



## DO YOU THINK DOMINICAN FOOD IS TACOS ?

Level: middle school  
Course: beginning Spanish

### Rationale

This project stems from a need perceived during the course of our year-long exchange program between a beginning Spanish class in a suburban, middle-class school and a bilingual/transitional class in which all the students are recent immigrants, largely from the Dominican Republic, at a nearby inner-city middle school. We match students as one-to-one key-pals, in addition to whole class projects. In one letter a Dominican student wrote, "What would you like to eat if you came to my house? Do you think Dominican food is tacos ? Because many Americans think Dominican food is tacos." In fact, the Spanish learners had no idea what Dominican food was, nor had they any other inkling of the Hispanic cultures of their key-pals. To help rectify this problem the teachers began a bilingual cookbook project in which everyone contributed an annotated favorite recipe. This lesson is an extension of that project. It seeks to provide Spanish learners with an interactive, discovery-based way of learning about Latino cultures.

by  
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### Lesson Overview

This lesson involves an interaction between a class of Spanish learners and a class of Spanish-speaking English learners. Our situation is fairly ideal; the classes are matched in class size, student age, and second-language proficiency (or lack thereof). The Latino students represent several cultures —Puerto Rican,

Guatemalan and Mexican, but mostly Dominican. This lesson is part of a year-long project, and will be used in conjunction lessons by Clifford and Peterson, but there are many ways that teachers can adapt this lesson to suit their needs. If you don't already have an exchange class see the bibliography for some suggestions for finding one. If you would like more information about the entire project, please e-mail the author.

This lesson involves an oral history project where Latino students collect both a traditional recipe from home and information about its cultural background. The Latino students then receive a visit from their American key-pals who will interview them and together the key-pals will type out on a computer both the recipe in Spanish and English and the cultural information. (If possible, Latino parents will be invited to provide a traditional lunch and talk with students.) In the second part of the school-day, groups of students will take a shopping trip with their teachers to local Spanish markets to purchase the specialty foods and bring them back to school.

## *Objectives*

For all learners in both classes:

- \* learn more about another culture based on interpersonal communication
- \* forge friendships across cultures
- \* identify and appreciate traditions
- \* increase self-esteem by building skills with computer use (specifically Internet and desk-top publishing)
- \* use the classroom to produce a useful product (cookbook)

For learners of Spanish (American students):

- \* take risks with food, people, neighborhood they are unaccustomed to
- \* expand Spanish vocabulary to include foods and dishes outside mainstream US culture

For learners of English (Latino students):

- \* increase self-esteem as Spanish experts who possess knowledge others wish to acquire
- \* gain comfort from realization that American kids have the same struggle to learn a second language and make similar mistakes
- \* expand English vocabulary and syntax
- \* increase pride in their culture

## *Time needed*

Three class days. The field trip will require one class day with preparatory and closure activities on each side. Preparatory activities should be done several days in advance of the field trip.

## Materials Needed

computer access, handouts (attached), reference material (cookbooks, dictionaries, etc.) and funds for bus travel and grocery shopping

## Procedures

### 1. the preparation

- \* Latino students are introduced to the cookbook project and prepped to collect a traditional recipe from a family member or friend. Oral history techniques are taught. Deadline is set for bringing in recipe information.
- \* American students will also be prepped on the project and oral history techniques. They will formulate questions to ask their key-pals. To gain some information about Dominican food they will visit two sites on the World Wide Web and print out two Dominican recipes on the Web (The printout will be assigned for homework the night before the field trip.):

for sancocho URL: <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~jtorres/domrep/sancocho.html>

for pastelitos URL: <http://www.aaart.com/domrep/pastelit.html>

### 2. the fieldtrip

- \* In the morning, American students will interview Latino students on their oral history projects. Together they will complete a debriefing sheet and word process or write out the cookbook entry as they decide to present it. The recipe should contain keywords in Spanish and in English.
- \* Optional: It would be desirable to have Latino parents provide a lunch and be available to speak to the students informally. American parents will reciprocate with a meal at the end of the cookbook project.)
- \* In the afternoon students will be divided into groups to go shopping at Spanish grocery stores in the area. Teachers will accompany groups, store owners will be contacted in advance. Latino students will be the guides to explain the foods to their key-pals. New and different foods will be brought back to be shared with other Spanish classes.

### 3. the follow-up

At home in their Spanish class American students will :

- \* enter their recipes into a database for the cookbook
- \* write their personal reflections of the previous day
- \* answer a questionnaire (attached) to provide some intellectual resolution to the topic
- \* compile a list of Spanish vocabulary of Dominican food

### 4. homework: study/learn vocabulary

## Extensions

- \* Make a menu for an imaginary Dominican restaurant.
- \* Read food ads from a Spanish-language newspaper (preferably from Caribbean or local Spanish papers.)  
Draw up your own food ads.
- \* Make a Caribbean meal for Parents' Night or some such event.
- \* Take an evening field trip to a local fiesta or restaurant.

