



Louisiana Gumbo Secondary



Historic Homes • Gardens • Artifacts • Costumed Crafts People
Boat Tours • Gift Shop • Restaurant



Standards

Standards as developed by the Louisiana Department of Education. Available online at <http://www.vermilionville.org/vermilionville/educate/lesson-plans>.

Grade 8

Social Studies

Physical and Human Systems

- **GLE #12:** Describe the causes and effects of cultural diffusion and the effects of cultural diversity in Louisiana (G-1C-M5)

Environment and Society

- **GLE #16:** Analyze the distribution and uses of Louisiana's natural resources (G-1D-M3)

Louisiana History

- **GLE #71:** Describe major early explorers and explorations significant to Louisiana or early settlers in Louisiana (H-1D-M1)
- **GLE #74:** Describe the causes and effects of various migrations into Louisiana (H-1D-M1)
- **GLE #75:** Describe the contributions of ethnic groups significant in Louisiana history (H-1D-M1)
- **GLE #81:** Explain cultural elements that have shaped Louisiana's heritage (e.g., festivals, music, dance, food, languages) (H-1D-M6)

Objectives

1. Students will identify different contributions made to Louisiana cooking by the Acadian, Creole, and Native American cultures through ingredients used in preparing gumbo.
2. Students will interview a family cook, collect their recipe, and document the process.
3. Students will discern between food storage, preparation, and sourcing in the 19th century and today.
4. Students will collaborate to create a multicultural cookbook.
5. Students will plant a garden consisting of vegetables and ingredients with various cultural origins found in Louisiana gumbo.

Additional Information

Gumbo is creolization. The word itself has possible origins from both African and Native American tribes. In western Africa, the word for okra is *gombo* and in Choctaw the word for filé is *kombo*. Families across the state still make this dish based off of the availability of ingredients and their culture. More often than not a blend of ingredients from different cultures are used to make the dish, which reflects our blending of cultures that are found in Louisiana today.



Gumbo ingredients by culture:

Acadian

Tasso – Spicy, smoked pork shoulder butt.

“Holy Trinity” – Onions, celery, and bell peppers. Likely originates from the traditional French *mirepoix*, in which carrots replace celery. *Mirepoix* and the “Holy Trinity” are used as the base for soups, stews, stocks, and sauces.

Roux – Used in classical French cooking as the base in three of the “mother sauces” (*béchamel*, *velouté*, and *espagnole*). In Louisiana, roux is traditionally made with equal parts bacon fat or lard and flour.

Native American

Filé – Ground sassafras leaves. The Choctaw of the Southeast used ground sassafras leaves as a seasoning and thickener. A possible origin of the word gumbo may come from the Choctaw word for filé – *kombo*.

Sweet potatoes – Sweet potatoes have been cultivated by Native Americans for possibly over 4,000 years. Commercial production of sweet potatoes originated in St. Landry Parish near Sunset, Louisiana. In this area, baked sweet potatoes are still a popular side dish to a bowl of gumbo. The Sweet Potato is Louisiana’s state vegetable.

Creole

Tomatoes – Tomatoes are more commonly found in gumbos made in Southeast Louisiana (near New Orleans) and usually accompany okra in the dish. The Creole Tomato plant is Louisiana’s state vegetable plant.

Okra – Okra, or *gombo* as it is known in Africa, is a flowering plant that produces seeded pods. Okra, along with being flavorful, acts as a thickening agent for gumbo. Some forms of gumbo actually use okra rather than roux to achieve a similar consistency.

Leafy greens – Mustard greens, collards, turnip & even taro are sometimes used in gumbo by Creoles. A popular variation on gumbo called *gombo z’herbes* is made during lent when eating meat is not allowed and is made with greens rather than proteins. The Caribbean dish *callaloo* that originates in Africa is a similar dish made with taro or elephant ears.

Pre-Visit Activity

Materials needed: Document #1 and Document #2

Teachers. We have made two introduction documents available to you on our website – a word document as well as a PowerPoint with pictures depicting the cultures that we represent. Please take some time to review these two documents with your class prior to your visit here. You can access them [here](#), by clicking on

- Introduction to Vermilionville and
- Vermilionville PowerPoint

In a class discussion, ask students if their families have an important dish they prepare? For example, is there a certain dish that is only made for special occasions or holidays? Is this dish unique in any way? Who prepares this dish and where does the recipe come from?

Explain to the class that food traditions are ways in which we identify ourselves and preserve culture. Louisiana is a cultural melting pot, meaning several cultures come together to create a new one. Observing foodways is one way to peel back the different culture layers. Gumbo can be seen as a dish that represents the coming together



of cultures to form a unique identity. Using the information above on cultural ingredients used to make a gumbo explain to students where these ingredients originate and how they contribute to Louisiana's culture.

Tell students they will be interviewing a cook in their family, perhaps the cook that makes that one special dish for important occasions. Students will also document the preparation of a dish by that family member and record the recipe with instructions. Instruct students to keep this project in mind while continuing with this lesson.

You Are What You Eat

Print and cut out ingredients from document #1 (print enough so each student can have one of each ingredient). Have students use their pots (document #2 – one per student) and fill it up with ingredients that they use in their family gumbo. Once each student has filled their pot, lead a discussion regarding what ingredients they chose and why. Explain the origins of the ingredients and what areas may be more likely to use some than others (seafood rather than chicken and sausage).

Anchor Lesson

Vermilionville offers examples of early methods of cooking and food storage. Detached kitchens were extremely common during the early days of Louisiana. In a time without air conditioning, detaching the kitchen was a way of keeping the home cool and also creating a safeguard from fires as cooking was done over an open fire hearth. At Vermilionville, two examples of detached kitchens can be found: behind Maison Mouton and Maison Broussard. Have students examine the interiors of these kitchens. What looks familiar? What's missing?

Food storage was handled differently before the advent of the refrigerator. Early Acadians used a *garde manger* to store goods. An example of a *garde manger* can be found in both detached kitchens. In Maison Boucvalt, a more modern method of food preservation can be found – an ice box. Also, note the ice order card in the front left window on the home. This was used to signal to the ice delivery person that more was needed and the number of pounds desired.

Native Americans handled food preparation a different way. Fish and meat would have been either cured with salt or left outdoors to dry. Grains would have been stored in clay pots or woven baskets wrapped securely to keep out animals.



Detached kitchen behind Maison Mouton



Garde manger





Open hearth with Dutch ovens



Detached kitchen behind Maison Broussard



Can you guess what this box, located in the Maison Broussard kitchen, was used for?
(French bread loaves)



Post-Visit Activity

Recipe collection and interview

Have each student interview a cook from their family.

Some key questions to ask during this interview are: When do you make this dish? Where did this recipe come from (friend, relative, cookbook)? Are there any ingredients used in this recipe that are associated with a particular culture? Students should develop a number of questions on their own that they feel are important to ask.

Once all interviews and collections are done, create an online cookbook with Google Drive where students can add their recipes and begin a tradition of having a School Culture Cookbook.

Gumbo Garden

Suggest students start a Gumbo Garden by planting ingredients they commonly use in their gumbo. Some plant ingredients can easily be obtained by simply planting the bottoms of green onions or yellow onions and drying out seeds to plant during appropriate seasons.

Evaluation

With the information obtained through the family recipe collection and interview, have students write a short essay explaining how the recipe would be prepared 200 years ago. Would the ingredients be the same? How may have it been prepared? How would the ingredients be obtained?

Differentiation of Instruction

Tactile learners will benefit by assisting with the preparation of the recipe during the family recipe collection and interview.



Document #1





