

What did Granny eat?

Time: 1 ½ hours

Individual and Group

Purpose

To find out more about people used to eat in the near past – including what type of food was available then.

Background to the task

We live in an age of convenience foods. We assume we can buy any food at any time of the year. Some foods we eat have travelled half way round the world to get into the shop. More and more families are buying prepared foods that just have to be heated.

Although convenience foods are convenient, they can have bad effects:

- Shipping (or flying) food a long way contributes towards environmental damage – local is much better
- Many people are losing the traditional skills of home cooking
- Prepared foods are more likely to be bad for health: many have high fat or sugar or even dangerous additives (e.g. the Sudan 1 colouring scare in early 2005 that led to over 500 products being withdrawn).

Older people will remember times when most food was local, organic and home cooked. What can we learn from them?

Carrying out the task

Individually

- Find someone over 60 who is willing to talk to you.
- Ask her or him what they used to eat when they were young Try to find out where the ingredients came from.
- Ask them if they had any favourite recipes, and if so to write them down
- Take a photo of them and/or make a tape recording if possible

In groups

- Try out some of these recipes
- Decide which are best

As a class

- Produce a book of interviews, photos of people and their favourite recipes from the past.

Recording results

See above

Teachers' notes

Materials needed

*A granny or someone of similar age who can be interviewed.
Access to digital cameras, tape recorders and ICT equipment generally*

Food ingredients depending on what people come up with.

Extensions

You might wish to launch the project by getting someone into school to talk about what they ate fifty years ago.

When the recipes are tried out it would be great to get a granny (or equivalent!) into the lesson to help with evaluations.

Link with any of PSHE / history / citizenship / English to write an introduction for the book.

Have a section in the book on organic food growing.

See <http://www.organicfood.co.uk/> for more on organic food. See also <http://www.whyorganic.org/>.

The Soil Association site is also good – visit <http://www.soilassociation.org>

However, a recent study (02/03/05) suggests that in terms of environmental impact, it is more important to buy local food than organic food. Transporting food by road for more than 12 miles has a worse effect on the environment than pesticides and artificial fertilisers.