
2. Ask children where and how they got their food.
3. Begin research on Indiana pioneers and what they ate.

Developing Unit

1. Have children research any of the Indiana groups mentioned plus Indiana Indians to find what foods they ate. Library books, encyclopedias, etc.
2. Have children group and choose a food from recipes brought in from grandparents and try a simple one to make and serve.
3. Have one group of children make posters of Indians' contributions with pictures of foods they have given us.
4. Have one group make posters of foods pioneer families ate in fall, winter, spring, and summer.
5. Have one group make posters of food settlers brought with them.
6. Have children make "recipe books" of recipes brought in and those taken from this paper or research.
7. All children will do the activity sheets with unit.

Conclusion

A. Have a pioneer day with children dressing in old fashion clothes.
   1. Make butter in a real churn
   2. Cook beans in iron pot
   3. Make cornbread to eat
   4. Eat jelly made ahead of time by children
B. Evaluate the unit.

1. Activity or worksheets graded
2. Discussion about what has been learned
Indiana History
Unit: Pioneer Foods
Foods from Indians

Worksheet 1

Directions: Read the story, then answer the questions as directed.

A. If you go to the grocery store today, you are surrounded by an enormous choice of good foods. This is more true in America than anywhere else in the world. Let us go back to the late 1400's.
In Europe, many diets consisted of bread, milk and cheese. Meat and eggs were had when available, but mostly for the rich. Only people living in warm climates could ever see fruits and few vegetables were eaten.

Many of the foods we eat today go back to foods the Indians taught first Spanish and later European explorers to eat. At the time Columbus came to the West Indies in 1492, many Central and South American Indians were eating what we think of as Spanish food now. Indians all over the North and South American continents were eating corn and beans.
The Inca Indians of Peru formed a highly developed farming community. They cultivated plants, installed vast irrigation systems, terraced gardens on the hillsides to conserve soil, rotated crops to get better yield, left ground fallow (no crops) to restore it, and even hybridized maize (corn).

1. What foods did most Europeans eat in the 1400's?

2. Why do you think they had such few choices?

3. Name at least four things the Inca Indians did to improve crops:
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
Activity 1

List all foods you eat in one full day and where they came from to you. Example: Breakfast: Apple Cherrios-bought packaged at grocery store, milk-bought in carton at grocery store.

**Breakfast**
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

**Lunch**
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

**Snack after school**
1.
2.
3.

**Dinner (or supper)**
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

**Snack before bed**
1.
2.
3.
Directions: Read the story, then answer the questions as directed.

The Mayas of Central America go back to about 250 A.D. They created one of the most distinguished civilizations perhaps of all ancient peoples. They built beautiful and well planned cities. They built pyramids. They developed the most complex writing system found in the New World. They developed astronomy which may have been used to decide when to plant crops. They cultivated crops which they planted and kept free of weeds by chopping them. Some foods they introduced to the Spanish explorers were pineapple and tomatoes.

Ancient pottery, showing pictures of pineapple and cultivation of it, dates back to 4000 B.C. in parts of Brazil and Central America. Natives called them "pina" because they looked like a pinecone. The English later added apple getting the pineapple we say today. If the Indians were feeling friendly, they would hang the crown of a pineapple at the entrance of their huts as an invitation for all to enter. The Spanish carried the custom to Spain and it spread all over Europe. Even yet today, we see carved pineapples on doorways, posts, or furniture as a symbol of friendship.

Put T for true or F for false.

A. 1._____ The Mayas were a highly developed civilization for ancient times.
   2._____ Cities were unknown to the Mayas.
   3._____ They may have used astronomy to decide when to plant crops.
   4._____ Pineapple was partly named by the Incas and partly by English.
   5._____ Hanging a pineapple over the doorway meant "Do Not Enter".
   6._____ Many people enjoy the pineapple yet today.
   7._____ Maya Indians enjoyed tomatoes long before Columbus came.

B. Look up pineapple in an encyclopedia and see where most of our pineapple comes from today. Write a paragraph about it.
Chocolate or chocolatl was served to Cortés by Montezuma, an Aztec chief, in 1519. Chocolate was taken back to Spain where it stayed until 1657 when a Frenchman opened a "Chocolate House".

