

## Spices of Mauritius

### Lesson Objective & Summary

**Objective:** Students will identify some of the different cultures that have influenced the cuisine and culinary traditions of Mauritius. Students will also identify some of the ingredients that are important to Mauritian cooking and will have the opportunity to sample some of the spices in Mauritius.

**Summary:** In the first lesson, students will identify spices with which they are familiar. With teacher guidance, students may be able to identify the geographic origins of several spices (e.g.: Indian curry, Mexican vanilla; Middle Eastern saffron). Students will explore the smells, tastes (if appropriate), geographical origins, and visual appearance of selected spices provided by the teacher. Students will then create a “Spice Bank” booklet where they will identify each spice and describe it using creative language.

In the second lesson, students will read the [Delicious Mauritius blog](#) and discuss some of the important facts they notice about Mauritian culinary influences. Students will look at a map of the Spice Route and notice Mauritius’s location as ideal for rest and trade. Students will then watch [Food Finds: Mauritius Edition](#) and try to identify some of the culinary influences of Zoe’s and Kat’s favorite foods from Mauritius. Students will look at the recipes of several Mauritian foods to see if they can identify which culture(s) influenced that particular dish. Finally, students will watch the [Let’s Cook!](#) video.

### Standards & Benchmarks

#### From the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts, Grades 3-5, Writing

- Students will determine the main idea of a text and supporting details.  
(*Reading Standards for Informational Text*)
- Students will integrate information from several different sources to write or speak about a subject knowledgeably. (*Reading Standards for Informational Text*)
- Students will write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly, using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic  
(*Writing: Text Types and Purposes*)

### Background Information for Educators

Mauritian cuisine reflects this island nation’s diverse history and amalgamation of cultures. Mauritius was an important port along the Spice Route, a term which denotes the trade route between Europe and India along which lucrative spices were traded from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onward.

**Grade Level:**  
Upper Elementary

**DURATION:**  
2 - 3 Lessons

**SUBJECTS:**  
English Language Arts,  
Geography, Social Studies

**AUTHOR:**  
Emily Chan

Prior to the development of seafaring exploration, European access to spices from India and Southeast Asia was limited and therefore spices were very costly. North African and Middle Eastern traders predominantly controlled the spice trade prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and would sell spices to European traders at exorbitant prices. However, with improved maritime technology, European traders began journeying around the southern tip of Africa into the Indian Ocean to gain their stake in the spice trade.

The Spanish and Portuguese predominantly sought cloves, while the British and Dutch sought nutmeg from Indonesia. In one noteworthy instance, the British and Dutch signed a treaty to end trade animosity, which gave the Dutch rights to the nutmeg-plentiful island of Run, Indonesia, while it gave the British rights to two colonies, one of which was Manhattan Island (New York City).

Mauritius served as an important port for traders in the Indian Ocean to rest, refuel, trade, and ultimately settle. The present day culinary palette of Mauritians encompasses cooking traditions from India, China, Great Britain, and France, as seen in its abundance of Indian spices (e.g.: curry, coriander, cumin, cinnamon), Chinese stir fries, and French-Creole pastries. Mauritian cooking is perhaps one of the most startling reflections of the diverse influences of Mauritius's multicultural heritage.

Guiding Questions	Key Vocabulary
<p>What are some of the spices with which you are familiar?</p> <p>Why are spices used?</p> <p>Where do some of the spices you use come from?</p> <p>What spices in Mauritian cuisine come from places other than Mauritius? What does this tell you about Mauritian cooking?</p>	<p>Spice Route</p> <p>Cinnamon</p> <p>Curry</p> <p>Cacao</p> <p>Cumin</p> <p>Turmeric</p> <p>Nutmeg</p> <p>Cloves</p>

## Lesson Plan 1

### Teacher Preparation

Provide (or have students bring) small samples of the following spices: cinnamon, curry, nutmeg, cumin, turmeric, mustard seed, and coriander. Provide small spoons or popsicle sticks for students to be able to examine, smell, and taste small samples of each spice.

**Helpful hint:** Have students use the popsicle stick or spoon to place a small amount of the spice on their [clean!] fingers so that spoons/popsicle sticks stay clean.

1. Ask students to identify some of the spices with which they are familiar and create a class list. Ask students to consider why spices are used. Ask students if they know where certain spices come from.
2. Have students examine a map of the world to see if they can identify some of the locations from which certain spices come from. Or, if students have access to tablets or computers, have small groups explore using this map: <http://www.schwartz.co.uk/cooks-guide/herbs-and-spice-map.aspx>
3. Explain that spices were an important trade item between nations. Spices were used to flavor food, but because they were only available in certain places, spices could be very expensive. During the Spice Trade, European traders travelled very far to be able to buy spices to bring back to their native land. In some cases, spices such as nutmeg were so valuable that wars were fought over them.
4. Show students the episode [Spices of Mauritius](#). With a partner, have students summarize what they learned about the different spices found in Mauritius, and any other fun facts they may have learned.
5. Ask students what kinds of description words might be used to explain spices to someone. Work together to create a word bank of adjectives that might be used (i.e.: Texture, Color, Smell, Taste). If desired, use the attached Spices Word Bank student worksheet to guide students.
6. After modeling your expectations, have student groups look at, smell, and taste each of the spices, writing down their observations (color, texture, taste description). You might challenge students to consider what foods or recipes may use these spices.
7. Have students create a "Reference of Spices for Traders" - a list that explains to traders what each spice is, and what it might be used for. Students should try to use their best creative language and descriptions. (e.g.: Curry is a fragrant yellow-brown powder that is usually a mix of several different spices. Curry powder was originally used in India to flavor vegetables and meat in a stew). Students may illustrate their spice banks if desired.

