Unit Title:  Creating Culture through Food: A Study of Traditional Argentine Foods

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Subject Area: Writing and Language, Social Studies

Topic: Food and culture

Grade Level: 1st, 2nd, 3rd (Lower Elementary)

Time Frame: 4 days of 45-minute lessons on Argentine food, nutrition and culture

Cooking: 3 days of cooking and 1 day to put together the cookbook
*The cooking lessons will require more time and resources. Also the cookbook may require going through a rough draft and final copy that can occur after the lessons themselves are completed. That can be done at the teachers’ discretion.

Brief Summary:

This unit will focus on helping students understand the role of nutrition and food in defining a culture by studying Argentine nutrition and food. The first four lessons will focus on comparing nutritional guidelines, evaluating food, and a discussion about meal times in both the United States and Argentina. The students will then embark on a series of three lessons that each focus on a traditional Argentine food. The students will cook the food, create a nutritional analysis, learn about the history of that food, and then write food reviews. The students will ultimately make a cookbook with the recipes, pictures, nutritional analysis, and their own food review.

Established Goals are taken from the Common Core Standards for Grade 2:

Research to Build and Present Knowledge
7. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g. read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations)
8. Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Speaking and Listening Standards
1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about Grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups
   A. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions
B. Build on others’ talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.
C. Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion
2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
3. Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

Enduring Understandings:

- The student will understand the differences in nutrition standards between the U.S. and Argentina.
- The students will understand the role that food plays in the Argentina culture.
- The students will gain insight into specific Argentine foods that they cook.

Essential Questions:

- What types of local food are grown and eaten in Argentina?
- What types of foods do Argentines eat? How do these foods compare to the foods we eat?
- What are the similarities and differences in nutritional guidelines between the U.S. and Argentina?
- How do food and meal times help define Argentine culture?

Performance Tasks:

- Assessment will be ongoing and formative as students participate in various activities and answer questions.
- The final cookbook serves as a project-based assessment of student learning based on food reviews, recipes, and nutritional analyses.
Lesson 1: Comparing Nutritional Guidelines

Objectives
- By the end of the lesson, students will be familiar with the nutritional guidelines for both Argentina and the United States.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast the nutritional guidelines from both countries.
- Students will create a poster of both Argentina’s and the United States’ nutritional guidelines, along with a Venn Diagram comparing the two.

Materials
- Poster size Venn Diagram
- A picture of the nutritional guidelines for Argentina
- The Spanish and English words for the Argentina nutritional guidelines
- A sample poster that shows both sets of nutritional guidelines

Learning Activities
- Gather students to the meeting area and ask them what they know about nutrition and what foods are good/bad for you. Accept all ideas. Ask if anybody has heard of “My Plate.”
- Show the visual of “My Plate” and solicit any observations from students. Ask them to discuss why some areas of the plate are bigger and why certain food groups are on the plate.
- Explain that in Argentina they also have a “My Plate” that helps them eat healthier. Show the Argentine version of “My Plate.”
- Ask students to look closer at the pictures and try to use the clues to figure out what the food groups in Argentina are. Label the groups in English and Spanish.
- Ask them to discuss why some areas of the plate are bigger and why certain food groups are on the plate.
- Draw or put up a Venn Diagram. Ask students if they have seen one before and explain that it is used to compare and contrast two things, in this case the nutritional plates of two countries.
- Solicit ideas to fill in the Venn Diagram. Only put 3–4 items in each circle.
- Show students your model poster and explain that they are going to make their own poster of these two plates to be used in future lessons. Have students understand your expectations, as well as how to make a Venn Diagram, before they leave the meeting area.
- Give students 20–30 minutes to work.
Closure
- Bring students back to the meeting area and ask them to add anything to your group Venn Diagram. Leave the diagram up in a visual place for the next few lessons.

