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LESSON 5: DIET AT WEST POINT AND TODAY

SUBJECTS

Social Studies, History, Washington State, Archaeology, Health, Nutrition

DURATION

30 to 45 minutes

CLASS SIZE

10 to 30 students

OVERVIEW

This lesson examines what archaeologists learned about the traditional diet of the people of West Point and the methods of food preparation used at the site. Students can compare the diet and food preparation methods of the people of West Point to their diets and how we prepare food today.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine what archaeologists learned about the foods eaten at West Point and the methods used to prepare these foods
- To compare the traditional diet and food preparation methods of the people of West Point to our diet and methods of preparing food today

VOCABULARY

Diet – the usual food and drink of a person or animal.

BACKGROUND

The people of West Point had a wealth of resources available to incorporate into their diet. During the earliest period of occupation, people utilized the broadest range of resources and had quite a varied diet. Foods such as mussels, dogwinkles, clams, cockles, flatfish, herring, sculpin, salmon, freshwater fish, seal, deer, wapiti, elderberries, goosefoot seeds, and bitter cherries were all part of the traditional diet. Most of these foods were eaten immediately rather than prepared for storage. Meat, fish, and shellfish were probably prepared by cooking over fire hearths, in pits, or by steaming on heated rocks.

Gradually, the people of West Point became more focused on a smaller variety of resources. The importance of salmon in the diet increased dramatically. Clams also became a very important food. Other foods in their diet were flatfish,

sculpin, perch, cockles, dogwinkles, mussels, barnacles, rabbit, beaver, and mountain beaver. There are some indications that the people at West Point processed salmon for storage as well as for immediate consumption. Archaeological features also indicate that clam drying took place at the site. An abundance of hardwood remains such as alder and maple suggest that cooking techniques such as smoking and curing were used to prepare clams and salmon. Some clams were also prepared using a steaming technique. As time passed, the people of West Point became increasingly focused on the preparation and drying of clams for winter storage. Other foods such as flatfish, ratfish, sculpin, and mussels were eaten fresh but not prepared for storage at West Point.

PROCEDURE

1. Using their knowledge of the natural resources available at West Point, ask the students to make a list of the foods that people at West Point could have eaten.
2. Then ask the students to make a list of the foods that they eat everyday.
3. Compare these lists and discuss the differences between the traditional diet of the people of West Point and our diets today.
4. Ask the students to make a list of the way the people at West Point cooked and prepared their foods such as drying, smoking, and steaming.
5. Then ask the students to make a list of the way they cook their food today or how food is cooked before it is purchased such as frying, grilling, and baking.
6. Compare the techniques used for cooking in the past to the ways we cook food today.
7. Consider the nutritional differences between the foods eaten in the past versus the foods eaten today.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Conduct a cookout on the beach or another appropriate place utilizing traditional foods and cooking techniques.
2. Invite people from the community or elders to show the students how to cook traditional recipes.
3. Have students ask their family for recipes using traditional foods. Collect these recipes and compile a traditional foods cookbook.
4. Try using traditional cooking techniques such as steaming, boiling, baking or fire roasting to prepare a meal.

REFERENCES

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United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, 1981.

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WA, 1995.

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Network, 1996.

RECIPES

(Recipes from *A'una Games and Recipes from Daybreak Star*)

These recipes use traditional foods and some utilize traditional cooking techniques. Try these recipes or talk to people in the community or elders to find other recipes that use traditional foods and cooking techniques.

HUCKLEBERRY FRITTERS

Ingredients:

1 pound fresh huckleberries (or blueberries)
4 cups flour
4-5 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup honey
3 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
5 eggs

Directions:

Sift together the flour, baking powder, and add sugar. Beat the eggs slightly. Add milk to eggs and stir. Mix wet ingredients into dry ingredients. Stir in the huckleberries. Heat oil in a skillet. Drop batter into the skillet by tablespoons. Let cook until brown around edges then flip. Place on paper towel to drain excess oil. Serve warm.

SALMON AND SCRAMBLED EGGS

Ingredients:

6 eggs
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 tablespoon minced chives
2 tablespoons butter/margarine
1/2 pound sliced smoked salmon, cut into thin strips

Directions:

Beat the eggs until foamy. Add pepper and stir in the minced chives. Melt the butter or margarine in a skillet. Pour in the egg mixture. Put in the smoked salmon. Cook over low heat and stir occasionally until the eggs are soft-cooked. Makes 6 servings.

FISH HEAD SOUP

Ingredients:

4 salmon heads
10 medium sized potatoes, diced
1 large onion, chopped
salt and pepper
water to fill pot

Directions:

To make the soup, first dice the potatoes and chop the onions. Wash the fish heads and put them into a soup pot with water, potatoes and onions. Add salt and pepper to your own taste. Bring this to a boil and cook until the potatoes are done.

RABBIT STEW

Ingredients:

1 rabbit, seasoned and cut into pieces
1/4 cup vinegar
1/2 cup celery
3 cups tomato juice
2 onions, diced
2 tablespoons flour
2 large potatoes, cubed
2 large carrots, chopped
salt and pepper

Directions:

Clean and wash rabbit. Season with salt and pepper. Cut rabbit into serving size pieces. Put rabbit into pot with all ingredients except potatoes and carrots. Bring to boil and simmer until tender. Add potatoes and carrots and simmer one more hour.