History of Corn in Mexico

Grade: 4th grade

Season: Any

IGS Unit: Farms, Food Systems

Essential Questions: What is corn? Where does corn come from? How does eating corn affect the world? What does food tell us about culture?

Objective: Students will understand the process of seed to fork through the lens of corn. Students will explore the transformation of corn over thousands of years, and how it has become the primary crop used in the U.S. today.

Materials:
- Teosinte (photos or artifact)
- Blue corn (photos or artifact)
- Popcorn (photos or artifact)
- Sweet corn (photos or artifact)
- Maps

Introduction:
Break students into small groups. Pass around teosinte, blue corn, popcorn, and picture of sweet corn. Ask students to discuss in groups: What are these things? How do they relate? What are they used for?

Lesson:
We are going to discuss the story of corn, and its deep roots in Mayan and Mexican culture. As we study the culture and history of corn, we are going to be thinking about this question: What does food tell us about culture? And more specifically: What does the Mayan tradition of growing corn tell us about their culture?

• Discuss how teosinte turned into blue corn and popcorn and then into sweet corn.
• Show map for where corn was first grown. Then show how it traveled throughout the US and the world
• Ask students: How could corn have been eaten by the Maya? Do people still prepare corn in the same tradition?

**Extension:**
Lesson: Corn and its routes across the world
Lesson: Corn investigation in our food system
Lesson: Corn and the Columbian Exchange

**Assessment:**
For homework, students complete their grocery store/home kitchen exploration. They must list all of the items they find that contain corn, and in what form.

**Spanish lesson:**
Introduce new vocabulary:
  o Sembrar/semillas: to sow/seeds
  o Tierra: land
  o Moler: to grind
  o Harina: flour
  o Masa: dough
  o Maiz: corn
  o Seasons: El invierno: winter, la primavera: spring, el verano: summer, el otoño: fall
  o Colors: Amarillo: yellow, negro: black, verde: green

Homework: Students write three sentences in Spanish, each using as many of their new vocabulary words as possible to explain what they know or have learned about corn.