Extension
- Have students write the food groups for both countries in English and Spanish.
- Encourage students to look at their own food and think about both sets of nutritional guidelines.
Nutritional Guidelines for Argentina:
Lesson 2: Looking at Traditional Meals

Objectives

- Students will be able to evaluate their own meals by using the nutritional guidelines for both Argentina and the United States.
- Students will look at pictures of typical Argentine meals and evaluate their nutritional value by comparing the meals to both sets of nutritional guidelines.
- Students will be work in groups to put the meals from both countries into a blank graphic organizer of the nutritional guidelines from both countries.
- Students will come to a conclusion about which country creates healthier meals based on both sets of nutritional guidelines.

Materials

- Pictures of three traditional American meals (example: cereal for breakfast; peanut butter and jelly, fruit, and a snack for lunch; pasta and salad for dinner)
- Pictures of three traditional Argentine meals
- Blank templates of nutritional guidelines
- “My plate” (http://www.choosemyplate.gov/global_nav/media_resources.html)
- Blank Argentine guidelines are at the end of this lesson
- Chart paper with blank templates

Learning Activities

- Gather students to the meeting area and ask them to list things that they had for breakfast that morning. Show a picture of a breakfast they may have had.
- Model putting the components of the breakfast into the “My Plate” nutritional guidelines.
- Have students help you put the components of the breakfast into the Argentine nutritional guidelines.
- Break students into groups of 2–3 and pass out pictures of typical lunches and dinners for the United States.
- Have students use blank copies of the nutritional guidelines for both countries to evaluate the healthiness of these meals.

Closure

- Bring students back to the meeting area and have the groups share their results.
- Have the students brainstorm which meals they think are healthiest and why. Post the three healthiest meals by student vote.

Extension

- Students can evaluate the food that they eat on a daily basis.
- Students can take blank nutritional guidelines home and evaluate the foods that they eat at home.
Blank Argentine Nutrition Chart:
Lesson 3: Evaluate Meals from Argentina

Objectives
- The students will be able to evaluate independently the healthiness of Argentine foods by looking at pictures and filling out blank nutritional guidelines.
- Students will focus on food from Argentina and more traditional Argentine meals (e.g., empanadas, pastas, steak).

Materials
- Pictures of traditional Argentine foods
- Blank copies of the nutritional guidelines for the United States and Argentina
- Chart paper

Learning Activities
- Gather students in the meeting area and ask them to recap what was learned in the previous lesson.
- Show students a picture of a traditional Argentine meal and model putting the components of the meal in both sets of nutritional guidelines.
- If students seem comfortable with the procedure, have them model how to do it on your chart paper.
- Give each student their own photograph of food from Argentina and their own copy of the blank nutritional guidelines for both countries.
- Have them follow the procedure you modeled at their individual seats. This is a good opportunity to see which students are understanding that foods from different countries have different nutritional values.

Closure
- Gather students and invite them to share their results with the class or in small groups.
- Ask students to use what they have learned in the past two days to come to a conclusion about the healthiness of foods.

Extension
- Students can share their knowledge at home and continue to talk to their families and friends about looking at meals through the eyes of nutritional guidelines.
Three Traditional Argentine Meals:

Beef Empanadas
Shrimp with vegetable risotto and milanesa
Salad with mushrooms, roasted red peppers, and olive oil
Locro
Lesson 4: Meal times

Objectives
- Students will be able to tell what time of day they eat their three main meals and compare these to the times of day that Argentines eat.
- Students will speculate why the Argentines have a different eating schedule than we do.
- Students will be able to complete individually a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting meal times from the United States and Argentina.

