

Life
FOCUS



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Introduction



“Everybody has some food tradition in their family,” says historian Christa Dierksheide. “And to talk about our culture is to bring understanding to our lives.” Family Fare is a one-hour presentation for the PBS audience to help children appreciate their family customs, as well as those of others. Through our palates, cooking and dining habits, we connect not only to our own families but also to the sights, smells, and sounds of our ancestors. Learning about history builds a bridge to understanding and ultimately accepting other cultures as being equal in richness to one’s own.

For example, sushi, today’s luxurious treat, originated in China in the second century and was introduced to Japan as a practical way to preserve fish. In the Middle East, the three Abrahamic cultures have age-old traditions about raising and preparing meat-- practices that have held religious implications since before Christ. And when you think of “ham and hocks,” our minds quickly remember the Old South, and traditions that built our great nation.

This hour brings to life our historical culture as children are encouraged to eat healthy and nutritious foods. In every episode, we discuss cuisine building blocks such as starches, vegetables, proteins and the spices added to help us enjoy cultural history. Come with us to hear the clamor of pans, the pounding of stone and the sharpening knives as we take children on a journey to appreciate countries and cultures around the world.

The purpose of this documentary is to:

- Educate children about the rich culture and history associated with cuisine.
- Encourage children to eat healthy and nutritious food from around the world.
- Help children open conversation with people from other cultures and to appreciate diverse traditions. In so doing, we discover that all of us, no matter where we come from find pleasure in an enjoying a tasty meal, but find real joy in sharing that experience with others.
- Inspire children to embrace their own cultural and family history.

Concept

Featuring three hosts from ages 12-15, children with three distinct personalities will visit “their friends” from different cultures who will bring them into their home, cook their foods, and dine with their families, as they explore the food history associated with different cultures. One of our hosts will play the “adventurous eater” who is willing to try anything and enjoys new foods. The second, the intelligent educator, always seems to know unusual facts about different foods. And the third host, the reticent eater, would rather have “McFast” and “McFried” over any of the meals he is about to try. These three hosts will visit five different homes, meeting their friends from other cultures, and learn to cook and appreciate the traditions of the friends’ families. Chef Sugar Brown, a connoisseur of the Southern American tradition, offers inspiration and education to the children’s television audience, as do our tween hosts. In the last segment, Sugar allows us to sample her Southern hospitality and invites us all to her home for a good old-fashioned country meal.



Style

We will shoot in semi-reality television style with four 4K cameras. With music, video, and snippets from the originating countries. We will entertain children and bring our television audience into the wonder of global cuisine.

Opening

Fast-moving montage with the three tween hosts speaking about food. They talk about how children from different cultures have different eating habits, and in their discussion, they reveal their personalities. Ms. “Smart One” reveals that rice is the world’s most popular comfort food. Mr. “Doesn’t want to try anything,” demonstrates that he just wants to keep to his cooking, thank you very much. And Ms. Adventurous cannot wait to introduce everyone to her friends. It’s an adventure led by Chef Sugar Brown, who gathers the three in her kitchen and suggests that they get ready because you can learn a lot about people when you learn about their food.



All five segments will include the following:

1. The children visit one of their friends, who introduces the hosts into their home. The hosts will greet the family, parents who will talk about their country.
2. The hosts will enter the kitchen and will discuss what dish they would like to share. Here all three of our children will demonstrate their personalities: adventurous, unsure and know-it-all.
3. Sugar will add nutritional knowledge, and she will ask pertinent questions about the host country.
4. A brief history lesson that demonstrates how the food is born out of a culture’s traditions.
5. Video, music, and maps cut in and out of the kitchen while the children are cooking.
6. A conclusion of family and hosts around the table to eat the food in the style of that country.

Suggested Countries

African Fare

What do bitong, fufu, injera, couscous and ugali all have in common? These are foods found in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region profoundly affected by farmers and cattle. And while their names sound funny, these meals—some of the most colorful, nutritious, and—yes, watch out—spicy you can taste. What we eat stems from our history, but also from flora and fauna found in a region. For example, in Africa, maize is a staple that sets the course for the entire diet.

- The first “barbecue” may have originated in Africa— a continent that may have invented cooking. But African dishes—especially those south of the Sahara are still woefully under-represented on the world culinary scene.
- We will create a meal using spices particular to Africa. Zambian cuisine, born out of Europe, India, and Asia are heavy on starches, and in spices!
- For example, Portuguese settlers introduced Piri-Piri chicken, doused with Chile peppers introduced by Portuguese colonists.

By beginning with African meals, we will explore how immigrants brought their traditions to this massive Continent, demonstrating that when it comes to food, we discover real integration through our palettes!



Middle Eastern Fare

If ever culinary tastes are defined by their past, it's in the Middle East, home to the three Abrahamic cultures. There, twisted, gnarled trees bear lovely olives, the fruit used for beauty, cooking and preserving. This base for almost all Middle Eastern cooking helps define the taste found in the three Abrahamic cultures. Classic Middle Eastern tradition excludes meat in its cuisine. However, festive occasions such as Passover, Easter and the break of Ramadan can include a leg of lamb cooked with traditional spices, such as oregano, garlic and lemon. Some food practices stem from the region's religious beliefs.

