

LIBERIA

Lessons for Mission Minded Kids

Lesson 4

Liberian Food



Liberia

Lesson 4: Liberian Food

Goals for Lesson:

- Students will appreciate differences in diet, farming methods and cooking styles between America and Liberia.
- Students will explore the food and eating habits of Liberians.
- Students will improve memorization of Psalm 25:4-5.

Verse for Liberia Lessons:

“Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” Psalm 25: 4-5

Before Class:

- Read through lesson and decide how you will use the material, according to your age group and time allotted.
- Make a copy of the coloring page for each student.
- Read through the recipes and decide if you want to make any of these dishes. You could make something ahead of time and bring it in, or depending on your class and facilities available, you could actually prepare something together in the church kitchen and serve a Liberian style meal. You could also gather an assortment of the fruits, vegetables and other foods mentioned in the story and have a little taste-testing “meal” together.
- Make a copy of the recipe pages to send home with your students so that they can try them at home.
- Prepare each of the pictures as a power point to show on a screen, or print them and back them with cardstock for stability.
- Decide if you will play “Mamba” or “Prayer Balloons” or both, and prepare accordingly.

Lesson Plan:

- Open your time together with a welcome, announcements and a brief prayer. (5 minutes)
- Bring out the Poster Board Verse and sing the verse together at least once to review it. Discuss as needed for review. (5 minutes)
- Read or tell the story part of the lesson, showing the pictures where indicated and discussing as necessary. (15-20 minutes)
- Depending on what you have decided on for the “meal” part of your lesson, proceed with cooking, serving and/or tasting your Liberian food. During this time, discuss in detail the differences and similarities in tastes, cooking styles, diet, eating habits, etc. between what your students are used to and what the Liberians are used to. (20-30 minutes)
- Play the Mamba Game, or the Prayer Balloons Game, or play each game for several minutes. (10-20 minutes)
- Send the coloring page home, or use it for the last few minutes of class time. (5 minutes)

Lesson 4 Story: Liberian Food

What did you eat for breakfast this morning? Do you think that people in Liberia had the same sorts of foods for their breakfast? Liberian food is considered to be very healthy and people grow a lot of things for themselves. Do any of you have gardens at home? What sorts of things do you grow in your gardens? In Liberia, it is not uncommon for people to grow their own rice, sugar cane, and a starchy root called cassava, along with many other fruits and vegetables.

Their diet consists mainly of fish, rice (which is served at least twice a day), greens, and vegetables. **(Show pictures of ladies making fish traps, and children selling dried salted fish.)** Their food is a mixture of West African and American foods. For example, you may find cooked cabbage served with bacon and pig's feet, sweet potato leaves served with fish, and palm nuts with shrimp in a fish or chicken broth. Cassava leaves are also used a lot in Liberian cooking. Cassava is important to Liberian cuisine. It is a tropical plant with very starchy, edible roots and edible leaves. It is found in most Liberian gardens. Another edible root is called eddoes. Some other things you might find in the gardens are sweet potatoes, sweet corn, and plantains. Do those sound like things you would want to have in your garden?

One of the ways cassava leaf is prepared is they are washed and beaten, mashed, or finely chopped with pepper and onion. Then they can be boiled with beef or chicken until well done and most of the liquid has evaporated. Palm oil is then added and after simmering for a few minutes, the dish is served with rice. Stews and soups are popular in Liberian cuisine. They even have a soup that is considered to be their national soup. What do you think it is? It's called goat soup. It is served on important occasions and is made with goat meat, onions, and tomatoes. Does that sound like something you would eat?

Another food that is popular in Liberia is called dumboy. Dumboy is made by mashing and beating cassava root and then boiling and straining the mash. **(Show picture of dumboy being made and dumboy being eaten with soup.)** Foo-foo is another version of the same thing. The dumboy is made with fresh cassava, and the foo-foo is left to ferment before cooking it. The soft rubbery dough is served like a dumpling in soups or stews. To eat it you break off a small, bite-sized piece, dip it into the sauce or stew and swallow it down whole.

What sorts of desserts do you like to eat after dinner? Well Liberians love sweet desserts. Things like sweet potato pie, coconut pie, and pumpkin pie are all some of the favorites of Americo-Liberians. Aren't those desserts that you can find here in America? They also enjoy sweet bread made from rice and bananas. One of the drinks that they really enjoy is lemonade. They also like Liberian coffee and a non-alcoholic drink made from pineapples called ginger beer.

Now when you come home from school, what do you have for a snack? Liberian children also enjoy snacks but sometimes they eat things that are a little strange to us. Liberian children like to catch grasshoppers and then they fry them up and eat them. How many of you would eat something like that?

