Fulbright-Hays Curriculum Project: Argentina, 2011 Food Tradition and Culture in Argentina

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Grade Level and Subject Area: Middle School Social Studies

Social Studies Topic Areas: Geography & Topography; Environmental Studies; Food Traditions & Culture

Unit Summary

This is a one–two week unit (5 lessons) for grade 6. It can easily be included within a larger unit about food traditions around the world, or introduced as a part of a larger unit on South America. In this series of lessons, students will first learn about the topography of Argentina and the role the land has played in the history of the country and its agricultural industry. Next, students will see how the agricultural and livestock industry is reflected in the Argentine national history and diet. In the third segment of the unit, students will learn about two cultural elements that are unique to Argentina's landscape, history, and diet (the *gaucho* and *yerba mate*). Finally, students will compare a typical Argentine diet to their own diets, in order to highlight some of the differences found in Argentine cuisine.

Essential Questions:

- 1. How are geography and landscape connected to culture?
- 2. How is Argentine culture different from/similar to the culture of the USA?
- 3. How do differences in diet reflect the national cultures of Argentina and the USA?

Unit Goals

1. Students will gain an understanding of Argentina's basic geography, interact with a topographical map, and learn the terminology to describe the different landscapes of Argentina.

- 2. Students will explore the relationship of topography, agriculture, diet, and culture.
- 3. Students will learn about the importance of livestock in the history of Argentina, and also understand some of the environmental challenges that are a result of this industry.
- 4. Students will be introduced to the history of Argentina by learning about several cultural elements related to food and diet (the beef industry, the *gaucho*, and *yerba mate*).
- 5. Students will explore cultural differences by comparing their own diets to a typical Argentine diet.

Lesson Summary

Lesson 1: Geography of Argentina

 Students will learn about the geography of Argentina by either color coding in an outline map of the country (quick lesson) or creating a 3-D map out of clay (longer lesson).

Lesson 2: Agriculture in Argentina

 Students will learn about agricultural production in Argentina, particularly the rise of the cattle industry and its importance to Argentine history and economy.

Lesson 3: El Gaucho

• Students will learn about the history of the *gaucho* in Argentina and its relationship to agriculture and the cattle industry.

Lesson 4: Yerba Mate

• Students will learn about *yerba mate* and its importance in Argentina. Students will read a folktale about the origin of *mate*, and learn about its history. Students will try *mate*, if available, as part of this lesson.

Lesson 5: American vs. Argentine Diets

• Students will analyze a typical Argentine diet as well as their own diets, in order to make nutritional and cultural comparisons. If possible, students will sample a few popular Argentine dishes.

Lesson 1: The Geography of Argentina

Lesson Objective: Students will learn about the geography of Argentina in preparation for lessons on agriculture, food, and culture.

- 1. Introduce Argentina to students by reviewing a map of South America.* Point out the location and size of Argentina, as well as the neighboring countries (Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile). Inform students that Argentina is the second largest nation in South America, and the eighth largest country in the world in terms of total land area (1,068,296 square miles/2,766,890 square kilometers).
 - *If the countries of South America are not easily identifiable to the students, the teacher may want to ask students first to label a map of all of the countries in South America, before focusing on Argentina.
- 2. Math extension question: The USA is 3.79 million square miles/9.83 million square kilometers. How large is Argentina in comparison to the USA?
 - Depending on time and skill level, the teacher may want students to determine the exact mathematical ratio. (Quick answer: Argentina is approximately ¼ the size of the USA.)
- 3. Students will identify the various landscapes of Argentina by color coding each area with the dominant landscapes: the Andes, the pampas, the North, Patagonia, etc. A good map resource to use is: http://www.enchantedlearning.com. This website has many blank outline maps of all regions of the world, complete and ready-to-go for students.
- 4. Students will identify the following locations and terms as they are labeling their maps.

