

NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

6-8

Subject

Social Studies

Lesson Title

Making Frybread: Cultural Connections to Food

Activity Description: Food has brought people together since before time. Sometimes certain cultural foods begin from difficult times and then turn into a source of pride and a symbol of resilience for a people. This activity features the history and deep significance of frybread for Navajo Nation. Also included is a traditional recipe for frybread to share this cultural food with family and friends.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- WiFi access (optional)
- Ingredients: all-purpose flour, baking powder, powdered milk, salt, shortening (or oil) for frying, warm water
- Mixing bowl and frying pan/skillet
- Print or digital version of the article "[National Homemade Bread Day and the History of Frybread](#)"
- YouTube video "[How to Make Frybread](#)" by Turquoise Skies
- Print or digital version of [I am New Mexico Navajo Frybread recipe](#)

STEPS

Have you ever had frybread? Frybread has become a famous cultural food that many recognize and love as a Native food. However, it actually began as a way for the Navajo people to use the basic food items the US government gave during the forced relocation called the Navajo Long Walk. Frybread is now eaten by many other tribes. Follow the links below to learn a deeper history of frybread and how to make some yourself. Please ask permission before doing any activity in the kitchen.

Activity Steps:

1. First, read the article "[National Homemade Bread Day and the History of Frybread](#)"
 - a. Why does frybread represent resilience (the ability to overcome suffering) to the Navajo people?
2. Now, watch this video on YouTube to learn "[How to Make Frybread](#)"
3. Next, print the [traditional recipe for Navajo Frybread](#) or use the one below if you do not have WiFi access.
4. Ask permission to make these with your caregiver. Gather the ingredients and follow the steps below.

Frybread Recipe:

2 cups all-purpose flour	4 teaspoons baking powder	2 tbsp powdered milk
1/2 teaspoon Salt	Shortening (or oil for frying)	2/3 cup warm water

1. Combine flour, baking powder, powdered milk, and salt in a large mixing bowl.
2. Add the warm water to the dry mixture and stir it into a smooth and elastic dough (you can use your hands).
3. Divide dough into balls between 1-2 inches thick.
4. Lightly flour a surface and roll out each ball of dough into a 1/4-inch thick circle.
5. Cut or use your finger to make a small hole in the center of each circle. (important)
6. Heat shortening in a frying pan at a medium-high heat. Fill the pan with about 2 inches of oil or melted shortening.
7. Fry the dough, one piece at a time, until golden on both sides. Turn them one time while frying.
8. Drain on a paper towel or cloth and enjoy them warm!

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HELPFUL TIPS

Parents and caregivers: For families that have young children, this activity can be done all together. To help younger children know about frybread, this YouTube video offers a read aloud of the storybook [Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story](#) by Kevin Noble Maillard

For families, it is also possible that frybread and other cultural foods are reminders of historical events that caused trauma to their ancestors that can still be felt today. Discussing historical trauma with your child can be difficult. For parents or caregivers who want help explaining historical trauma read this article ["Understanding Historical Trauma and Native Americans"](#) from *Native Hope*.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Families and educators: While frybread is a cultural staple of many Native tribes, there is also controversy with the food. For some it is a symbol of the oppression and suffering of the Navajo people and for others it is an unhealthy comfort food that increases poor health in tribal communities. It is important to be sensitive to the cultural perspectives of any community as frybread is a deeply traditional food.

- To further understand the history and controversy of frybread read this article ["Fry Bread Nation: A Tragic Necessity"](#) from Arizona Public Media.
- For a literature connection, the poem ["Frybread Dreams"](#) by Richard Walker on *Indian Country Today* expresses the feelings of pain and resilience that frybread causes the author to feel.

Activity Resources:

- "National Homemade Bread Day and the History of Frybread" <http://blog.nativepartnership.org/national-homemade-bread-day-and-the-history-of-frybread/>
- "How to Make Frybread" YouTube video by *Turquoise Skies* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5shGN5SicEQ>
- "Navajo Frybread" recipe from *I am New Mexico* <https://iamrm.com/dine-navajo-fry-bread-recipe/>

Additional Resources:

- *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MibEeGiFThM>
- "Understanding Historical Trauma and Native Americans" from *Native Hope* <https://blog.nativehope.org/understanding-historical-trauma-and-native-americans>
- "Fry Bread Nation: A Tragic Necessity" by *Arizona Public Media* <https://news.azpm.org/p/news-splash/2017/6/29/113193-fry-bread-nation-a-tragic-necessity/>
- "Frybread Dreams" by Richard Walker, *Indian Country Today* <https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/native-american-heritage-month-frybread-dreams-a-poem-by-richard-walker-ArWioM8Qq0Skbmi5EVCL3w>