Materials
- Information about the times of day that Argentines eat
- Chart paper, one side labeled United States and the other Argentina
- Blank Venn Diagrams (one for each student)
- Two blank daily schedule with time in hour increments

Learning Activities
- Gather students in the meeting area. Display the blank schedule.
- Ask students to help you fill it in, making sure to highlight the meal times.
- Bring the students’ attention to the meal times and ask them to brainstorm why meals are spaced out that way. Write their ideas under the United States side of the chart paper.
- Bring out the second schedule and have students watch as you fill it in based on Argentine meal times (there is a sample schedule for this at the end of this lesson).
- Have students brainstorm what they notice on the Argentine side of the chart paper. Also solicit ideas for why their meals are spaced out so differently than ours.
- Hand out Venn Diagrams and ask students to fill in 2–3 points for each part about the similarities and differences in meal times between the two countries. You can decide to have them do this individually or in small groups.

Closure
- Invite students back to the meeting area and ask them to help you fill in a chart paper Venn Diagram about their discoveries. Have them continue to brainstorm about the differences in meal times and try to come to a conclusion about which culture has more appropriate meal times.

Extension
- Students can take a blank schedule home and fill it out based on their personal meal schedules.
- Students can share their knowledge with parents and discuss why their family has meals at certain times.
## United States Daily Schedule

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**Argentine Daily Schedule**

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**Argentine Daily Schedule (Filled In)**

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**Cooking Lessons:**

The following lessons require planning ahead to acquire the ingredients and resources needed to cook the food. The lessons can easily be adjusted with one of the following options:

- Do the cooking at home (or ask parent volunteers) and have students taste the food and complete the cookbook in class.
- Choose to cook less than the three recipes/lessons provided here, even choosing one can provide an appropriate learning experience.
- Adjust the expectations of the cookbook, students can simply write a recipe and draw a picture or any other combination of the requirements.
Lesson 5: Empanadas

Objectives
- The students will be able to understand the history of empanadas and the differences in empanada fillings.
- The students will make black bean empanadas.
- The students will be able to evaluate the empanadas based on both Argentina’s and the United States’ nutritional guidelines.
- The students will be able to write a food review of empanadas based on their opinion after tasting the food.

Materials
- All the ingredients and tools required by the recipe at the end of this lesson
  *Note: I find it VERY helpful to make the filling ahead of time and have the students just fill the empanadas, the lesson is written as if this were done.
- Chart paper with the steps of making empanadas listed
- If possible, parent or community volunteers to help the students
- Blank paper
- Blank copies of nutritional guidelines provided in lesson 2
- Copies of the recipe and history provided at the end of this lesson

Learning Activities
- Gather the students to the meeting area and ask them to review what they have learned about nutrition in both the United States and Argentina. Refer to their posters or any charts you have made to help them.
- Explain that today they are going to make one of the most popular foods in Argentina, the empanada. Share the history of empanadas that is written at the end of this lesson and have students share any thoughts.
- Refer to the chart paper and go through the steps to have students fill and fold the empanadas. There are several management tips for this lesson:
  - Divide the class into small groups and have adult volunteers each take a group
  - Have students remain in the meeting place and do it as a class
  - Have students divided into small groups with a small print out of the directions and ingredients pre-laid out at each table
- Bake the empanadas as directed. While the empanadas are baking, have students complete a nutritional analysis for both countries.
- Give students blank templates of each nutritional plate or have them draw their own. As a class, put the various components of the black bean empanadas in the food plates of both Argentina and the United States. Have students discuss how they could add components, such as dairy, to the meal.
- When the empanadas are done, have students taste them and write a few sentences on their opinion of the taste. If needed, model how this is done and then send students out to create their own food review. An example of a student food review is provided at the end of this lesson.
Closure

- Call students back to the meeting area. Have them share their food reviews and any observations on how to add nutritional components to the meal.
- Have students put a copy of the recipe and history, their food review, and their nutritional analyses in a safe place. These will form the basis for their cookbook at the end of this unit.