## Handouts

### FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer as completely as you can.

Is Dominican food Tacos?

Are there any similarities between Mexican and Caribbean food ?

What differences are there ?

Where is the Dominican Republic ?

How does the geography/climate of the Dominican Republic affect the kind of food Dominicans eat?

What are some popular foods in the Dominican Republic ?

If you were to move across the globe, what foods from the USA would you miss the most ?

If you ran an American food store in a distant country, what foods would you carry ?

What do Dominicans in the United States miss about their home cooking ?



## Bibliography

### *Dominican/Caribbean food traditions*

Latin America Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1985

S9-S12 Latin American banquet, C47-C56 Dominican Christmas traditions/food

From Guacamole to Rocambole, Center for Latin American Studies, Western Kentucky University.

Recommended by source listed above in Latin American banquet lesson plan.

Wolfe, Linda, The Cooking of the Caribbean Islands, Time-Life Books, Foods of the World series, NY 1970

199 pages. Excellent background material, lavish color photos including step by step cooking techniques. May recipes, glossary, sample menus and mail order information (out of date?)

Rexach, Nilda, The Hispanic American Cookbook, Lyle Stuart, Inc., Secaucus, NJ 1985

185 pages, no illustrations. The recipes are not labeled as to country of origin, but this book is extremely useful as all recipes are in Spanish on one page with English on the opposite page. Also provides a glossary and conversion chart from American measures to metric.

Foods of Latin America, Latin American Curriculum Resource Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

Recipes compiled from commercial companies with color ads.

Karoff, Barbara, South American Cooking, Addison Wesley, Reading, MA 1989

214 pages, lists recipes by country, gives origins, influences and seasonal menus. (ISBN 0-201-55094-6)

### *Dominican / Latin American Culture*

Portillo, Lourdes, Mirrors in the Heart, WGBH Educational Foundation, Boston, MA 1993

A video on the Dominican Republic and Haiti, from the Americas series. This is good background information on racial relations and culture clash on the island of Hispaniola. Telephone order 1-800-LEARNER

Zapater, Beatriz, Fiesta!, Simon & Shuster, NY 1992

A picture story book about a South American immigrant family going to a fiesta in the US. Good background on different Latino cultures. (ISBN 0-671-79842-1)

## Oral History in the Classroom

Falk, Lisa, Cultural Reporter, Tom Snyder Productions and Smithsonian Institution, Watertown, MA. 1995

Excellent source for using oral history in the classroom. Comes with videos, computer templates for classroom handouts and other material. Telephone order 1-800-342-0236

Hotchkiss, Ron, "Oral History in the Classroom," *History and the Social Science Teacher*. Vol. 14, No. 3, pp.205-213

Hoopes, James, History: An Introduction for Students, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC 1979

Mehaffy, George, "Oral History in the Classroom. How to Do It Series," *Guide Series*. Vol. 2, No. 8

### Internet Sources

URL <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~jtorres/domrep/sancocho.html>

recipe for sancocho ( in English)

URL <http://www.aaart.com/domrep/pastelit.html>

Information about the Dominican Republic, including a recipe for pastelitos and information about this popular dish in English

### Keypal-Internet Class Exchanges

#### E-mail Classroom Connection

URL: <http://www.stolaf.edu/edu/network/iecc>

A site to look for partners for e-mail and classroom project partners. This would be a place to look for an ESL/transitional class of Spanish-speakers, it's less likely that Latin American classes can be found here, as the subscribers are largely US, Canadian and Australian.

### Kidsphere

A listserv with many valuable resources. To subscribe (for free) send e-mail to: [kidsphere-request@vms.cis.pitt.edu](mailto:kidsphere-request@vms.cis.pitt.edu) and leave the subject line blank. In the body of your message write: subscribe kidsphere <First Name Last Name> .

\*\* nota bene ! There are bad things as well as good things on the Net. Some Dominican homepages can lead you to the one with Pimps-R-Us which is sexual material in English and Spanish wholly inappropriate for students. You can avoid this page by using one of the software programs for censoring web sessions or by downloading in advance just the pages you want onto your hard drive.

### *Other Sources for finding an Exchange Class*

The best resource for learning about Latin America is to get in touch with Latin American people. While this can be done via letters and e-mail with people in the countries themselves, it would be foolish to overlook the immense resource in the US: recent immigrants. One way might be to choose the closest area where there is a large concentration of Spanish speakers and contact the school department's bi-lingual director.

Our exchange with a bilingual, transitional class in Lynn, MA has been extremely fruitful. In this area of the country, the students are mostly from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, in other areas you may find people of other national origins and adapt your lesson to that. The class you exchange with need not be the same age, although that is desirable. Classes at community colleges and adult education ESL classes may also yield results.