

# Teaching Appalachian Heritage Cooking to Children, Part II

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## Educational Objectives

- Participants will identify key elements of Appalachian culture such as history, traditions and values.
- Participants will be able to explain the historic role of the essential garden in Appalachian cooking and recipes.
- Participants will demonstrate confidence in teaching Appalachian cooking to youth audiences.

Appalachian heritage foods continue today as a part of West Virginia communities, festivals and the culture. Youths and adults can learn about our heritage through preparing these foods and understanding why they were

used. Many recipes are useful today and can be adapted to be a part of a healthy diet. Family members and volunteers can enjoy teaching youths about our Appalachian heritage while preparing traditional foods together and strengthening the connections between the past, present and the future.



## The Essential Garden

The original kitchen gardens were popular across Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These gardens contained herbs for eating, flavoring foods and sometimes medicinal purposes, as well as vegetables, fruits and flowers for pollination. Kitchen gardens migrated with immigrants into the Appalachian Mountains. They were separate from other gardens and crops, and were located close to the dwelling for easy access.

Commonly grown vegetables in kitchen gardens included beans, cucumbers, cabbage, tomatoes, peas, zucchini, peppers, squash and lettuce. Other plants that may have been included were fruits, such as strawberries and grapes, and a variety of fruit trees.

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## Food Preservation Key to Survival

Growing and preserving foods was the key to survival. To survive the harsh winters, people preserved what they couldn't eat immediately. Family members worked together to plant, harvest and preserve foods. Foods were dried, pickled, canned, salt-cured, smoked and buried; nothing was wasted. Many crops were also stored in cellars along with canned goods. Crops that were commonly stored in cellars or buried included sweet potatoes, potatoes, rutabagas, onions, turnips and pumpkins. Families ate all year long from what they grew in their gardens.

### Roasted Root Vegetables

#### Ingredients:

- 3 pounds assorted root vegetables chopped into 1½-inch pieces
- 1 large red onion chopped into 1½-inch pieces
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- Freshly cracked pepper to taste



#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 F. Combine all vegetables, onion and minced garlic in a large bowl. Add olive oil, kosher salt, rosemary and ground pepper. Stir well until all vegetables are coated. Spread evenly over cookie sheet or large cast iron skillet. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes, turn the vegetables with a spatula halfway through cooking. Roast until vegetables are tender when pierced with a fork.

Recipe Source: [www.spendwithpennies.com/roasted-root-vegetables/#wprm-recipe-container-139037](http://www.spendwithpennies.com/roasted-root-vegetables/#wprm-recipe-container-139037)

## Rhubarb

Rhubarb has long been a favorite throughout Appalachia that could be found in gardens and is widely recognized as a pie plant. In the buckwheat family, this perennial is one of the first crops to be harvested in the spring. Rhubarb was originally used in China for medicinal purposes, and later introduced to Europe; it became commonly used in America in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. While it is too sour to be eaten raw (only the stalks are edible), it can be cooked, sweetened and used in a variety of recipes that include pies, breads, cakes, jellies and sauces.

### Old-fashioned Strawberry Rhubarb Pie

#### Ingredients:

- 2 pints strawberries, cut in half
- 1 pound rhubarb (without tops), cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1¼ cups sugar
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Pastry for 9-inch two-crust pie
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine, cut into bits
- 1 tablespoon milk or half and half



#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 425 F. In large bowl, with rubber spatula, gently toss strawberries, rhubarb, sugar, flour, tapioca, vanilla and salt to mix well. Let mixture stand 30 minutes to soften tapioca, stirring occasionally so tapioca will be evenly moistened.

Prepare pastry for two-crust pie. On lightly floured surface with floured rolling pin, roll two-thirds of pastry into round about 2½ inches larger than a 9½-inch by 1½-inch deep pie plate. Line pie plate with pastry; trim pastry edge, leaving



1-inch overhang. Spoon fruit mixture into piecrust; dot fruit with butter or margarine.

Prepare remaining pastry for top. Brush pastry (not edge) with milk or half and half.

Bake pie 50 minutes or until fruit mixture begins to bubble and crust is golden. Cool pie on wire rack 1 hour; serve warm.

Recipe Source: The New Good Housekeeping Cookbook (1986), 1<sup>st</sup> edition. The Hearst Corporation, New York, New York.

## Herbs for Cooking and Medicinal Purposes

The woods and forests of Appalachia were foraged for valuable plants used for food as well as medicinal purposes. A variety of herbs were also grown in early gardens for the same purposes.