Important Places	Bodies of Water	Bordering and Nearby
Andes Mountains	Atlantic Ocean	Countries, Islands, etc.
Patagonia	Pacific Ocean	Brazil
Pampas	Paraná River	Bolivia
Puna	Rio de la Plata	Cape Horn
Mesopotamia	Strait of Magellan	Chile
Buenos Aires		Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)
Mt. Aconcagua		Paraguay
Ushuaia		Uruguay
Tierra del Fuego		
Iguazu Falls		

- 5. Once students color code their maps, make sure that they also label them in order to differentiate the various regions.
- 6. Class research or student homework activity: Students work individually or in pairs to research five facts about one of the "Important Places" or "Bodies of Water" from the list (note: the teacher can assign students more than one area (or all geographic areas) to research, depending on the size of the class and time available). As presenters share their research facts with the class, students will take notes on the attached geography worksheet (teacher notes are also included). The teacher can decide whether it's appropriate to test students on this material at a later date.
- 7. Final group discussion question: After students have labeled their maps and presented their research about the different regions of Argentina, ask students to brainstorm how Argentina's changing landscape might affect the people living in each location. Record student opinions on the board and then discuss as a whole class.

Map Extension Activity

Students can gain a hands-on understanding of Argentina's landscape by creating a 3-D topographical map of colored modeling clay.

Materials needed: colored, quick-drying modeling clay; a board to use as a base (at least one square foot); a topographical map of Argentina; toothpicks; and paper.

Directions: After tracing an outline map of Argentina onto the base surface, students will use clay to represent the important topographical features of Argentina, such as the Andes Mountains, Patagonia, Pampas, etc. (see list on next page). Once students have completed their 3-D model, they will label each topographical area using a "flag" made of toothpicks and paper.

Student Worksheet: The Geography of Argentina

Directions: Locate each area listed below on your map. Be sure to color code each geographic area and label each landmark. (If you are making the 3-D map, write each term below on a small, about one inch square, piece of paper. Tape each paper square to a toothpick to create a "flag" that you can use to label each of the regions on your 3-D map).

*Save this sheet so that you can write any notes about each geographic area during the student presentations.

Bodies of Water:

Atlantic Ocean

Pacific Ocean

Paraná River

Rio de la Plata

Strait of Magellan

Bordering and Nearby Countries, Islands, etc.:

Brazil

Bolivia

Cape Horn

Chile

Paraguay

Uruguay

Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)

Important Places/Geographical Areas

Andes Mountains

Patagonia

Pampas

Mesopotamia

Puna

Buenos Aires

Mt. Aconcagua

Ushuaia

Tierra del Fuego

Iguazu Falls

Teacher Notes: The Geography of Argentina

Bodies of Water

Paraná River - 3,998km long, flows from Brazil to Argentina. It's the world's 13th-longest river and the second longest in South America (the Amazon is the longest).

Rio de la Plata - "River of Silver" or "River Plate": This is one of the world's great river systems. It rivals the Amazon, Nile, and Mississippi in terms of length, width, and flow.

Strait of Magellan - the sea channel located at the southern tip of South America. It was "discovered" by Ferdinand Magellan in 1520.

Bordering and Nearby Countries, Islands, etc.

Cape Horn - from Dutch "Kaap Hoorn," it's the southernmost headland of Tierra del Fuego

Falkland Islands (*Islas Malvinas***) -** islands owned by Britain, though disputed by Argentina.

Important Places/Geographical Areas

Andes Mountains - dominant mountain chain in South America. Average height is 13,000ft/4,000m.

Patagonia - from Spanish "*patagones*" or "big feet." This area is sparsely populated steppe (cold, dry grasslands).

Pampas - Quechua for "level plain." This flat, fertile land that is the center of the country's agricultural output.

Mesopotamia - "the land between the rivers," the northern fertile areas bordering Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Puna - "high steppe" or *altiplano* region. This is the dry, high altitude area in the northwest. It is generally a dry, grassy area with pasture land for sheep, llamas, guanacos, and vicuñas.

Buenos Aires - Spanish for "Fair Winds," the capital of Argentina, and the second largest city in South America. The greater BA population is approximately 15 million.

Mt. Aconcagua - highest peak in both southern and western hemispheres (22,835ft/6,962 meters)

Ushuaia - southernmost town in the world.