Choose the best answer:

1. When the Spanish explorers arrived, how did the Aztec Indians treat them?
   (a) Ran them off  (b) Killed them all  (c) Sat and watched them  
   (d) Showed them how to eat the food

2. Some archeologists think maize or corn has been cultivated for some__________.
   (a) 50 years  (b) 600 years  (c) 6000 years  (d) 1000 years

3. Although the Indians all over the Americas called maize, "maize", the Europeans thought of it as a food grain, so called it__________.
   (a) beans  (b) corn  (c) Mayola  (d) conola

4. The Aztec thought that ashes from burned ground-cover made good
   ________________
   (a) food  (b) fertilizer  (c) decorations  (d) portion

5. Most Europeans took a long, long time to accept the Aztec food, tomatoes, because they thought they were__________________
   (a) poisonous  (b) too pretty  (c) sour  (d) too hard to keep

Answer the questions:

1. What were the foods that could be easily grown, baked, made into puddings, fried into cakes, ground into a powder and made into a bread like cake?_________________________

2. What part of the squash or pumpkin was eaten raw?
Directions: Read the story, then answer the questions as directed.

The Aztec Indians of Mexico helped the Spanish explorers to find food and showed them how to use the strange new foods. The Aztecs had cultivated corn for some 6000 years according to some archaeologists. Mexico is the probable source of maize and from there it spread to South and North America. Maize was the Indian name for what we call corn. Europeans called all food grains "Corn" so they called maize corn and the name stuck.

Within 25 years of when Columbus arrived, corn had spread over much of Europe.

The Aztecs had developed ways of improving their crops. They slashed the weeds from their crops. Before planting, they would burn the ground cover, then use the ashes for fertilizer. They gave the Spanish maize, beans, squash, tomatoes, peppers and chocolate.

The Aztec people taught the explorers ways to prepare tomatoes that are similar to what we do today. They ate them raw, cooked them, and made sauces with red or chili peppers. Spanish and Italians were the only countries where people accepted tomatoes. It was some 400 years later that Louisana families first began to eat tomatoes. People were afraid of them because they belong to the nightshade family and were considered poisonous. Creole dishes come from these original Indian dishes.

Squash and pumpkins were used by Indians both in Mexico and across North America. They were baked, made into puddings, fried into cakes, seeds were roasted like nuts, and pounded seeds made a powder that was used for bread-like cakes. Even the blossoms were eaten as a salad or made into soup.

Complete the following sentences using words from the word bank:

Aztec    maize    explorers    tomatoes
Mexico    corn    chocolate    squash
Worksheet 3 (con't)

1. The _______________ Indians of _______________ gave us many tasty foods.

2. Spanish _______________ found them cultivating _______________ and using ashes for fertilizer.

3. _______________ and _______________ mean the food grain that is so widely grown in Indiana today.

4. A common food grown in Mexico was the pumpkin and _______________.

5. An Aztec chief served __________ to Spanish explorer Cortes who took cocoa beans back to Spain.

6. _______________ were believed to be poisonous by European people and were not accepted for hundreds of years.
Worksheet 4

Directions: Read the story, then answer the questions as directed.

Spanish explorers found the Incas raising sweet potatoes, white potatoes, peanuts, pinto, navy, yellow-eye, black-eye, kidney, and lima beans. Peanuts stored in jars were also found, as well as pottery with pictures of peanuts on it. Pictures would show they were roasted, then pounded into paste. Oil was extracted by pounding kernels between stones. Meal-pulp was used to make flat cakes. Spanish explorers took them back to Spain where they were traded to Portugal and Africa. Some 200 years later, African slaves brought them back to North America.

1. List five kinds of beans known for thousands of years.
   1. ____________
   2. ____________
   3. ____________
   4. ____________
   5. ____________

2. Think of reasons why beans would have been a very important find for the Europeans.

   **********************************************************************************************************
   **********************************************************************************************************
   **********************************************************************************************************
Worksheet 5

Directions: Read the stories below, then choose one of the foods and research it. Write a story about it in your own words.

A. **Oranges** were brought to America in 1493. They originated in Indochina around 3000 B.C. Columbus sold Ferdinand and Queen Isabella on the idea of sugar, oranges, and pineapple plantations in the New World. His reports are dominated by plants. He was America's first explorer as well as importer of plants. The oranges were to prevent scurvy on the return trip to Europe. **Peach** trees were among the first trees planted in Mexico, Brazil and West Indies. All colonial areas imported peaches as soon as possible. Indians became proficient in planting fruit orchards. By 1789, a report was made by William Bartram of the excellent orchards of peaches, oranges, figs and apples.