Extensions

- Provide the recipe for students to try at home. Students can also experiment with different fillings and think if this changes the nutritional value of empanadas.
- Each lesson includes history, pictures, converting a recipe, cooking and ending with a nutritional analysis based on both the U.S. and Argentine nutritional guidelines.
Black Bean Empanada Recipe

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
1 can black beans, drained and rinsed  
½ can chopped green chilis  
1 small chopped onion  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 tablespoon salsa  
1 egg, beaten  
Pre-bought empanada dough

Directions:

1. Heat the vegetable oil in a skillet over medium heat.  
2. Add the garlic and onion for about 5 minutes.  
3. Add black beans, salsa and chillies, stir and cook for about 15 more minutes.  
4. Prepare your empanada dough by placing it on a plate. Put a little bit of filling on half the dough.  
5. Fold the bottom half of the dough up until the edges meet and seal with your fingers by pressing down. The empanada should have a half-moon shape.  
6. Place empanadas on a greased cookie sheet.  
7. Lightly brush empanada with egg, for a shiny, golden shell.  
8. Bake in 400 degree oven for 12–15 minutes.
History of Empanadas

The most typical dish in Argentina, after the asado, is the glorious empanada, a must at all parties. The word empanada is often translated as turnover, but the word empanada should be used, because it has become a true Argentine creation. The original recipe came from Spain, brought by Andalusians who had been in contact with the Arabs. The habit of putting a filling into a piece of bread or any other similar dough is common to many cultures, but in Argentina empanadas have become a national dish.

These crisp and dripping empanadas have a characteristic recipe in each province, one can even say that each family has its own secrets which are carefully passed on from mother to daughter.

Empanadas of the Northwest have potatoes in their filling (in Jujuy they even add peas), and in the wine region, the cooks add raisins. In La Rioja they add olives, in Tucuman they are smaller and sometimes filled with chicken and many vegetables; in Catamarca they are spicy and in Cordoba they are sweeter and larger; in San Juan they are flavoured with lots of condiments and in Mendoza they have more onion than meat. In Patagonia, empanadas are made of lamb, shrimp, or hare meat, in Corrientes and Santiago del Estero they sometimes fill them with vizcacha meat. In the Northeast, wheat flour is sometimes mixed with manioc flour.


Example Food Reviews:

I didn’t like it. I did not like the black beans or the dough.

Um…I kind of like the outside but I don’t really like the inside. It’s kind of good but I don’t really like it.

I liked the filling. It reminded me of the dinners my mom makes. The dough was not good though.
Lesson 6: Alfajores

Objectives:
- The students will be able to understand the history of alfajores.
- The students will make alfajores.
- The students will be able to evaluate the alfajores based on both Argentina’s and the United States’ nutritional guidelines.
- The students will be able to write a food review of alfajores based on their opinion after tasting the food.

Materials:
- All the ingredients and tools required by the recipe at the end of this lesson
  * Note: You can choose to make the dough ahead of time or to start the dough in the morning, it has to be in the refrigerator for a couple hours before making. I had the students make the dough in the morning and this lesson is written as if the dough was already prepared for the students.
- Chart paper with the steps of making alfajores listed
- If possible, parent or community volunteers to help the students
- Blank copies of nutritional guidelines provided in Lesson 2
- Copies of the recipe and history provided at the end of this lesson
- You will need to buy or make dulce de leche. It can be found at any Hispanic Foods Store or made. I have provided a recipe for making it at the end of this lesson.

Learning Activities:
- Gather the students to the meeting area and ask them to review what they have learned about nutrition in both the United States and Argentina. Ask them to recall making the empanadas and what they learned. Refer to their posters or any charts you have made to help them.
- Explain that today they are going to make another one of the most popular foods in Argentina, alfajores. Share the history of alfajores that is written at the end of this lesson and have students share any thoughts.
- Refer to the chart paper and go through the steps to have students make the alfajores. There are several management tips for this lesson:
  - Divide the class into small groups and have adult volunteers each take a group.
  - Have students remain in the meeting place and do it as a class.
  - Have students divided into small groups with a small print out of the directions and ingredients pre-laid out at each table.
- Bake the alfajores as directed. While the alfajores are baking, have students complete a nutritional analysis for both countries.
- Give students blank templates of each nutritional plate or have them draw their own. As a class, put the various components of the alfajores in the food plates of both Argentina and the United States. Have students discuss how they could add components such as dairy to the meal.
• When the alfajores are done, have students taste them and write a few sentences on their opinion of the taste. If needed, model how this is done and then send students out to create their own food review.