Unfortunately, a lot of the good farmland was destroyed by war, but Liberia is still known for growing a lot of crops. Fruits like oranges, grapefruits, avocados, bananas, pineapples, and watermelons are still grown and readily available and can be eaten right out of the garden. Vegetables like cucumbers, okra, collards, eggplants, and lima beans are also a part of the Liberian diet. **(Show pictures of pineapple growing and coconuts in the palm tree.)**

Do you remember last time we met I mentioned that Liberians do their cooking outside? The women and children gather sticks and cook outside in the hot and humid weather over open fires. How many of your families cook outside sometimes during the summer? Imagine if that was your only kitchen. I bet it is hard work. **(Show picture of outside fire with kettle.)**

It can be fun to learn about different foods and how they are grown and eaten. If you are adventurous, you may also enjoy tasting different foods and experiencing what other people like to eat. God made us unique in our personalities and what we think tastes good. He also made a huge variety of foods to grow in all sorts of climates all around the world. He wants us to explore and enjoy all of His creation, and He wants us to learn to love and appreciate all of the different people He created as well. Each person is loved equally by God, no matter where we were born on the earth. But not all people know that God loves them and sent His Son, Jesus, to make a way for them to be with God in Heaven. Let's pray today that the people of Liberia would hear about and understand God's great Love for them.



Tabita stirs the food in the big cooking pot in the yard.



Liberian Women weave fish traps to catch the fish.



Children sell the salted dried fish.



Cassava root being made into dumboy.



Dumboy is eaten with stew.



Pineapple grows on a stalk in a garden.



This man is cutting coconuts out of the palm tree.

Liberian Recipes

Liberian cooking has become a mixture of the American cooking the freed slaves brought with them from the United States in the 1800's, and the traditional native African cooking that has been part of tribal life for generations. It is considered a very healthy diet, as many fresh fruits and vegetables are grown in the tropical climate and eaten fresh in season.

FRIED PLANTAINS

Cut four plantains in half lengthwise and then crosswise into six uniform pieces. Saute them quickly in a quarter of an inch of hot oil in a saute pan. The more black (ripe) a plantain is, the sweeter and softer the “meat” will be. The greener the plantain is, the firmer and starchier the “meat” is. Either is good. You might want to make some of each to discover the differences.

Liberian Sweet Potato Pone

Ingredients:

3 cups raw, grated sweet potatoes
1 cup molasses or dark cane syrup
2 tsp. ground ginger
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1/3 cup vegetable oil

In a 3-quart saucepan, combine all ingredients. Simmer slowly, stirring constantly, for about 10 minutes. Pour into a well-greased 9-inch baking pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 30 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes for the first 20 minutes. Smooth down the top and allow to brown for the last 10 minutes. Cut into squares and serve either hot or cold.

Stewed Mangoes with Cloves

Ingredients:

2 large mangoes, peeled and cut into large pieces

Peach halves from a 24oz. can

1 cup syrup from the can of peaches

6 whole cloves

In a one quart saucepan, place the mango and peach pieces and the six whole cloves. Pour the syrup over fruit and bring to a slow simmer. Simmer for about 15 minutes. Cool and serve.

Liberian Rice Bread

Ingredients:

2 cups Cream of Rice cereal

3 ripe mashed bananas

½ c. vegetable oil

4 tbsp sugar

1/2 tsp freshly-grated nutmeg

1 tsp salt

1 cup water

1 tsp baking soda

Preparation: Simply mix all the ingredients together thoroughly in a large bowl. Tip the resultant dough into a well-greased rectangular loaf pan and bake in an oven pre-heated to 375 degrees for about 30 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the center of the bread emerges clean. This bread is traditionally used as an accompaniment to coffee. It is very versatile and will stay moist for a week.

Mamba

A mamba is a big indigenous African snake. There are green mambas and black mambas. Both are poisonous. Children in Liberia like to play this game.

- Designate a playing area defined by walls or furniture. About 10'x10' is good for 20 children.
- One child is chosen as the mamba.
- Everyone must stay within the designated area. The object is to stay away from the mamba.
- At a signal, the game begins.
- The mamba tries to catch the players. When a player is caught, that player joins the snake by placing his/her hands on the snake's shoulders.
- Each new "catch" becomes another part of the snake's body, always adding to the snake's tail. (Just like when a real mamba eats, it becomes bigger and bigger.)
- Only the head of the snake can catch new people, but the snake can use its "body" to surround other players, as players may not pass between the snake's body parts.
- Game ends when all but one of the players has been caught. The last person left uncaught becomes the next mamba.

Prayer Balloons

- Write a simple prayer request for Liberia on a slip of paper and roll it into a small tube. Slide one tube into each balloon before blowing it up. Prepare several prayer requests and several balloons, depending on the size of your group and how long you want to play.
- Have students form a circle, or two circles if your group is large.
- Tap one or more balloons into each circle. Students must keep balloon in the air and in the circle by tapping it lightly with their fingertips. If the balloon flies out of the circle or falls on the floor, play stops. The last person to touch the balloon picks it up and pops it. They retrieve the slip of paper inside and pray for that item.
- Play resumes with a new balloon.

****For a variation, you can play African music and when the music stops, the player who last touched the balloon pops it and prays for that request.**