B. **Wheat** was important to Europeans because bread of wheat flour was what they were used to. Settlers brought lettuce, cabbage, turnips, beets and carrots. "Queen Ann's Lace" that we know today as a weed is actually carrots reverted to wild state. **Asparagus, cucumbers, dill and horseradish** came with settlers. Queen Isabella ordered cucumbers be one of the first vegetables planted and by 1494 they were thriving in Haiti. **Kale and cabbage** were brought by French explorer Jacques Cartier in 1540.

**Dandelion** was a herb brought for medicinal use. It was used in salads and stew pots as well as medicine. Ground roots substituted for coffee.

Apple tree slips, herbs, teas, were brought from England in 1623 and before 10 years were bearing apples. **Johnny (Chapman) Appleseed** was greatly responsible for getting apples to Indiana and the Ohio Valley around 1800.
Indiana History  
Unit: Pioneer Foods Settlers Brought  

Worksheet 6  

Directions: Read the stories, then do as directed after the stories.

A. When settlers could, they brought domesticated animals with them. These would include oxen or horse teams, a milk cow, pigs, ducks, geese and chickens. Sheep were kept mainly for wool, however, many settlers came with only their wagonload of basic covers, seed for corn, and a minimum of clothing and furniture. They literally lived off the land until the first crop of corn and beans were gathered. Acorns were used for a substitute for flour, but many times they had only meat plus perhaps berries or herbs in season.

B. As winter progressed, the usual meal included beans, cornbread and whatever meat was available. After the bears were gone, there was pork. Many families had a cow which provided milk and butter but this would not be available when the cow was "dry". As food preservation, they dried fruits and vegetables as well as making preserves with honey or maple sugar. A springhouse kept butter and milk. Where these were not available, cisterns or wells were used by lowering the milk, butter and cheese down on a rope to hang in the coolness. Salting or pickling preserved meat and some vegetables, but finding salt was a big problem. Cider and cider vinegar were made for pickling after apple trees were established. Smoking and drying meat and fish was used but occasionally wolves and other wild animals stole the meat. It was not until the late 1800's that canning was commonly used.

C. Domestic Animals: Cows were introduced as early as 1550 in Florida and by 1611 in Jamestown. Indians had not had milk or beef until settlers came, although buffalo meat was similar. Cherokee Indians fed the cows corn and produced more tender beef. Pigs were brought by Europeans and adopted by Indians. The Creeks and Seminole Indians fed the pigs peanuts. Settlers mostly let them run until a month before butchering when they were fed corn. The Pawhatan smoked their rear legs (hams) over hickory fires giving white man the technique. Sheep were brought by colonists and adopted by Indians. The Cherokees stuffed lambs and pigs with apples and nuts and roasted them.
A big help to Indians was the introduction to the iron pot or kettle. Iron kettles were standard equipment for the settlers for they held up well over the open fires used for cooking. A "spider" was often used. This was a kettle with legs that held it up over the hot coals.

Activity: Pretend you are a settler coming to Indiana from one of the other states. Write a story about how you would get to Indiana and what you would bring with you. What would fit into a covered wagon? What tools would you bring? What keepsakes? What animals?
Worksheet 7

Directions: Read the story, then follow directions below.

A. Corn was invariably the first crop planted and the first task accomplished after building a lean-to. Corn was the base of pioneer agriculture. Corn grew easily in Indiana soil and Indiana climate. Often it was planted among trees and stumps. It quickly became the staple of every pioneer for family and animals.

Pioneer women served green corn boiled on the cob. They pounded and grated corn into meal. The meal was used for Johnny cake and corn pone. Hominy was made by soaking in ash water to remove hull, then boiled, fried or made into cakes. It was also made into whiskey.

By 1832, there were 15 varieties of corn being grown in New Harmony. Sweet corn was one new variety which was eaten while not yet ripe. The frontiersmen thought there was nothing better than cornbread, beans and pork.

Corn became an important commodity. Settlers even paid their taxes, rent, and debts with corn for they had little money. Popcorn was introduced as early as the first Thanksgiving and became a favorite snack in Indiana. It was popped in a wire basket over hot coals in the fireplace. (Indians popped it in stone jars in early days.) It was then served with milk as a cereal, or topped with melted butter or bacon grease and eaten as a snack. On special occasions, it was made into balls using molasses as a sweetener.