Tierra del Fuego - "Land of Fire," a series of islands that comprise the southernmost part of Argentina.

Iguazu Falls - Guarani language meaning "Great Water," it's the largest waterfall in South America, includes over 275 individual falls, and extends over 2 miles (3km).

Lesson 2: Agriculture in Argentina

Lesson Objective: Students will build upon their knowledge of the Argentine landscape in Lesson #1 to learn about the development of the agricultural industry of Argentina. Students will explore the connection between the USA and Argentina in the following fields: geography, agriculture, economy, and diet.

- 1. Begin by directing students to take out their color coded (or 3-D) maps of Argentina. Ask students to look at the maps and then, with a partner, think about which types of food might be grown or raised in the various regions: Andes Mountains, the Pampas, Mesopotamia, and Patagonia.
- 2. After students have finished making their initial lists, review the following facts:
 - According to the Argentine Ministry of Economy, about 10% of Argentina is cultivated, and about half of that land is used for raising livestock.
 - About 10% of Argentina's GDP is earned from agriculture (down from 20% in the first half of the 20th century).
 - Beef is one of Argentina's most important exports.
 - Argentina's populace is one of the world's highest beef consumers (per capita).
 - Argentina's top five agricultural products: soybeans, maize, sugar cane, wheat, sunflower seed (for oil).
- 3. For this jigsaw activity, students will focus on the beef industry. In groups 4–5, students will research one of the following five sets of questions (note: if the class is large, the teacher may have more than one group research each set). After the research is completed, each group will present their findings to the class. Students will take notes during each presentation so that each student has a personal set of notes for all five sets of questions.

Student Research Questions: Agriculture in Argentina

Research Question #1: What kind of landscape is best suited for raising cattle? What is the difference between "grass fed" beef and "grain fed" beef? In what ways are these two methods similar? How are they different? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each method? After completing your research, does your group feel that one method is superior to the other? Why or why not?

Research Question #2: How are cattle typically raised in the USA? Your group should provide a clear overview of the process, and include at least five research facts from each person in your group.

Research Question #3: How are cattle typically raised in the Argentina? Your group should provide a clear overview of the process, and include at least five research facts from each person in your group.

Research Question #4: What are the environmental effects of raising cattle? Are the USA and/or Argentina facing any of these environmental problems? You must research and describe at least five issues during your presentation.

Research Question #5: What are the health benefits of eating beef? Are there any health risks? If so, what are they? Your group should research both the benefits and risks and be ready to present your findings to the class.

Lesson 3: *El Gaucho*

Lesson Objective: Students will compare the *gaucho* in Argentina to the American cowboy. They will learn some of the historic and cultural characteristics of *gaucho* culture.

Note: It is recommended that students have two different colored writing utensils for this activity.

- 1. Discuss with students what they know about American cowboys. What words and images come to mind? Keep a running list on the board.
- 2. Direct students to draw a large Venn Diagram on their papers. Over one circle, write the title "American Cowboy." Over the second circle, title it "Argentine *Gaucho*."
- 3. Using one of their colored writing utensils, students write in one half of the Venn Diagram what they know about American cowboys, cowboy culture, etc. They may refer back to the class discussion notes in step #1, if necessary.
- 4. Using the same writing utensil, students now brainstorm what they know about Argentine *gauchos* in the second half of the Venn Diagram (this may be a much shorter list)
- 5. To introduce students to the concept of the *gaucho*, the teacher can present one or more of the following:
 - A) A picture of a typical gaucho (use Internet or printed sources)
 - B) A video of modern gauchos in Argentina (National Geographic has an interesting 2 minute clip, or the teacher may prefer other video images. There are numerous videos available on YouTube.)
 - C) A cartoon video "El Gaucho Goofy" by Disney Classics (1943). This 8-minute video is easily found on YouTube and is interesting as a cultural and historical artifact, since it portrays both cowboys and *gauchos* of an

- earlier time period. Students can discuss the information learned from the cartoon, as well as the cultural generalizations and stereotypes of the time period.
- 6. As homework, or for an in-class activity, students will conduct independent research to complete the worksheet about American cowboys and Argentine *gauchos*.
- 7. After finishing the worksheet, students will add their research facts (using a different colored writing utensil) to each circle of the Venn Diagram.
- 8. Next, as a class, students share their research and complete the final section of the Venn Diagram, which is the section that highlights shared characteristics found in both cowboy and *gaucho* culture.
- 9. Discussion: What surprising facts did students learn during their research? Overall, do cowboys and *gauchos* have more cultural similarities or differences?

