# The Columbian Exchange of Old and New World Foods (Grades 6-8)

## Grade Level

6 - 8

## Purpose

Students explore New World and Old World food origins to discover how the Columbian Exchange altered people's lives worldwide. Grades 6-8

## Estimated Time

12 hours

## Materials Needed

**Activity 1: My Lunch—A Guided Inquiry into Old World and New World Foods**

- World Map (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/map_template.pdf)
- Where in the World Food Cards (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/where_in_world_foodcards.pdf)*, 1 set of laminated cards per group of 3-4 students
  - Answer Key (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/12/01/foodcards_answerkey.pdf)

*The World Fabric Map (https://agclassroomstore.com/world-fabric-map/) and Where in the World Food Cards (https://agclassroomstore.com/where-in-the-world-food-cards/) are available for purchase from agclassroomstore.com.

**Activity 2: Where in the World**

- Projector/computer combo
- Food, Land, and People and World Civilizations (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/world_civilizations.ppt) slide deck

**Activity 3: Facts About Food**

- Projector/computer combo
- Computers for students
- PowerPoint, VoiceThread (http://voicethread.com/), or posterboard for student presentations
- Food Origin Research Project rubric (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/researchproject_rubric.pdf)
- Foodtimeline.org (http://www.foodtimeline.org/) website

# Essential Files

- World Map Template (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/map_template.pdf)

# Vocabulary

**center of origin:** geographic region where a plant first appeared or developed its distinctive properties

**Columbian Exchange:** a widespread exchange of animals, plants, culture, human populations, communicable disease, and ideas between the New World (Americas) and the Old World (Africa and Europe)

**New World:** a term referring to the foods and culture originating in the Americas

**Old World:** a term referring to the foods and culture originating in Europe, Africa, or Asia

# Did You Know?

- Chocolate is a New World food made from the beans of the cocoa tree.[1]
- The scientific name of the cocoa tree (*Theobroma cacao*) means "food of the gods."[1]
- Olives are an Old World fruit. Green and black olives can come from the same tree, green olives are just less ripe.[2]

# Background Agricultural Connections

Prior to the rise of agriculture, people were hunters and gatherers. After the domestication of plants and animals, people were able to cultivate their own food. Still, the only food available was what they grew or what they could catch; they couldn't just go to the grocery store and buy whatever was on the shelf. In 1492, when Christopher Columbus came to America, he saw plants and animals that he had never seen before. He took them back to Europe with him. Columbus's trips were the beginning of an exciting time in the history of food. People would be able to taste different foods; foods with flavors, shapes, and textures they had never experienced before!

The **Columbian Exchange** refers to the transfer of animals, plants, ideas, diseases, and more that occurred during the two centuries following Columbus's arrival in the Americas. Global trade and cultural exchanges significantly altered the lives of people around the world, starting with one of their most basic needs—food.

It is estimated that nearly two-thirds of the foods consumed today originated in the **New World** (the Americas). Prior to the Columbian Exchange, these foods were unkown to Europeans. Foods that originated in Europe, Africa, or Asia are **Old World** foods. For example, mountainous Central Asia is the **center of origin** of apples, making them an Old World food. Central Asia is where the first wild apples grew and where apples were first domesticated by people. Today the wild ancestors of domestic apples still grow in Central Asia, and this is where the greatest genetic diversity in apples can be found.

People all over the world are constantly producing, processing, manufacturing, and transporting food. People all over the world are eating, gardening, hunting, shopping for food, and preparing food to be eaten. Everyone must eat to survive, but people in different regions of the world eat very differently from each other. Consider how and why geographic location affects what people eat. What plants and animals live in the area? What kinds of transportation are available to the area? Can planes, ships, or trucks deliver food that was grown in another part of the world?

Consider the foods you've eaten this week. Where did they originally come from? Where are they grown today? What percentage of what you consumed came from the New World? Would people from other parts of the world eat the things you eat or reject them because they are new and look different?

# Engage

1. Create a poll using polleverywhere.com (https://www.polleverywhere.com/). Students may respond using computers, cell phones, or any mobile digital device. Ask the simple question: "What is an Old World food?"
    a. A food with an origin in Asia, Africa, or Europe.
    b. A food that would be consumed by Neanderthals.
    c. A food with an origin in the Americas.
2. At the beginning of class, review students' answers and share the background information concerning the Columbian Exchange. Ask:
    - Does what people eat depend on where they live?