Closure:
• Call students back to the meeting area. Have them share their food reviews and any observations on how to add nutritional components to the meal.
• Have students put a copy of the recipe and history, their food review, and their nutritional analyses in a safe place. These will form the basis for their cookbook at the end of this unit.

Extension:
• Provide the recipe for students to try at home.
• Each lesson includes history, pictures, converting a recipe, cooking and ending with a nutritional analysis based on both the U.S. and Argentine nutritional guidelines.
Receta para Alfajores - Recipe for Alfajores (Carmel Sandwich Cookies)

1 3/4 cups flour
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 pound butter (1 stick) at room temperature
1 teaspoon lemon zest (optional)
4 egg yolks, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 recipe for dulce de leche (or one jar of it)

Combine flour, salt, sugar and baking soda in a bowl. Cut the butter in with two knives, and then mix by hand until well incorporated. Work in the lemon zest and then mix in the egg yolks and vanilla. Shape the dough into 2 balls and chill for 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. On a floured work surface, roll out each ball of dough to a thickness of 1/4 inch. Cut into 2-inch rounds and transfer to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake for 15 minutes or until done. The cookies will be dry but not brown.

When the cookies are cool, spread a spoonful of dulce de leche in one cookie and top it with another. Press together gently.
**Dulce de Leche**

1 can of sweetened condensed milk

The following three methods all begin with a can of sweetened condensed milk:

1. Oven: This is my favorite way to make it because it gives a smooth creamy texture with minimal work. Empty the contents of a can into an oven-proof dish; sprinkle with some kosher salt and tightly cover it with foil.

Place the covered dish in a larger roasting or casserole pan and fill it up with water until it reaches three quarters of the up the covered dish to create a water bath. Bake at 425 degrees F for 60-90 minutes checking every 30 minutes on the water level and adding more as needed.

Dulce de leche is ready when it takes on a brown and caramel-like appearance. Remove from the oven and whisk to smoothness. Let cool before storing.

2. Stovetop: This method takes the longest, but it allows for the most control over the consistency. Remove label from can. Pierce three holes in the formation of a triangle on top of can (this is critical to release the pressure from the heat or else the can may explode.) Place the can in a sauce pan and fill the sauce pan with water three-quarters of the way up the side of the can.

Bring water to a simmer and keep it there for 3-4 hours or until desired consistency. For a thicker more syrup-like texture cook closer to 4 hours. When ready, use tongs to remove can allow to cool slightly and pour dulce de leche in a bowl and whisk to smoothness. Let cool before storing.

3. Microwave: The fastest way, but I found it to yield a less smooth texture than the other two methods.

Empty contents of can in a microwave safe dish and loosely cover with plastic wrap. Cook it on medium in two minute increments stirring between each increment (be careful of any steam as you lift the plastic wrap) up to 10 minutes for thinner pouring consistency, or up to 13-15 minutes for a thicker, syrup-like consistency. Let cool before storing.

**History of Alfajores**
The word *alfajor* is of Arab origin, *alfahua* means honeycomb. In Argentina alfajores are two circular pieces of pastry stuck to each other with fig or peach jam, and more often than not, with dulce de leche. It is a sort of biscuit sandwich.


These delicious cookies can trace their origin back to the Moorish occupation of Andalusia, Spain and the great culinary traditions of the Mediterranean Basin. As per some Spanish culinary experts, the cookies were first composed of dried fruit preserves rolled in carefully prepared dough then rolled in an assortment of nuts or sugar. With time each region of the Americas adapted the Spanish Alfajor and made it their own.