Student Worksheet: The American Cowboy

1. Describe the linguistic history of the word "cowboy."

2. What are five common characteristics of cowboys in the 1800s and early 1900s?

3. What clothing and tools are typical of a cowboy? What is the purpose of each of these elements?

4. Describe at least one way that cowboys of today are similar to and different from their predecessors in earlier times.

Student Worksheet: The Argentine Gaucho

1. Describe the linguistic history of the word *gaucho*.

2. What are five common characteristics of *gauchos* in the 1800s and early 1900s?

3. What clothing and tools are typical of a *gaucho*? What is the purpose of each of these elements?

4. Describe at least one way that *gauchos* of today are similar to and different from their predecessors in earlier times.

Teacher Notes: The American Cowboy

1. Describe the linguistic history of the word "cowboy."

"Cowboy" is an English translation of the Spanish word *vaquero*, which is a man who works with cows (*vaca* = cow). The term first appeared in English in the 1700s, although the concept of a herder (cowherd or shepherd) had been in use for centuries. The term may originally have referred to only a boy, and then expanded to include the modern cowboy, which became more prevalent in the 1800s. Early on, it was at times considered an insult to be called a cowboy. However, today the word cowboy has a positive connotation that includes both horse showmanship and various ranch related work. The cowboy is also an icon of the American west, and is a symbol of Manifest Destiny.

2. What are five common characteristics of cowboys in the 1800s and early 1900s?

The American cowboy began as a derivative of the Spanish *vaquero* tradition, as Spanish settlers moved into the north. As more cattle were raised, the land needed for grazing increased. Cowboys often lived with their herds, roaming the American west. They often carried their supplies with them, and many did not have families, or live in permanent communities. Cowboys needed to be well versed in horseback riding, since the horse was essential to the day-to-day existence of the cowboy. Cowboys branded their herds in "roundups," which were the origins of the "rodeos" of modern times.

3. What clothing and tools are typical of a cowboy? What is the purpose of each of these elements?

A cowboy might wear the following: jeans, bandanna, chaps, cowboy hat, cowboy boots, and gloves. His tools might include: a gun, a knife, a lariat (lasso), spurs, and all the equipment for his horse.

4. Describe at least one way that cowboys of today are similar to and different from their predecessors in earlier times?

Cowboys today still work with horses, cattle, and animals. They learn many of the same skills that earlier cowboys used. Today's cowboys are less nomadic, living settled lives with families and in permanent communities. Today there are both working cowboys, and others who may adopt the image. Today there are also rodeo performances, where cowboys show their skills to an audience, often solely for entertainment purposes.

Teacher Notes: The Argentine Gaucho

1. Describe the linguistic history of the word *gaucho*.

The word *gaucho* has several possible origins. It may be derived from Quechua word "huachu" (orphan) or the indigenous Mapuche word "cauchu" (vagabond). The word appeared in Spanish at around the same time as Argentina's independence in 1816.

2. What are five common characteristics of *gauchos* in the 1800s and early 1900s?

Gauchos were often *mestizo* (mixed race). They typically worked on their own or in small groups, living for long periods of time on the open land (*pampas*). Gauchos were great horsemen and outdoorsmen. Their primary job was to herd cattle and bring the herds to market.

