Corn Investigation in our Food System

Grade: 5th

Season: Any

IGS Unit: Farms, Food Systems

Essential Questions: What does food tell us about culture? How do we nourish ourselves? How does eating corn affect the world?

Topical Question: How does the modern American system of growing and eating compare to the traditional Mexican system of eating corn?

Objective: Students will explore what “nourish” means, both personally and within our global food system. Students will engage in an investigation of corn in their daily lives. Students will understand the impact that corn has had on our society throughout history.

Materials:
- Cornbread
- Worksheet: What Does Nourish Mean to You?
- Student resources: Uses of Corn and List of Corn Products, Map of US

Introduction

Hook: Ask students, “Raise your hand if you think you eat corn everyday”

Then call out the following items:
- Yoplait or Dannon yogurt
- Pepperidge farm bread
- Special K, Cheerios, Fiber One bars
- Frozen pizza
- Easy Mac
- Soda
- Bottled Salad dressings
- Canned fruit
- Mott’s Applesauce
- Heinz Ketchup
- Jam and jelly
• Canned soups
• Cold cuts
• Hot dogs
• Pancake syrup
• Ice cream
• Cake mix
• Twinkies

• Ask again, “Raise your hand if you think you eat corn everyday”

Lesson:
Ask students, “Why is there corn in so many of the foods we buy?”
  • Discuss how we have lots of big corn farms in the middle our country that produce corn cheaply

Ask students, “What is the difference between a whole food and a processed food?”
  • Discuss how corn is a major ingredient in processed foods. Hand out Uses of Corn, and ask students to identify familiar and unfamiliar items

Discussion topics, based on reading La Tortilleria:
  • How is this system of growing and eating corn different from the traditional Mexican system of growing and eating corn that we read about in the story?
  • What does nourish mean?
  • How is our system of growing and eating corn nourishing? How is the traditional Mexican system of growing and eating corn nourishing? (This could be introduced as a debate)

For our activity today we’re going to think about what the word “nourish” means to us...

Activity:
  • Worksheet: What does nourish mean to you? Draw yourself doing something that makes you feel nourished.
  • Eat cornbread from our corn

Assessment:
  • Share drawings
  • Homework: Using the List of Corn Products, and the Uses of Corn handouts, how many food products at home can you find that have corn in them? (If this hasn’t been done already in Corn: Botany lesson)

Extension:
  • Introduction to Corn: Botany
  • Corn and the Columbian Exchange