- The first food mentioned in the Bible was so good that Esau gave up his birthright just to have a bowl of lentil stew! Today, this legume and lamb are the main ingredients for many Middle Eastern dishes. Some say it's still good enough to give away their birthright.
- Around the world, Muslims fast during Ramadan believed to be the month during which the Qur'an, the Islamic holy book, was given by God to the Prophet Muhammad. During this month, Muslims fast during daylight hours, eating and drinking before dawn and after sunset.
- Orthodox Jews and some conservative Jews follow dietary laws, popularly referred to as a kosher diet, discussed in Jewish scripture.

Asian Fare

When people from Asian countries such as China, Japan, Vietnam and Korea first began cooking, they cooked with a few sticks, leaves for wrapping and baking, and maybe a hot flat rock. But now with new cooking utensils, the basics of Asian cooking are relatively simple, much variety, lots of vegetables and hot flames.

- For many Korean-Americans, comfort food is a plate of kimchi, white rice, and fried Spam.
- In much of China, only the older generations still shop every day in the wet market, then go home and cook traditional dishes.
- Eating is done family style, with shared dishes, and eating is the major social activity for friends and families.
- There are many Chinese proverbs involving food, such as, “The way you cut your meat reflects the way you live.” (Confucius)



Mexican Fare

Mexican food is one of the most popular cuisines in the United States-and for good reason: it is delicious! Flavorful and bold, many dishes include chili peppers, spices, corn, and other native staples for their country. Food is central to many Mexican traditions, festivals, and celebrations. For the Day of the Dead festival, foods such as tamales, sweet bread, and mole are set out on altars and it is believed that the visiting dead relatives eat the essence of the food. Food and family are intertwined in the rich cultural and culinary history of Mexico!

- The history of Mexican food is a long and diverse one. It is believed that authentic Mexican food might have been derived from the Mayan Indians. Corn tortillas with bean paste were a common food item; but they also ate wild game, tropic fruits, and fish.
- Early natives of Mexico heated food over the open fire, using cast iron skillets and ceramic ware. They also utilized frying and steaming, wrapping their food in cactus or banana leaves and boiling over water in a deep pit.
- Traditional food such as salsa and chocolate originated in Aztec marketplaces. The base of most Mexican fare is often beans, corn, and chile peppers, a fact that hasn't changed since the very beginning of the Mexican culture.





Southern American Fare

You might not say that this is cultural, but if you are from the North and have no idea what a collard green is, then I would argue with you. Also, I dare not think I can compete with Sugar Brown's knowledge on this matter. But when we think of a traditional Southern meal, we think of fried chicken, bitter greens, mashed potatoes and sweet tea, topped off with friendly southern hospitality. Perhaps that is what Sugar will serve when she invites everyone to HER house where she will cook up a storm with Southern hospitality, and explain how our traditional finger-licking' good food in the South gets its reputation.

- Believe it or not, elements of Southern cooking come from many diverse backgrounds. For example, squash, corn and deep-pit barbecuing come from the American Indian tribes, including Caddo, Choctaw, and Seminole. Its love of okra, rice, and eggplant come from Nigerian cuisines (slave days, perhaps). And many of its spices and dishes come right from the Scottish in Europe. I think this is great. I feel it is important to acknowledge what seems the most 'american' of cuisines is an amalgam of the many culinary traditions that shaped our country from it's beginning. Native American, African, French, European, Indian. But so much from African slaves - even the seeds they brought with them to plant here!
- Back in the day, some Southern food included opossum, rabbit and squirrel, the main ingredient of Brunswick Stew, which historians say was popular in Virginia and Georgia.
- Sweet tea recipes date back to 1879 in Old Virginia, when its founder, Marion Cabell Tyree added sweetness to green tea, the most famous tea in Texas. During World War II, traditional sources for tea in the United States were cut off, forcing tea drinkers to switch to black tea.

Meet the host



Sugar Elisa Brown

Born in Austin and raised in Los Angeles, Sugar is deeply connected to the food of both regions. Her earliest food memories are of her Granny's kitchen and the aroma of homemade rolls, pecan pie, and banana bread. Southern cuisine is the culinary equivalent of hug and nowhere else is there such a profound connection between love and food. That connection continues to influence everything she do in the kitchen. As a chef in Southern California, she emphasizes clean, fresh, plant centric and organic foods. Gorgeous, abundant produce and fresh seafood along with vast ethnic culinary building blocks provided an incredible backdrop to learn. In 2012, after many years as passionate self-taught home cook, she left a successful career as a Contemporary Art Dealer to attend The New School of Cooking in Culver City, CA where she received classical training and a professional Culinary Degree. The real learning, however, has come with the experience she's since gained working in professional kitchens and as a Personal Chef. A summer of staging Sunday Suppers at Lucques in West Hollywood (James Beard Award winning restaurant), and time spent interning at downtown Los Angeles restaurant Alma (Bon Appetit's Best New Restaurant 2012) profoundly influenced the way Sugar sees and works with food. But at the end of the day it always comes back to her roots - to the love!