3. What clothing and tools are typical of a *gaucho*? What is the purpose of each of these elements?

A *gaucho* typically wore baggy trousers, high boots, a wide brimmed hat, and a poncho (which could be used as a saddle). He prized his *facón*, or knife, as well as his *boledora* (or *bola*). The *bola* consisted of three metal balls wrapped in leather that were connected with leather straps. The *gaucho* would throw the *bola* around the legs of an animal in order to catch it. The typical gaucho outfit would also include a *rebenque* (leather whip), a belt called a *tirador*, and a *chiripá*, or a cloth wrap. In the wintertime, gauchos wore heavy wool ponchos to protect against cold. Nowadays, working gauchos are as likely to be found in overalls and wellington boots as in their traditional dress.

4. Describe at least one way that *gauchos* of today are similar to and different from their predecessors in earlier times.

In the past, *gauchos* were an important part of the agricultural economy and often had a negative reputation for being uncivilized. Today *gauchos*

represent a romantic image of Argentina's past, but they do not have a major presence in modern daily life.		

Lesson 4: Yerba Mate

Lesson Objective: Students will learn about *yerba mate* and its importance in Argentina. Students will read a folktale about the origin of *mate*, and then learn about its history. Students will try *mate*, if available, as part of this lesson.

- 1. The teacher will begin with a class discussion question: *After water, what do you think are the most widely consumed drinks in the world today?*Brainstorm with students what they think are the most widely consumed beverages and why. After students have a chance to discuss the idea, inform students that tea is generally considered the world's second most popular drink.
- 2. Introduce students to *yerba mate* by first explaining that this tea is considered Argentina's most popular drink, and it is found all over the country.
- 3. Students will read the Guarani myth about the origin of *mate*, which illustrates the cultural and historic importance of *mate* in Argentina's history. Various versions of this myth are easily found on the Internet, or in children's books on Argentina (see resource list).
- 4. For homework or as a class activity, students will research briefly about the history of *yerba mate* and record their research on the worksheet included in this lesson.
- 5. As a culmination for this lesson, teacher will provide a sampling of *yerba mate*, if possible, and bring in and/or show pictures of a *mate* drinking gourd and *bombilla* (metal straw). Students will discuss their research facts while sampling mate.

Student Worksheet: Finding Out About Yerba Mate

1. What is the etymological history and translation of <i>yerba mate</i> ?	
2. How did <i>yerba mate</i> become such an important part of Argentine culture?	
3. What are the health benefits of <i>mate</i> ?	

4. How is *mate* consumed? Are there any rituals associated with drinking this beverage?

Teacher Notes: Finding Out About Yerba Mate

1. What is the etymological history and translation of *yerba mate*? *Yerba* = Spanish for "herb"

Mate = Quechua for "cup" or "gourd"

Therefore, *yerba mate* means, "herb cup," which is how *mate* is traditionally prepared.

2. How did *yerba mate* become such an important part of Argentine culture?

Yerba mate was widely used by the indigenous people of Argentina. It is naturally found in the Misiones region, and comes from the young leaves of the Brazilian holly plant. It was adopted by Spanish settlers, since the tea was locally produced and more widely available than imported coffee or tea. Today it is estimated that Argentines drink over 200,000 tons of *yerba mate* a year, and Argentina is one of the world's largest consumers of this tea.

3. What are the health benefits of *mate*?

Yerba mate contains some natural caffeine, and is full of anti-oxidants. Many claim that mate increases mental awareness, improves circulation, provides energy, and improves overall health.

4. How is *mate* consumed? Are there any rituals associated with drinking this beverage?

Mate (the tea) is traditionally prepared in a gourd (*mate*) and then drunk through a straw called a "*bombilla*." The straw has a filter to keep the tea free from leaves. The *yerba mate* bowl or gourd can be ornately decorated, and Argentines take great pride in this tradition. Typically *yerba mate* is a shared activity, and the *mate* is passed from person to person.

Lesson 5: American vs. Argentine Diets

Lesson Objective: Students will analyze a typical Argentine diet as well as their own diets, in order to make nutritional and cultural comparisons.