Choose two:

1. Look through cookbooks and see how many recipes you can find made of corn. Make a "corn cookbook".
2. Make a list of your favorite ways to eat corn.
3. Make a corn husk doll.
Indiana History
Unit: Pioneer Foods
Foods Found in Indiana

Name ______________________

Worksheet 8

Directions: Read the following stories, then do as directed. Choose from the following suggestions as directed by your teacher. Note: The following projects are done with adult supervision. Activities are for whole class or extra credit.

B. Potatoes
Although potatoes came back to North America from Europe, they were not eaten until 1719 when Irish settlers planted and ate them. By the 1800's, they were commonly grown by Hoosier settlers. Sweet potatoes were readily accepted but because the white potatoes were of the nightshade plant family, many considered them poisonous.

White potatoes were used in stews, boiled, fried, or most commonly baked in the jackets in the hot ashes. Potatoes and salt were used for salt-rising bread. Any yeast had to be made by the cooks.

Make a pioneer person or animal by carving a potato. Use toothpicks to hold it together. Use construction paper or corn husks for hats and other accessories.

C. Beans
Indians carried beans all over American soil. By the time settlers arrived in Indiana, beans were planted throughout the season to keep them supplied. They would let them dry to store for the winter. Green bean pods were picked and strung up to dry from rafters. These were called leather britches and were used in stews and soups. Most bean recipes were originally Indian such as baked beans, succotash (lima and corn) and bean soup or stew.

1. Make a mosaic of beans depicting something from pioneer times; a churn, a covered wagon, etc. Use different kinds of beans for variety of color.
2. Try drying green bean pods.
3. Hull out ripe beans from dry pods.
D. Sunflowers, squash and pumpkin

A regular part of any garden was sunflower, squash, and pumpkin. The seeds of all three were used as nuts for snacks and in other foods. The seeds were dried and ground into a meal to be used as flour. Squash and pumpkins were also made into puddings, baked and eventually baked in pies in later years.

1. With your parents or teacher's help, try baking sunflower or pumpkin seeds and eating them.

2. Try making and tasting a squash pudding. Directions: Start with a Butternut squash, cut in half and remove seeds. Bake in microwave oven or crockpot until tender. Mix so pulp is soft, add maple syrup (or brown sugar), butter, raisins, and nuts. Eat while warm.

E. Berries and Fruit

Indiana grew an abundance of fruit. In the spring and summer, these were picked and carefully preserved by drying or put in preserves.

Northern Indiana had cranberries and blueberries. Strawberries, raspberries and blackberries could be found over the entire state. Southern Indiana had chokeberries, wild red cherries, chicsaw plum, dewberries, mulberries, elderberries, boysenberries, huckleberries, and tart gooseberries. Paw-paws (the Indiana banana), persimmons, haws, wild grapes and crabapples were plentiful, especially in Southern Indiana. Mayapples were used as a substitute for lemons.

1. In fall, gather persimmons, run through a calendar to get pulp, then make pudding according to recipe in "Teachers Manuel".

2. Choose a fruit or berry mentioned and make jelly.
F. Nuts and Herbs
Nuts were important to the settler's diets. Walnuts, pecans, hickory nuts, butternuts, pinon or pine nuts, and acorns were used. They were eaten as a snack, put into candies and baked foods and ground into flour for breads. Sometimes the oil was extracted and used as a substitute for milk as the Indians did. Many herbs found in Indiana were new to the settlers. This was any plant that could be gathered and eaten and might be used as medicine as well. The newer word is vegetable which is from the Latin word vegetabilis and means life giving. Some of these included sweetflag, ginseng, sassafras for tea, sourgrass, pokeweed shoots, sourdock, wild onions, wild turnips, and cattails. Wild roses were used for beauty and food. Maple sugar and honey were used as sweetners. Green stocks of corn were used to make corn syrup or molasses.

1. Have a parent identify a sassafras tree and dig roots to bring to class and boil for tea. (buy roots, if possible, or liquid tea at store)

2. Gather and crack hickory nuts and make candy with them or eat as a snack.

G. Meat and Fish
Many pioneers depended upon wild game and fish for some years until they could afford to get pigs for pork. Sometimes they ate nothing but the wild turkey, deer, and bear until a crop had matured and they would have corn. Some buffalo were left in early 1800's before 1810. Elk were seen occasionally. Every bit of animal were used including the skins. Up until 1840, a hunter could kill eight to ten deer in a day. After 1840, deer gradually disappeared. Black bears were hunted for meat and grease. They were so plentiful that early settlers could not raise pigs. Squirrels were considered pests and were not eaten. Rabbits were few for the large animals ate them.

