

Fantastic Family Feasts: Traditional Meals from History

What does your family eat for holidays or special times? Families everywhere have wonderful feasts and meals they make to celebrate. Let's learn about some fantastic traditional family foods from different cultures and times.

In Ancient Rome, a popular feast food was dormice. Dormice are tiny mice. Romans thought they were yummy to eat. They would fatten up the dormice on nuts. Then they cooked them in sauce or stuffed them with pork. Romans also loved sweet treats like honey cheesecake made with flour, eggs and goat cheese.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, most people ate simple foods like bread, stew, and ale. But noble families in castles had big feasts. Knights ate roast goose, duck, and wild boar from hunts. Huge pies held live birds that flew out when cut. Jesters performed and musicians played lutes to entertain.

In Asia, Lunar New Year is a big holiday. Families get together for huge feasts with symbolic foods. Fish and dumplings mean prosperity for the new year. Noodles represent long life. Red fruits like kumquats mean luck and good fortune. Eating these traditional foods unites families.

Many Native American tribes had feasts after good hunts and harvests. In the Northwest, salmon was a main food. Tribes dried and smoked the fish to last all winter. Corn and squash were also eaten a lot. Pumpkins, beans, berries and nuts added variety to the feasts.

In pioneer days of American history, families worked hard to cook big feasts. Main dishes were venison or rabbit stew. Squash and root vegetables like turnips came from the garden. Cornbread, biscuits and pies provided carbs. Wild berries like huckleberries made a sweet tart dessert. Feasts took all day over a campfire.

The Jewish faith has many traditional holiday foods. At Passover feasts, families eat symbolic items like lamb, bitter herbs, salt water and dip. Challah bread and matzo ball soup are essentials. Favorite treats are hamantaschen cookies shaped like triangles. The foods retell the ancient Jewish story of freedom.

As you can see, traditional family feasts reflect history. The foods use ingredients and crops from a culture. Cooking methods fit the time. And the symbolism passes family tales between generations. So when you eat your next family meal, think about all the history on your plate!

Glossary

- symbolism: when something stands for an idea

- delicacy: a fancy, expensive food that's a treat
- staple: a basic, commonly eaten food that's a major part of the diet
- liberate: to set free from control Here are 6 reading comprehension questions with an answer key for the 3rd grade version of the article:

Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What did Romans think dormice were?
a) Scary b) Yummy to eat c) Cute pets d) Difficult to catch
2. What did jesters do at noble family feasts in the Middle Ages?
a) Play music b) Tell stories c) Perform tricks d) Cook meals
3. What does fish eaten during Lunar New Year feasts represent?
a) Togetherness b) Long life c) Prosperity d) Good luck
4. How did Native American tribes preserve salmon?
a) With salt b) In iceboxes c) By drying and smoking d) In large pots
5. What made cooking pioneer feasts difficult?
a) Few ingredients b) Small kitchens c) Only campfires for cooking
d) Lack of recipes
6. How do traditional holiday foods connect families?
a) Unique ingredients b) Telling family stories c) Fancy cooking methods
d) Huge portions