

Teaching Appalachian Heritage Cooking to Children

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“Connections with Appalachia [are] about more than the food on the table. It’s about connecting family, friends, history and traditions.”
– Barbara Swell, Appalachian author

A fun way to teach children about our Appalachian heritage is to make traditional recipes together and talk about the connection with history, family and the community.

Quick Breads

Cornbread and biscuits were an important staple of the Appalachian diet because the ingredients were simple and available, and these quick breads were filling, which provided energy for labor intense days. Cornbread was often paired with beans for a complete protein source. Baking soda and buttermilk were usually available and served as a leavening agent to give quick breads lift. Biscuits were often paired with apple butter, creamed chicken, sausage gravy and homemade jams.

Biscuits

Makes 10 to 12 biscuits

Ingredients

2 cups flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 tablespoon sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup milk

Directions

Stir together flour, baking powder, sugar and salt. Cut in shortening until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. A pastry cutter is very helpful. Make a well in the center, add milk all at once. Stir just until dough clings together. Knead gently on a lightly floured surface, 10 to 12 strokes.



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Roll or pat to ½ inch thickness. Cut into 2 ½-inch biscuits, dipping cutter in flour between cuts. Transfer to an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 400 F for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden. Serve warm. To make buttermilk biscuits, prepare as directed except stir ¼ teaspoon baking soda into the flour mixture and substitute ¾ cup of buttermilk for the milk.

Adapted from Better Homes and Garden: New Cook Book (1982), 9th edition, 3rd printing. Meredith Corporation, Des Moines, Iowa.

Apples

The amazing apple was critical to the health of Appalachian folks because they were easily grown in the mountain climate, and they stored well through the winter in root cellars. The native Golden Delicious apple has remarkable ability to maintain freshness for months. In addition to simply eating an apple, other popular uses included apple pie, fried apples, applesauce, apple butter and apple cakes.

Cast iron was an important cooking tool because it was durable and worked well for preparing almost anything over an open hearth or wood cookstove. Fried apple recipes work well in cast iron.

Berries

Foraging for berries during the warmer months meant using them in pies, cobblers and even jellies and jams. A variety of berries were available and could be enjoyed year-round after being processed and canned. Making jam is simple and provides a hands-on learning experience and product.

Blackberry Jam Recipe

Ingredients

6 cups berries, fresh or frozen
2 cups sugar
2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice

Directions

In a saucepan, add the berries, sugar and lemon juice. Gently stir the berry mixture and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce to a soft boil on medium heat and cook, uncovered, stirring

frequently, for about 20 minutes or until the jam has thickened. Let cool. This can be stored for up to two weeks in a refrigerator.

Recipe from Kelly Hicks, WVU Extension Service



Heritage Food Festivals

West Virginia heritage foods are celebrated throughout the state at a variety of festivals and would be fun to visit with family.

- **Buckwheat Festival** – Preston County in September
- **Strawberry Festival** – Buckhannon in May
- **Ramp Festival** – Richwood in May
- **Maple Syrup Festival** – Pickens in March
- **Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival** – Martinsburg in October

Consider a theme for the spring or fall where children can learn about apple seed germination and cultivation, preparing food with apples and visiting a fall apple festival.

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