Ruffled grouse and wild turkeys were plentiful. Quail were plentiful and prairie hen were in Indiana until late 1800's. Fish of many kinds were in abundance in Indiana's many lakes and streams and provided meals when larger game was not ready or available.

1. List the kinds of wild meat we can still hunt today.

2. Explain why buffalo are not longer plentiful.
Worksheet 9

Word Bank for Word Search of Foods Found in Indiana

potatoes  walnuts
corn      pecans
beans     butternuts
leather britches  pinon
sunflowers  sassafras
squash     spearmint
pumpkin    peppermint
wild grapes maple sugar
buffalo  ginseng
der  cattails
elk      popcorn
bears
rabbits
quail
turkeys
grouse
squirrels
sweet potatoes
cranberries
blueberries
blackberries
raspberries
haw
paw paw
persimmons
hickory nuts
acorns

Words may go             X              and              |
Worksheet 1
1. Most Europeans ate bread, milk and cheese with some fruit according to climate and season.
2. Answers will vary.
3. The Incas, (1) cultivated plants, (2) installed irrigation systems (3) terraced hillsides and (4) rotated crops.

Worksheet 2
A. 1. T  5. F
   2. F  6. T
   3. T  7. T
   4. T
B. Answers will vary.

Worksheet 3
1. Aztec - Mexico
2. explorers - corn (or squash)
3. Maize - corn
4. squash

Worksheet 4
1. pinto  4. kidney
2. navy  5. lima
3. black-eye

2. 1. Easy to grow
   2. Seeds light and easy to carry with them
   3. Could be eaten while green
   4. Could be dried and easily stored for winter and seed.
   5. They were nutritious and filling

Worksheet 5
Write story or even make a "Pioneer" book.

Worksheet 6
Evaluation used as extra credit or not graded.

Worksheet 7
Simply check to see which children did and opinion or do one with them.

Worksheet 8 - Evaluation
Did they participate?
Did they finish?
Make Your Own Family Tree

Your grandmother (mom's mother) (name before married)

Your grandfather (mom's father)

Your grandmother (dad's mother) (name before married)

Your grandfather (dad's father)

Your mother (name before married)

Your sisters

Your name

Draw your picture or paste your photo here.

Your Dad

Your brothers
BIBLIOGRAPHY


A well compiled book of recipes used by Rebecca Boone


This book tells of the foods brought to be used as medicine by the colonists.


This is a fascinating book going way back to before Columbus. It tells of the research into the foods.


This is a wonderful book for children to read to themselves or have read to them. It takes one year of a pioneer's life and tells about it from a young boy's viewpoint.


This book gives examples of the substitutions made for better known foods. It also tells of the many available fruits in the Wabash Valley.

MacMillan, *Instant Activities Program*. Holidays (p. 66-67) 6 Sommercial St., Hicksville, N.Y. 11801

This booklet from MacMillan Reading Program has some good pioneer type things to do and explanations.


Madison talks about the importance of corn to the Indiana farmer and pioneer. It was the staple item for both animals and people.

Schaeffer, Elizabeth, *Dandelions, Pokeweed, and Goosefoot, How the early settlers used plants for food, medicine and in the home*. Young Scott Books, Addison Wesley Publishing Co., Inc. Reading, Massachusetts, 1867, 1972

This book tells us of the many plants brought or found that were used by the settlers. Many foods were used we don't think of today.
Veale Suggestions

1. Make projects depicting life in pioneer days. (May be helped by family). optional)
2. Make foods - corn bread, Johnny cake, persimmon pudding, etc. and eat in class.
3. Make maps of Indiana showing three divisions or main rivers and towns.
4. Have "Pioneer Day"
   1. Children dress "old fashion" as much as possible.
   2. Pretend you are in "one room" school and do without electricity, go to "outhouse" and get drinks at the "well". Do lessons orally and chalkboard.
   3. Have spelling bee.
   5. Invite parents and grandparents in for afternoon and ask them to bring antiques to share stories about.
   6. Use any retired teachers (if possible, grandparents) to tell about first school they taught.
   7. Make family history tree