

“Cómo se come una guayaba”

THEME:	BASIC NEEDS (FOOD)				
LANGUAGE:	SPANISH				
STANDARD:	COMMUNICATION	CULTURES	CONNECTIONS	COMPARISONS	
	1.2	1.3	2.2	3.2	4.2

Time Frame:

Two 55-minute class sessions

Materials Needed:

- Pictures of tropical fruits (particularly the guava)
- Copy of prologue to “*Cuando era puertorriqueña*” by Esmeralda Santiago (1994) (provided)
- Grids for reading and writing tasks (provided)
- Overhead transparencies of the grids

Description of Task:

Pre-reading:

Note: This task is intended for students at beginning levels of proficiency. Given the nature of the authentic text to be used, a great deal of support through pre-reading activities and structured during-reading activities is provided (Little et al., 1994; Swaffar, 1985; Young, 1993).

The students will consider the following list of times and places and choose five. They will then write down the food (in English) that comes to mind when they think of this time or place.

Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Halloween, or a special place such as a previous home, cabin, camp, vacation spot, etc.

The students will share their responses with one classmate and compare lists.

Level:

Novice-High

Purpose:

To scan for information, to describe in writing, and to explore the feelings and memories that foods can conjure

Communicative

Functions:

Referential: Scanning for information; describing something

Language Structures:

Descriptive adjectives; noun-adjective agreement; present tense

Cultural Aspects:

Cultural significance of certain foods

Modalities:

Reading

Writing

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The students will participate in a class discussion in English about the following questions:

- Why did these foods come to mind?
- Do you think people in other families or in other areas of the country or world would think of the same foods, for example at Christmas? Why not?
- How do certain foods become related to time and place? How do they conjure feelings and memories?

The teacher will explain that they will be read about an important food in Puerto Rico and show the students pictures of different types of fruits. Pointing to familiar fruits the teacher will ask students to identify and describe them. These questions should be made visible to the students on an overhead projector or chalkboard. The teacher will need to give cues to help students understand these unfamiliar vocabulary words, stressing the noun-adjective agreement. This activity should be conducted entirely in Spanish. A list of adjectives should be created on the board or an overhead transparency so that students can refer to it later.

Por fuera:

- ¿Qué color es?
- ¿Es grande o pequeño?
- ¿Es suave o áspero?
- ¿Tiene cáscara? ¿Es suave o dura?

Por dentro:

- ¿Qué color es?
- ¿Es blando o duro?
- ¿Es jugoso o seco?
- ¿Es crujiente?
- ¿Tiene semillas? ¿Son grandes o pequeñas?
- ¿Tiene pulpa?

El sabor:

- ¿Es dulce, agrio, o ácido?

¿Cuándo es la cosecha? (la mejor época para comer esta fruta porque es fresca y más barata)

In a whole class discussion, ask students to describe an orange (or other fruit). A list of adjectives for describing the orange is created.

¿Cómo se come la naranja? The teacher will model the process of how to eat an orange using relevant vocabulary for telling order of events. The teacher

can model various forms of the present tense (e.g., first person and second person).

1. lavo/lavas la naranja
2. pelo/pelas o quito/quitas la cáscara
3. separo/separas las partes de la naranja
4. muerdo/muerdes las partes de la naranja con los dientes
5. evito/evitas tragar las semillas

Choose another fruit and have students describe the process. (It may be useful for the teacher to explain to the students that often foreigners are not sure how or when to eat certain fruits. For example, plantains are often mistaken for bananas. Imagine the surprise of the visitor who buys a great big banana, peels it, and takes a big bite of a bitter plantain.)

Have students offer examples of some fruits that are not common in the U. S. and briefly describe them to the class. The teacher can offer examples, as well. Continue to add words to the list of descriptive adjectives and verbs used to describe the process of eating fruit.

During-reading:

Students read in pairs while they perform a scanning exercise to fill in the information on the grid, listing adjectives given from the reading that describe the guayaba's color, texture, size, exterior, seeds, and taste. Some pairs will be assigned the grid for the ripe *guayaba* and others will be assigned the one for the green (not ripe) *guayaba* (grids provided). Then they will write the steps for eating a *guayaba* told by the narrator. In addition, they should answer (in English) the discussion questions on the handout.

Post-reading:

Pairs of students that described the ripe/green guavas will share their responses with the class, and the teacher will fill in the various responses on an overhead transparency of the grid. The teacher will continuously draw students' attention back to the text and have students point out parts in the text that led them to their answers. Noun/adjective agreement and correct use of the present tense should be emphasized. The class will then address the discussion questions.

The teacher will ask the students to think of their own favorite fruit. Individuals are to fill in the same information on the new grid (provided), and explain the steps for eating this fruit. They should be careful not to

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use the name of the fruit in their description. The students' papers are exchanged, and the readers are to look at the description of the fruit on the grid and guess the name of the fruit described. They write the name of the fruit on the paper along with their name. Later students can check with the writer to see if their answer was correct.

Assessment:

The tasks have assessment built in—the grids for the ripe/green guayabas provide a comprehension check. Students' description of their favorite fruit can be assessed in terms of the content, descriptive adjectives, adjective/noun agreement, and correct use of the present tense. Students' comprehension of descriptions of favorite fruits is assessed by how well they guessed the name of the fruit (does their guess correspond to the description provided?).

Extensions:

Suggestions for adapting the task for various levels:

For advanced levels: The discussions can be carried out entirely in Spanish. Other language structures such as the imperfect tense can be emphasized. Students can be expected to process much more of the text and can be asked questions that involve inferencing (for example, "Santiago consistently refers to differences between children and adults—what is she trying to communicate with these references?" Why does she use the word "*agridulce*" in the last sentence?" "What is she communicating to the reader?").

Other extensions:

- Provide samples of various tropical fruits (available at local Mexican grocery stores or co-ops) for students to taste and according to the descriptions from the reading, have them decide which is the guayaba.
- Students can interview their parents and grandparents asking what foods were significant to them while they were growing up.

Cultural extensions:

- The students can request information (via e-mail) from students in various Spanish-speaking countries, asking what foods are significant to

them. Once they receive responses, they can try making some of these foods in class or at home.

- Students can read other texts or see movies that show the cultural significance of foods in target cultures (see resources below).

References and Resources:

This lesson makes use of the following authentic material:

The Prólogo: Cómo se come una guayaba from *Cuando era puertorriqueña* by Esmeralda Santiago. Copyright © 1995 by Esmeralda Santiago.

To reprint this material online permission has been requested by Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc.

Little, D., Devitt, S., & Singleton, D. (1994). *Learning foreign languages from authentic texts: Theory and practice*. Dublin, Ireland: Authentik Language Learning Resources Ltd.

Swaffar, J. K. (1985). Reading authentic texts in a foreign language: A cognitive model. *Modern Language Journal*, 69, 15-34.

Young, D. J. (1993). Processing strategies of foreign language readers: Authentic and edited input. *Foreign Language Annals*, 26, (4), 451-461.

Target Culture Literature Describing Cultural Significance of Food:

Mayle, P. (1989). *A Year in Provence*. New York: Vintage Books: A Division of Random House, Inc.

Esquivel, L. (1992). *Como agua para chocolate*. New York: Doubleday.

Movies Showing Cultural Significance of Food:

Babette's Feast (French)

A Chef in Love (French)

Like Water for Chocolate (Spanish)

Reflections:

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