

LEVEL: PRIMARY

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TASTE SOME HAITIAN FOODS

OBJECTIVE

To acquaint students with Haiti's basic foods and Haitian meal patterns, and to have them make and try some Haitian dishes.

INPUT

Haitian families usually eat two meals a day. A breakfast is served between 7 and 8 a.m. It is substantial—boiled plantain or spaghetti with a creole sauce made from tomatoes, green peppers, onions and spices. Ideally the sauce also contains some protein—herring, goat liver or some other fish, poultry or meat.

A main meal, served around 3 p.m., consists of cooked grain (sorghum, ground corn or rice) and beans with a vegetable sauce. If the family can afford meat, they will have it at this meal.

Between meals and at bedtime, bread makes a quick snack. If peanuts are grown in the area, children may put peanut butter on their bread. Children also snack on fruits if they can find them. Mangos grow plentifully in Haiti and become a staple for rural children during the dry spring season when other foods are unavailable.

Another popular snack is sugar cane. A child may even carry a stalk of sugar cane to school to eat during break. Often the stalk is taller than the child carrying it! Sugar cane may seem like a food that is hard on the teeth. Surprise! It's actually good for the choppers! The sugar cane juice is dilute and does not stick to the teeth. Further, the sugar cane fiber, which the child chews to extract the sweet juice, is one of nature's best toothbrushes!

Whenever they get a little money, children also like to buy hard candies or fried fitters, called *marinads*, in the market.

Two common songs of grace sung before meals are below.

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Make and serve some Haitian foods:

1. Simple Snacks
 - a. Bread (*pen*) and peanut butter (*mamba*)
 - b. Fruit—mango, pineapple, oranges, grapefruit, melons of many varieties.
2. Special banana fritters, called *benye* (ben YEAH), are fried around Mardi Gras or Carnival time, right before Lent begins.
3. Haitian Bean Sauce or *Sòs Pwa* (sohss PWAH)

This thick bean gravy is eaten over cornmeal porridge from tin bowls in poor families' homes, and over rice in fancy Haitian restaurants. Haitians mash, mix and strain the beans several times to remove all the hulls for a smooth sauce. When farmers host *konbits*, or cooperative work parties, they serve *Sòs Pwa*.

LE-A RIVE...



Le-a ri—ve, Man—je pa—re. Me—si Bon Dye ki bay man—je. A—men.
Translation: The hour has arrived, the food is ready. Thanks to God who gives us food. Amen.

MANJE SA-A...



Man—je sa-a ou vo-ye bay nou-a Pa-pa— Man—je— ki bay la-vie.
Translation: This food you send us Father. Food that gives us life.

BENYE

Combine in a medium-sized bowl:

- 3 ripe bananas, mashed (1 to 1-1/2 cups mashed banana)
- 1 cup milk
- 1 egg, beaten
- 3 teaspoons vanilla

Add to the banana-milk mixture and beat well:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/4 cup sugar (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Heat oil the recommended amount of time or until 350 degrees in a deep-fat fryer. Dip out about 1/4 cup batter (a metal soup ladle works well) and gently pour it, all at once and quickly but smoothly (so that hot oil doesn't splatter) into the hot oil.

Turn when brown on bottom (should take 2 to 3 minutes), using a slotted spoon, and let other side brown. Remove from oil and drain on paper towels. May sprinkle with granulated or powdered sugar. Makes about 12 fritters, each the size of a small potato.

Note to teacher:

Deep-fat frying in an open pot on the stove with a group of children is not recommended. An appliance designed for deep-fat frying (with a short cord) is a safer alternative. Children should stand back from the pot; it's a good idea to post an adult who knows how to deep-fat fry at the appliance. Children old enough to try their hand at frying should be instructed to gently lower or pour batter into pot, not drop it.

SÒS PWA

In large saucepan, sort and soak overnight or by quick method*:

- 1 1/2 cups dried red, black or white beans, pigeon peas, or a mixture of beans
- water to cover

Before cooking add:

- 3 cloves garlic, diced or mashed
- 8 whole cloves or 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 cup onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon oil

Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer until beans are tender. Drain off liquid and reserve. Remove 1/2 cup cooked beans and reserve.

Puree in blender:

- cooked bean mixture
- 2 cups bean broth

Return pureed sauce and reserved whole beans to saucepan.

Add:

- 1 hot chili pepper, chopped, or 1/4 teaspoon ground red pepper
- salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon margarine

Bring to a boil and simmer, uncovered, until thickened to gravy consistency. Serve over rice or thick cornmeal mush (recipe below).

* Quick Method: Bring beans to a boil for two minutes and soak one hour before cooking. Cook beans in soaking water.

CORNMEAL MUSH

Boil in large soup pot:

- 6 cups water

Mix in bowl:

- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup water

Stir until smooth, then add to boiling water. Simmer 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add, about 1/2 cup at a time:

- 2 1/4 to 2 1/2 cups additional cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon salt (optional)

After each 1/2 cup of cornmeal, stir well with wooden spoon until all dry particles disappear and all lumps are smoothed. Continue stirring vigorously a few more minutes until mush is stiff enough to handle easily without dripping off spoon. Remove from heat, cover and let stand 10 minutes. The longer it sits, the stiffer it becomes. Stir again before serving.

Serve by spooning cornmeal mush into bowl with bean sauce on top. Garnish with slices of avocado or lemon.

(These recipes and explanation are taken from *Extending the Table...A World Community Cookbook* by Joetta Handrich Schlabach and Kristina Mast Burnett. Scottsdale, Pa., Waterloo, Ont.: Herald Press. 1991. Pages 170, 151.)