The recipe can be traced to the late 1800s to what is now Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

Source: DianasDesserts.com
Lesson 7: Mate

Objectives:
- The students will be able to understand the history of mate.
- The students will experience drinking mate (one does not necessarily make mate as it is tea leaves).
- The students will be able to evaluate the mate based on both Argentina’s and the United States’ nutritional guidelines.
- The students will be able to write a drink review of mate based on their opinion after tasting the drink.

Materials:
- A mate cup, bombilla (mate straw) and tea leaves, hot water
- Chart paper with the steps of making mate
- If possible, parent or community volunteers to help the students
- Blank copies of nutritional guidelines provided in Lesson 2
- Copies of the recipe and history provided at the end of this lesson

Learning Activities:
- Gather the students to the meeting area and ask them to review what they have learned about nutrition in both the United States and Argentina. Ask them to recall making the empanadas and alfajores and what they learned. Refer to their posters or any charts you have made to help them.
- Explain that today they are going to experience drinking the most popular drink in Argentina, mate. Share the history of mate and have students share any insights.
- Refer to the chart paper and go through the steps to have students make the mate.
- Model making the mate and have students pass around the cup as you help them refill with hot water.
- Once all students have tasted the mate, discuss whether or not they think it has any nutritional value.
- You can choose to have students fill out the blank nutritional guidelines but it is not necessary for this lesson.
- Have students write a drink review for the mate. If needed, model how this is done and then send students out to create their own food review.

Closure:
- Call students back to the meeting area. Have them share their drink reviews.
- Have students put a copy of the recipe and history, their food review, and their nutritional analyses in a safe place. These will form the basis for their cookbook at the end of this unit.

Extension:
- Provide the recipe for students to try at home.
Each lesson includes history, pictures, converting a recipe, cooking and ending with a nutritional analysis based on both the U.S. and Argentine nutritional guidelines.
Steps to Make Mate

1. Obtain a gourd and bombilla.
2. Pack the dry, loose mate into the gourd just over half full.
3. Insert the bombilla into the gourd. Put it in the bottom and against the wall.
4. Pour hot water (not boiling) over the leaves until just covered.
5. Sip from the bombilla. Sip because it will be HOT.

Source: www.wikihow.com
Information on Mate

Mate, Argentina’s national drink, is drunk not only by Argentine people but many people in the rest of the world who are learning to enjoy it.

Mate is an excellent beverage. It not only simulates the nervous system and circulation, but it is an excellent regulator of the digestive system as well.

Yerba Mate has an important beneficial action on those portions of the brain responsible for the memory and it helps recovery from mental fatigue.

Lesson 8: Putting the Cookbook Together

Objectives:
- The students will put together a cookbook of their work from the past three lessons.
- The students will use the papers they have already prepared to create a Table of Contents, Introduction (Welcome), and the pages in their cookbook.
- The students will share their cookbook with families, friends, and the community.

Materials:
- Blank paper for the students
- Hole punch and yarn or stapler to put the books together
- Blank chart paper

Learning Activities:
- Gather students to the meeting area, invite them to bring the work they have already done towards the cookbook.
- Have students look through their work and create a Table of Contents together. For example: welcome, empanadas, alfajores, mate. If students want to be more detailed in their Table of Contents, they are welcome to be.
- Explain what a Welcome Page is and model creating one.
- Send students off to write their Table of Contents and Welcome. Then have them put their pages in order based on the Table of Contents.
- Once you have checked each students’ order and pages, invite them to staple or hole punch the cookbook together.

Closure:
- Bring students back to the meeting area. Invite them to share their cookbooks with friends.
- Ask students to brainstorm what they have learned from these lessons and which foods they would enjoy if they were to take a trip to Argentina.

Extension:
- If you want, you can host a celebration for students to share their work. They can make more empanadas and alfajores to share and celebrate their accomplishments with the unit.