- Does what they eat correlate with what plants and animals live in that area?
- Has this trend changed in recent years?

# Explore and Explain

### Activity 1: My Lunch—A Guided Inquiry into Old World and New World Foods

1. Divide the class into small groups of three or four. Ask students to list the things they had for lunch the previous day. Instruct them to be more specific than "pizza" by listing the basic ingredients of pizza—tomatoes, cheese, bread, sausage, etc.
2. Explain to students that they are going to explore the origins of their lunch and other foods by participating in a mapping activity. Pass out one world map per group. A fabric map is suggested (see Materials), but a large paper map (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/map_template.pdf) can work.
3. Next, pass out one laminated set of Where in the World Food Cards (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/where_in_world_foodcards.pdf) to each group.
4. Starting with the food cards that were ingredients in their lunches, have students place each food card on the map in the location where they think the food originated from.
5. When all the groups have finished, ask them if they think they got all of the cards right. Then ask each group to share where they placed one card and ask if the other groups agree or disagree.

### Activity 2: Where in the World

1. Show and discuss the PowerPoint Food, Land, and People and World Civilizations (https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/world_civilizations.ppt). Instruct students to move any foods that they have in the wrong location, correcting their maps as you go through the slides. Ask each group to keep a tally count of their moves.
2. After going through the PowerPoint, talk about the changes they made. Ask how many moves each group made. Discuss what food would be like if there had been no Columbian Exchange. Would pizza exist as we know it today?

### Activity 3: Facts About Food

1. Explain to the students that you have only introduced a small sample of the foods of the world and that they are now going to get a chance to individually research and present a food.
2. Ask students to pick a food, such as cucumbers or chicken, or assign them one. Have them go to foodtimeline.org (http://www.foodtimeline.org/), and instruct them to use *ctrl + f* to search for their food product.
3. As part of the research project, ask students to create either a 10-slide PowerPoint, a poster, or a 10-picture VoiceThread (http://voicethread.com/) about their food to present to the class. Use the Food Origin Research Project

(https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/2015/11/19/researchproject_rubric.pdf) rubric to guide students in preparing their presentations.

# Elaborate

- Expand your discussion about the origins of food by exploring herbs and spices. These flavorings were part of the Columbian Exchange historically, but also continue to be derived from all over the world. Use the lesson Herbs and Spices of the World (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/lesson/114/).
- Prepare a taste test of foods from the New World and the Old World, such as chocolate, bread, or fruits.
- Show clips of Guns, Germs, and Steel (https://agclassroom.orghttps://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/557/).
- Dissect a typical meal in the United States, exploring the origins of the meal's contents.
- Hold a discussion on the roles that transportation and infrastructure play in food availability for different countries or different communities in the United States.
- Use a blender to make hummus (http://allrecipes.com/recipe/20797/extra-easy-hummus/), and have a tasting in class, showing students the origin of a simple snack.

# Evaluate

After conducting these activities, review and summarize the following key concepts:

- The production of specific foods can be determined by geography, climate, or culture.
- The production of spices and various foods in specific areas of the world have impacted world trade. The Columbian Exchange is an example.

# Sources


1. https://www.cadbury.com.au/about-chocolate/harvesting-and-processing-cocoa-beans.aspx (https://www.cadbury.com.au/about-chocolate/harvesting-and-processing-cocoa-beans.aspx)
2. http://olivetreegrowers.com/faq.php


# Recommended Companion Resources

- Ancient Recipes - Foods of Bible Times (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/785/)
- Beans to Chocolate (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1304/)

- Chocolate Taste-Testing (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/754/)
- Chocolate: How It's Made (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/430/)
- Eat Happy Project video series (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/822/)
- How Stuff Works: Popcorn (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/485/)
- Magical Sour Cabbage: How Sauerkraut Helped Save the Age of Sail (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/560/)
- Mapped: Where Does Our Food Come From? (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1283/)
- Planet Food Online Game (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/736/)
- Popcorn on the Cob (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/882/)
- Popped Secret: The Mysterious Origin of Corn (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/568/)
- The Book of Chocolate: The Amazing Story of the World's Favorite Candy (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/879/)
- The Food Timeline (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/240/)
- The Story of Food: An Illustrated History of Everything We Eat (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/938/)
- Trading Around the World (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/573/)
- World Fabric Map (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/809/)

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# Organization

Utah Agriculture in the Classroom