- 1. Begin the lesson by showing students a menu from an Argentine restaurant. If possible, obtain printed menus from a local Argentine restaurant; if none are available, sample menus are easily available online from many restaurants and/or cookbooks. A printable menu (PDF) is available from Buenos Aires Cafe (Austin, TX) at www.buenosairescafe.com.
- 2. Direct students to list any unfamiliar words or dishes that they find on the menu. Use Spanish dictionaries and/or Argentine guidebooks, if necessary, to look up any unusual terms. As students analyze the menu, they should list the five most common food groups that they find.
- 3. Next pass out a blank sheet of 81/2" x 14" piece of paper to students. This will be their "placemat" for their imaginary meal.
- 4. Introduce students to the USDA dietary guidelines by visiting www.choosemyplate.gov. This website helps define the recommended diet for Americans and serves as a basic model for students to design their own "plate."
- 5. Once students have an opportunity to review and discuss the USDA guidelines, students will illustrate a dinner "plate" that represents one of their typical meals.
- 6. After students illustrate and label their "plate," they can use the USDA website to look up the nutritional and caloric results of their choices.
- 7. For comparison, students will draw a second plate (either on the back or their paper, or on a separate sheet), which will contain a "typical" Argentine meal. In order to complete the Argentine plate, students can use the information gathered from menus or Argentine cookbooks and should

be sure to include some cultural foods. The teacher may have students conduct additional research either online or with printed resources. One fact students should consider as they are designing their Argentine plate is that an average Argentine consumes about 190 pounds (86kg) of beef per year!

- 8. Students can use the USDA website to calculate the nutritional and caloric differences between their personal diet and that of a typical Argentine.
- 9. After all students are done illustrating their two plates, the teacher can post the illustrations so that students can see the variety of meals eaten in both the USA and Argentina. The teacher may also wish to have individual students present their two plates. Once the class has had an opportunity to view the variety of plates, the teacher will help students reflect on their observations.

Questions to consider during the reflection activity:

- Do you notice any trends or patterns in the plates from the USA and from Argentina?
- Do you notice any overall differences in the diets of the two countries?
- What are several positive dietary choices you can learn from this activity?

Food Extension Activity:

Students can prepare Argentine foods either at home or at school with the teacher, in order to sample Argentine cuisine.

Some popular Argentine dishes that students may wish to prepare are:

- Chimichurri
- Empandas
- Dulce de leche/alfajores (cookies)
- *Medialuna* (croissants)
- Asado (grilled meat)
- Pasta (sorrentinos, ravioles, etc.)

Resources

Children's Reference Books

Argentina: A Portrait of the County Through its Festivals and Traditions. Grolier Publishing, Danbury CT, 2004. ISBN 0-7172-5789-4. This book focuses on festivals, but also has a version of the legend of *yerba mate*).

Blashfield, Jean F., <u>Argentina</u>, Children's Press (Scholastic), New York, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0-516-24872-1

Caro Gofen, Ethel & Jermyn, Leslie, <u>Argentina: Cultures of the World</u>, Marshall Cavendish Corporation, Tarrytown, NY, 2002. ISBN 0-7614-1358-8

Videos

"Gauchos" (2 minute video), National Geographic Society, http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/places/regions-places/south-america/argentina_gauchos.html

"El Gaucho Goofy" (7 minute video), Walt Disney Productions (You Tube video clip), original publication in 1943.

Websites

USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), www.choosemyplate.com

"A to Z Kids Stuff: Argentina," http://www.atozkidsstuff.com/argentina.html

"National Geographic Kids: Argentina," http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/places/find/argentina/

"Travelsur," http://www.travelsur.net/gauchos.htm
For more information on *gauchos*.

"Zone Latina," http://www.zonalatina.com/Zldata109.htm
For more information on *mate*.

"Argentina's Travel Guide," http://argentinastravel.com/190/drinking-mate-with-the-argentines/

For more information on mate.

"Guayaki Yerba Mate Company," http://guayaki.com/mate/1894/Legends-of-Yerba-Mate-Origins.html

This site has a good version of the legend of the *yerba mate*.

"Beef," Anup Shah, <u>Global Issues: Social, Political, Economic, and Environmental Issues That Affect Us All,</u> http://www.globalissues.org/article/240/beef

A good source for information about the beef industry and its impact on the environment.