

Cultural Differences in the Diet of American and Japanese Families

Purpose:

Students will learn to appreciate cultural diversity by comparing diets in Japan and the United States.

Target Grade Levels: 3-8

Essential Questions:

1. How does the Japanese diet compare to the diet of an American student?
2. What has caused the Japanese diet to change, especially with young people?

Objective:

Students will gain knowledge and understanding of the difference between American and Japanese students' diets.

Materials:

- Venn Diagram on board or overhead
- Blank student copy of Venn Diagram
- Pictures of chain restaurants in Japan (Handout A)
- Map to locate Japan (available at: <http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/>)
- Paper
- Crayons or markers

Activities:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking the students the following questions: "Do the Japanese eat different food than do Americans?" "What are some of the different foods?" Have the students discuss their thought on these questions.
2. List on the Venn Diagram some typical (traditional) Japanese foods, which might be included in a Japanese meal.
 - a. rice, seafood, vegetables, miso soup, tofu, soba (noodles), green tea
 - b. Discuss meaning of "traditional".

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- c. Discuss why these foods would have been common in the past in Japan.
(grown in Japan, cost too high to import American foods, land too small to grow a lot of different crops, easy accessibility to fishing in the ocean)
 - d. Discuss what geography might have to do with the Japanese diet.
 - e. Point out the location of Japan on a map---point out the ocean surrounding most of Japan.
3. List on the Venn Diagram some typical (traditional) American foods.
- a. Steak, roast beef, potatoes, vegetables, milk
 - b. Discuss how these became part of the American diet
4. In the middle of the Venn Diagram, list the foods that are in both Japanese and American diets.
- a. Hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, French fries, milkshakes, soda, ice cream
 - b. Discuss why these foods have become popular. (American influence, media influence, international influences, cheaper, faster to eat, like the taste)
 - c. Discuss where the ingredients for most of these foods come from. (The United States)
 - d. From what countries might Japan import these foods? (United States, Europe)
5. Discuss why eating habits change in any country over a period of time.
6. Discuss how older Japanese people might react to these changes.
7. List some restaurant chains, which have opened or may open restaurants in Japan as a result of these changes. (McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Wendy's, Mister Donut)

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8. Share pictures of some American chain restaurants in Japan and Japanese food (Handout A).

Assessment:

Class discussion, Venn Diagram, students could make a picture and label showing a typical Japanese meal and a typical American meal, students could look up types of food eaten by Japanese students, on the internet, and groups of students could prepare a collage of both “traditional” foods and “contemporary” foods eaten in Japan. These items could be shared in class and discussed further by the class.

Grade Adaptation:

This lesson should be appropriate for third through eighth grade. The activities presented could be adjusted for the appropriate grade level.

Relationship to Social Studies Standards:

Grade 3, People in Societies, Grade-level Indicator 1

Compare some of the cultural practices and products of various groups of people who have lived in the local community including:
(a) artistic expression, (b) religion, (c) language, (d) food.

Grades 6-8, People in Societies, Benchmark A

Compare cultural practices, products and perspectives of past civilizations in order to understand commonality and diversity of cultures.

This lesson was originally developed by Lewis E. Miller, teacher, Tiffin City Schools and was revised by Mary Ellen King, teacher, High Street Primary School, Piqua City Schools.

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Handout A



Typical School
Lunch in Japan.

Japanese Food
Displays in Window
of Restaurant.



Mister Donut
in Tokyo.

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McDonald's
Entrance.



McDonald's
Menu Selection.



McDonald's Meal—
Big Mac, fries,
chicken nuggets,
drink.



Photos by Mary Ellen King, teacher, High Street Primary School, Piqua City Schools.