Goldie at Home: Historic Recipes

Activity Overview: Do you have any recipes that have been passed down in your family or any special dishes that are made for holidays and celebrations? Learning about history should involve all your senses. This Goldie at Home activity focuses on taste, the Plum Grove Historic Home and recipes connected to the state historic site. Preheat your oven and try these recipes or research your own family's food history.

Connection to Iowa History



Robert and Friendly Lucas arrived in Iowa after Robert was appointed the first territorial governor of Iowa in 1838. He has previously served as governor of Ohio, and he served as Iowa's territorial governor until 1841, when he was replaced with a new appointee. Their home, **Plum Grove**, was built in the country South of Iowa City in 1844 and was surrounded by 360 acres of land. Friendly was known as a warm hostess who cooked using ingredients grown on their property, including Friendly's famous plum butter recipe which has been passed down for generations.

Food, Heritage and Historic Recipes

An essential part of any group's culture is the foods they eat. The preparation of foods and how they are eaten say much about a people's society and the environment in which they lived. Although many recipes were passed down verbally from generation to generation, handwritten recipes and cookbooks began to appear in American kitchens as time progressed. *American Cookery* was the first known cookbook published in the United States in 1796 by Amelia Simmons. The standardization of weights and measurements also helped develop the modern recipe. Older recipes typically only included a few sentences about ingredients and possibly how to combine them together. It was based on the idea that the cook should already know how to make the recipe. The recipe cards listed below include different recipe examples. Friendly Lucas' plum butter is one that was verbally passed down with little instruction, while the date cake is a written family recipe.

Recipe Card



Friendly's Plum Butter

As recorded by Margaret Lucas Henderson, great-granddaughter of Friendly and Robert Lucas. This recipe shows how recipes were passed down before standard measurements.

1. Sneak up on plums and get as many as you can.
2. Wash well (a few worms give it a meaty flavor so do not be squeamish).
3. Cover with boiling water and cook till tender. Take potato masher and mash - skins and all.
4. If you are short plums and want to use all the bulk available - put skins and all into a colander - use potato masher and mash, mash, mash. Take pits out with your fingers. Put through as much of the skins as you can.
5. For each cup of pulp you have to use 2/3 cup of sugar.
6. I cook mine in the oven - slowly - testing for consistency.
7. A small portion in a saucer - put in the refrigerator will tell you when the jam or butter is just right.
8. Put in jars and seal.

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Recipe Card



Helen Hansen's Date Cake

This recipe is an example of a written family recipe. It was passed down from Helen Hansen, the great-great grandmother of Matt Beyer, Museum Education & Engagement Coordinator for the State Historical Society of Iowa. Helen lived in Carroll, Iowa, during the late 1800s, and would have baked this cake in her wood-burning oven for family celebrations. This recipe also shows how recipes can be modernized so family members today can bake the same cake in a modern kitchen.

Ingredients

- 1 cup chopped dates
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 tbsp. shortening
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 3 tsps. baking powder
- 1 egg
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- Optional: fresh cherries and candied fruit to make this a fruit cake

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Grease and flour two small loaf pans.
2. Combine dates, boiling water and shortening together in a medium-sized bowl. Stir to combine, then cover and let cool.
3. In a small separate bowl, sift together the flour and baking powder. Set aside.
4. In another small bowl, beat together the sugar and the eggs.
5. Add this mixture to the cooled date mixture, while alternating with the dry ingredients. If adding cherries and candied fruit, add at this time. Mix well until combined.
6. Divide the batter evenly between the small loaf pans.
7. Bake for 50-60 minutes. Remove from the oven when golden brown.

1 Questions to Spark Learning

- How has the American kitchen changed since the first cookbook was published in 1796? Think about how things are cooked, who does the cooking and the types of ingredients available.
- Why would learning about the food of the past be helpful to understand certain time periods?
- Food is an important part of celebrations and holidays. What types of foods does your family make to celebrate? Is there any reason why you make this specific food?

2 Additional Resources about Plum Grove Historic Home and Historic Recipes

- **A Taste of Plum Grove**
- **Teacher's Guide: Plum Grove**
- **Plum Grove Site History**
- ***The Goldfinch: The Iowa Territory's 150th Birthday***
- **Feeding America - Michigan State University Online Catalogue of Historic Cookbooks**
- **Smithsonian Magazine Article - "The Making of the Modern American Recipe"**
- **Friendly Grove House - Robert and Friendly Lucas' Ohio Home**

Instructions continued on next page

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3 Additional Activity

What is your family's culinary history? Reach out to family or friends to find out what food they remember from their childhoods.

- If there is a historic recipe you want to try, work with an adult to complete the recipe. You can learn more about your heritage and enjoy a tasty treat in the process.
- If you want to keep track of historic recipes, use the recipe card template below to write down the name, history, ingredients and directions for a recipe. Now, you can start your very own recipe collection to pass down to someone else.
- If you can't find any historic recipes, do some research to find out what types of food would have been popular when a great-grandparent or grandparent was your age.

Recipe Card



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This recipe is from _____

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Ingredients

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Directions

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