- **Echinacea** – Recognized by many as the coneflower, this popular herb is easy to grow. It was used in the treatment of toothaches, sore throats and snakebites by Native Americans. Today it is used to enhance the immune system and to support respiratory and lymphatic systems.
- **Lavender** – Popular globally and used throughout history, this aromatic herb proves to be just as popular today. Both Greeks and Romans used lavender in herbal baths, and it was once strewn over the floors in sickrooms and castles as a deodorant and disinfectant. It is still used for its aromatic, medicinal, antibacterial, and culinary purposes.
- **Witch Hazel** – This plant has a colorful feathery flower that blooms in autumn. It is used in many medicinal products to relieve bruises, insect bites, sunburn, and poison ivy rash.
- **Bee Balm** – A tea made from bee balm has been found to be effective in treating colds and sore throats. Steamed and inhaled, the fumes help clear sinuses.
- **Spearmint** – This easily grown and widespread plant is a lovely fresh addition to lemonade or tea. It also complements pork and cold salads. Try a refreshing summer drink using pineapple juice, frozen limeade, and a lemon/lime soda with a sprig of spearmint.

- **St. John's Wort** – This perennial shrub with bright yellow flowers has been used for the treatment of depression.

Be careful because not all flowers and plants are edible. When in doubt, consult someone with experience in plant identification.

## Lavender Tea Cookies

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 cups flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons lavender sugar

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 F. Cream butter and sugar. Gradually add flour and salt. Chill dough for 1 hour. Form the dough into 1-inch balls and roll in lavender sugar. Press each ball with thumb. Place on ungreased baking sheet and bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Makes three dozen.



## Forest-grown Medicinal Plants

- **Ginseng** – This herb is popular globally and is reported to be restorative to the mind and body as well as reduced fatigue and stress. It also is called manroot.
- **Goldenseal** – Recognized as ground raspberry, wild turmeric, yelloweye, yellowroot or yellow puccoon, it is endangered in some states and considered unlawful to trade or sell. It's recognized for anti-inflammatory benefits as well as immune-boosting benefits, and ability to treat hemorrhoids, mouth sores and eye afflictions.
- **Bloodroot** – Used by Native American tribes for the treatment of rheumatism and fever, it's now being researched for use in the treatment of cancer. This plant can be toxic and should not be used casually.
- **Mayapple** – An abundant medicinal plant, it grows in clusters with umbrella like leaves and white flowers. It has a small greenish yellow fruit with a sweet taste that is ideal for jams and jellies.



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## Herbs for Flavoring Foods

Herbs were vital to giving flavor to food, especially when salt was unavailable.

- **Thyme** – A spicy herb with a distinct aroma that can be added to many recipes. Thyme flowers can be used to make a flower-infused butter served with potatoes or on toast. It is full of trace minerals and can enhance digestion.
- **Wild Mustard** – Mustard flowers are edible and make a nice garnish for breads, cornbread, potatoes and creamed soup. Cut the flowers away from the stem and sprinkle over dishes.
- **Nasturtium** – The bright blossoms make a nice garnish to savory dishes and salads and they add a peppery flavor. It is a good source of vitamin C.
- **Oregano** – A favorite addition to tomato-based and Italian recipes, this herb is easy to grow. The flowers are also edible and can be used as a garnish or to make an herb butter.

## Herb-infused Butter

### Ingredients:

- 1 stick butter, softened
- ¼ cup minced thyme flowers
- ¼ cup minced red onion
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper



### Directions:

Add all ingredients to the butter and mix well. Enjoy on toast, bread or, potatoes and etc.

Recipe and Photo Source: Kami McBride Zesty Edible Flowers List – Mother Earth News

## Plant a Garden at Home

Consider planting a garden at home. Garden plans are available online. Gardening is a great way to incorporate fruits and vegetables into your diet, enjoy locally grown products, help you be more physically active, save money, be more self-reliant and spend time with family.

## Club Activities

- Prepare one of the recipes for group to sample.
- Share family heritage folklore stories.
- Talk about foods grown in the past and present by families.

## Resources

[homegrown.extension.ncsu.edu/2021/12/growing-medicinal-plants-in-the-home-garden/](http://homegrown.extension.ncsu.edu/2021/12/growing-medicinal-plants-in-the-home-garden/)

[growappalachia.berea.edu/2011/12/06/appalachian-garden-folklore-chad-brock-red-bird-mission/](http://growappalachia.berea.edu/2011/12/06/appalachian-garden-folklore-chad-brock-red-bird-mission/)

The Foxfire Book

[www.smliv.com/food/appalachian-foods-defining-generations/](http://www.smliv.com/food/appalachian-foods-defining-generations/)

[newcropsorganics.ces.ncsu.edu/herb/medicinal-herbs-info/](http://newcropsorganics.ces.ncsu.edu/herb/medicinal-herbs-info/)

[newcropsorganics.ces.ncsu.edu/herb/lavender-history-taxonomy-and-production/](http://newcropsorganics.ces.ncsu.edu/herb/lavender-history-taxonomy-and-production/)

[catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec797/html](http://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec797/html)

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*“You slice th’ pumpkin around in circles, take th’ seeds out, peel it, hang in on a stick crosswise of th’ joists of th’ house. Let it hang there until it dries. Then store in in sacks. It took a long time to cook, and you have to cool it several hours, and they season it with hog meat and grease.”*

– The Foxfire Book

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