**Teacher's Note:** Some spices may be more difficult to describe or to connect with how they are used. This reference may help: <http://www.thekitchn.com/quick-guide-to-every-herb-and-spice-in-the-cupboard-108770>

## Lesson 2

**Teacher Preparation:** Prior to this lesson, you may want to gather a variety of Mauritian recipes, and print them on small notecards to distribute among student groups. Or, if student groups have their own computer/tablet, you may want to pre-determine which websites students will use to find their Mauritian recipes.

1. Ask students to share with the class what they had for dinner last night, and if they can identify from what country the dinner recipe(s) may have come from.
2. Have students read the [Delicious Mauritius blog](#). Frontload vocabulary, as necessary. Ask students to share what facts they notice about Mauritian cooking traditions.
3. Have students re-examine the Spice Origins map from Lesson 1. Ask students to think about Mauritius's location and why it may have been an important trade port during the Spice Trade. Have students identify which countries and/or regions may have influenced Mauritian cooking because of their proximity.

4. Show students [Food Finds: Mauritius Edition](#) episode and have them record their observations of what different types of cuisine make up Mauritian foods. Ask students to also consider some of the ingredients and spices they notice.
5. Next, watch the [Let's Cook!](#) episode and have students discuss any observations they may have made about the ingredients or seasonings.
6. To complement their "Reference of Spices for Traders" from the previous lesson, students will be creating a "Mini Mauritian Cookbook." Student groups will research and compile a selection of 3-4 Mauritian recipes that represent some of the cultural diversity found in Mauritian cooking. Their selected recipes must reflect at least 3 of the cultural influences found in Mauritius (French, Creole, Indian, Chinese, East African).
7. Once they have created their "Mini Mauritian Cookbook," students will share why each recipe was selected as a representation of Mauritian culinary diversity.

### Challenge Questions (Extension Questions)

- What spices do you use in your own cooking?
- Why are some spices more expensive than others? What might this tell you about where the spice grows?

### Assessment / Evidence of Understanding

**Spices Word Bank:** Students will use precise language to describe the different spices they will explore. Words used should be descriptive, clear, and specific.

**Mini Mauritian Cookbook:** Student recipe selections reflect an understanding of some of the different cultures that have influenced Mauritian cuisine. Student explanations (written or oral) should clearly reflect an understanding of why Mauritian cuisine is so diverse.

### Additional Resources

#### Interactive Spice Map

<http://www.schwartz.co.uk/cooks-guide/herbs-and-spice-map.aspx>

#### Spice Route Map

<http://asiapacificuniverse.com/pkm/spiceroutes.htm>

#### Spice Origins Map

<http://figswithbri.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/eTheSpiceCookbook.jpg>

#### How the Spice Trade Changed the World

<http://www.livescience.com/7495-spice-trade-changed-world.html>

#### Mauritian Cuisine

<http://cuisinemauricienne.blogspot.com/>





Assessment Rubric	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Reference for Spice Traders	Student uses generalized language (i.e.: “yellow,” “smells good,” or “tastes bad”) to describe the various spices explored. Student’s spice descriptions are limited and do not include grade-level appropriate vocabulary.	Student uses precise language (i.e.: “grainy,” “smells delicious,” “spicy”) when describing the various spices explored. Student’s spice descriptions use grade-level appropriate vocabulary and show some understanding of which spice might be reflected in which culture’s cuisine.	Student uses precise language that exceeds grade-level expectations (i.e.: “pungent,” “bland,” “savory”) when describing the spices. Student’s spice descriptions are not only descriptive and creative, but they also show a clear understanding of which culinary tradition in which that particular spice is used.
Mini Mauritian Cookbook + Explanation	Student collects recipes from only one or two culinary traditions represented in Mauritius. Student’s explanation reflects limited or generalized understanding of why Mauritian cuisine is a diverse representation of the different cultures that are reflected in the country.	Student’s recipe collection includes the required three or four recipes from different culinary traditions. Student can explain which country/cultural culinary style is represented by each recipe.	Student’s recipe collection is from at least three or four of the different culinary traditions in Mauritius, and recipes chosen may reflect some of the more obscure culinary influences (i.e.: Red beans curry is reflective of East African influences). Student can explain not only which country/culinary tradition is represented by each recipe, but student may also cite specific ingredients and spices that help identify that culinary tradition).

\*\*\*\*\* Spice Word Bank Worksheet follows on next page \*\*\*\*\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Spices Word Bank

**What words can you use to describe how a spice...**

Looks? 	Feels? 	Smells? 	Tastes? 

**Use some of your Word Bank description words to describe the following spices:**

Cinnamon: \_\_\_\_\_

Nutmeg: \_\_\_\_\_

Curry: \_\_\_\_\_

Cumin: \_\_\_\_\_

Turmeric: \_\_\_\_\_

Mustard Seed: \_\_\_\_\_

Coriander: \_\_\_\_\_

**In what kinds of food items or recipes might you taste the following spices?**

Cinnamon: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Nutmeg: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Curry: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cumin: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Turmeric: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mustard Seed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Coriander: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_