

Creating a Special Event Menu

Grades 6-8

Overview

How we eat is as important as what we eat. This lesson encourages students to reflect on food traditions and special occasions that are meaningful to them. Food traditions are important to our identity, and the people we eat with teach us about cultural and family traditions that can add to positive feelings and experiences around food. Students will explore aspects of meals that make it special and enjoyable for them, including the people they eat with.

What Students Will Learn

- Students will reflect on and describe factors that can make eating experiences more enjoyable, such as the people they eat with and the meal setting.
- Students will build their food literary skills by designing a special event menu.

Materials

- Pencils/crayons
- *Special Meal Event Menu and Event Guest and Setting Plan Activity Sheets*
- *Special Meal Ingredient List and Budget*
- Optional: Cookbooks or recipes for inspiration



Time



- 30 minutes - 1 hour (varies by grade level and whether extension activities are included)

Curricular Links

- Physical & Health Education
- English Language Arts
- Arts Education

BC Curriculum Competencies 6-8

- Investigate and analyze factors that influence personal eating choices
- Recognize how different genres of text (e.g. recipes/menus) reflect various purposes and messages
- Create artistic works using ideas inspired by imagination, and inquiry
- Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts

TEACHING TIP

Be sensitive to your students' diverse food experiences, interests and family context. If mealtime or family situations cause anxiety for some students, re-focus the lesson activity on a special occasion at school or being creative with their guest list (e.g. inviting someone they admire or a favourite musician/actor/athlete/author).

Note for Navigating Food Talk: Talking about foods in a neutral way helps students develop a positive relationship with all foods. "Eating different foods gives us what we need to grow, play and learn" can be one way to discuss the concept of variety that is inclusive of student's diverse food experiences. To learn more about these important concepts visit teachfoodfirst.ca.

Special Meal Event Menu Activities

1. As a class, discuss examples of special cultural, family or local traditions that involve food.

Have students describe why these special meal events are important to them (e.g. the type and cultural meaning of food served at the event, the people they eat with, people coming together, the other traditions that accompany the event - ceremonies or rituals, music or songs, dancing).

2. Using the Special Meal Event Menu template, have students create a menu for a special meal event to enjoy with friends or family (or other special guest(s) they would like to share the meal with).

Encourage students to be creative when planning their menu, and remind them to consider:

- The foods that will be on the menu.
- The number of courses (e.g. appetizer, main) and the beverages they will include.
- Who will help them shop for, prepare and cook the meal?

3. Next, use the Special Meal Event Guest and Setting Plan template to have students describe the guest list and the meal setting.

On this sheet, encourage students to describe:

- Who they will invite and why and draw what the invitation will look like (Grade 6).
- How they will set the table, and whether they will assign seats for their guests.
- Whether they will play music or not, and whether there will be dancing (or other activity?).
- Whether they will use decorations (why or why not?).

4. Have students present their special event menus to the class.

Expand on the presentations by having a class discussion about the diversity of the meals presented. Have students reflect on how sharing these meals with others can be a great way to share food traditions across generations and with friends, and to explore foods that are new to them.

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Grade Specific Considerations:

- **Grade 6:** When designing their menu, have students research three fun facts about the food or meal on their menu (e.g. the origin of the food or meal, traditions the food or meal is connected to). Have them add these fun facts to the menu that they present to their guests at the event. Have students create a sample invitation (e.g. drawn, written, digital) for their guests.
- **Grade 7:** Special meals are often based on cultural or family traditions. Expand on this lesson's learnings by having students reflect on what/who inspired their special meal event menu. Then, have students interview a classmate to learn more about their special event meal and the food traditions that are important to them (e.g. who/what inspired them?, what does their favourite food/eating tradition look like, how did it start?). Alternatively, have students interview a family member about an important tradition that involves food, and how and why it is important to them.
- **Grade 8:** Have students write out a list of everything they will need for their special event menu (both food and non-food items e.g. napkins, cutlery, decorations). To help students determine the cost of their event, use the Special Meal Ingredient List and Budget template to price out the items they need to buy.

Extension Activities

- *Explore Potlatches:* Get students to do research about potlatches and share their learning with the class. Consider inviting an Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Keeper to talk to the class about potlatches.
- *Classroom potluck:* Have students bring in one food item from their special menu (or a favourite food) to share with the class. Alternatively, as a class choose one food item/dish that is meaningful and make it together.

Additional Resources

- [Teach Food First: An Educator's Toolkit for Exploring Canada's Food Guide](#)
- For students looking to try preparing their finished menus, remember [Food Safety Principles](#)

Special Meal Event Menu

A large empty rectangular box with a thin red border, intended for creating a special meal event menu.

Special Meal Event Guest and Setting Plan

Describe who you are inviting and why, guest seating and table setting plans, decoration plans, and music or other activity plans.

Special Meal Ingredient List and Budget

Ingredients	Price for Ingredients
Appetizer Ingredients:	
Main Dish Ingredients:	
Side Dish Ingredients:	
Dessert Ingredients:	
Beverages	
Non-food items:	
Total # of items:	Total Cost of Special Meal: