

# Mealtime Traditions Around the World

**THEME:** CONNECTING FOOD, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

4TH  
GRADE

50  
MIN.

SPRING

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*Why do cultures create traditions and habits around eating food?*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

✓ Students will be able to compare and contrast the mealtime traditions of various cultures.

## CONCEPTS

culture mealtime tradition

### *Engaging the Classroom Teacher*

- During Action Step 3, suggest that the teacher support groups as they work at and move from each station in the gallery walk.
- During Action Step 4, suggest that the teacher share their mealtime traditions alongside the class.

## LESSON DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, students learn about mealtime traditions from other cultures by taking a walking tour of the world.

## MATERIALS

- Mealtime Traditions Posters from five different regions around the world (pp. 501–505)
- 5 pieces of chart paper
- Tape
- Post-it notes (5 for each student)
- Marker or pencil for each student
- Chime or bell (optional)
- Map or globe (optional)
- Tasting of one of the cultural foods mentioned (optional)

## PREPARATION

- Print the Mealtime Traditions Posters, and tape each to the center of a piece of chart paper. Consider adding more information or images to enrich students' understanding of that country or culture (e.g., the countries' flag, a map image, or examples of other food that is eaten).
- Display the following guiding questions:

### GALLERY WALK GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What was something that was unique or surprised you about the mealtime tradition of this country?
- Were there any foods that you would like to try?
- What is one question you have about this tradition?

## ACTION STEPS

**1. Engage:** Explain that today you'll be discussing some mealtime traditions from different cultures around the world. Explain, *A culture is a particular group that shares similar beliefs, habits, or traditions. Explain that the culture could be based on a particular place like Mexican culture or it could be based on a mutual interest like the culture of fans of one sports team.* Ask students, *What are some traditions or habits your family or culture has around mealtime?* Discuss student responses, and explain that they'll have an opportunity to share more later in the activity **(5 min.)**

**2. Explain the Activity:** Explain, *You'll be going on a world tour today. In teams, you'll travel to a particular region of the world. Together, you'll read about the mealtime customs in that region, and reflect on what you learn.* Explain that some families in the US also eat these ways because immigrants have continued their traditions. Remind students that it is important when discussing culture to be respectful of differences. **(5 min.)**

**3. Gallery Walk:** Have students count off from one to five to make even teams. Then send each team to a different photo. Have students work together to read the information, look at the image, and discuss it based on the guiding questions. Then have each student write a reflection using one of the guiding questions. Students can write directly on the poster, or if you'd like to reuse the posters with multiple classes, have them write their comment on a Post-it note. Give groups 4-5 minutes at each station, and then have them switch to the next station **(20–25 min.)**

**4. Tasting and Discussion:** Have students return to their desks. Pass out the tasting you've brought, reminding students what culture it comes from. As students are eating, ask them to share more about their own mealtime traditions. Ask questions such as, *Are there certain foods you eat on certain days or at certain celebrations? Are there things you say or do, ways you sit, or utensils you use that are unique to your tradition?* **(10 min.)**

## REFLECTION

Have students discuss the following questions in small groups, then share with the class: **(5 min.)**

### Social and emotional learning

- *How did you work together in your group?*

### Check for understanding

- *What surprised you when learning about mealtime traditions from around the world? Did you notice anything different from your own traditions?*
- *What are similarities among different mealtime traditions? Did you notice anything similar to your own traditions?*
- *Why do you think cultures create traditions and habits around eating food? What is the purpose of these traditions?*

## ADAPTATIONS

**Extension:** Students brainstorm their own mealtime traditions to adopt in the cafeteria at lunchtime or in their classroom during snack or FoodCorps lessons.

**Research:** Have students research lingering questions about the cultures in the countries they learned about. One approach could be

connecting with community members to learn more about specific mealtime traditions.

## **ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS**

English Language Arts Common Core State Standards

### ***CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1***

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

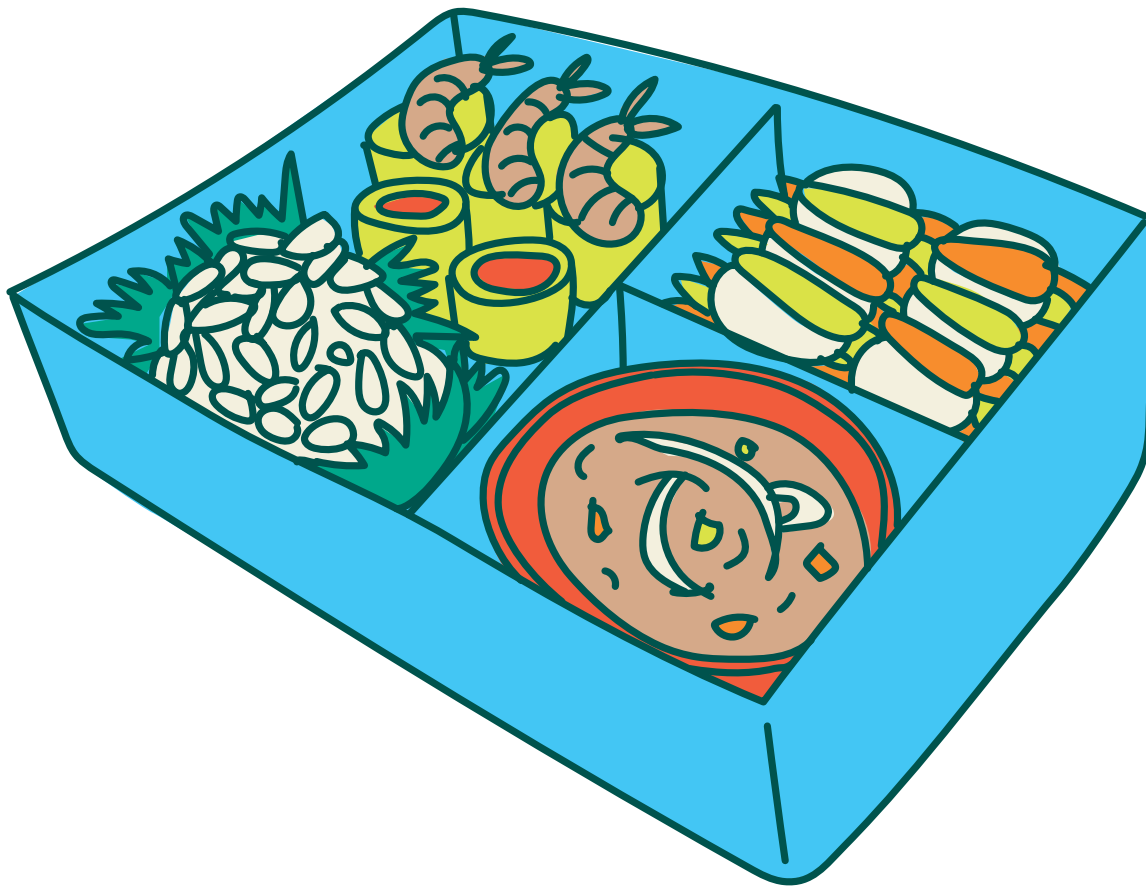
# MEALTIME TRADITION EXAMPLE

**Ethiopia:** In Ethiopia, people eat food with their right hand only, usually with a piece of bread called *injera*. Everyone eats from one really big sharing plate in the middle of the table, instead of having their own plates. You should eat what's closest to you on the plate instead of reaching across the table.



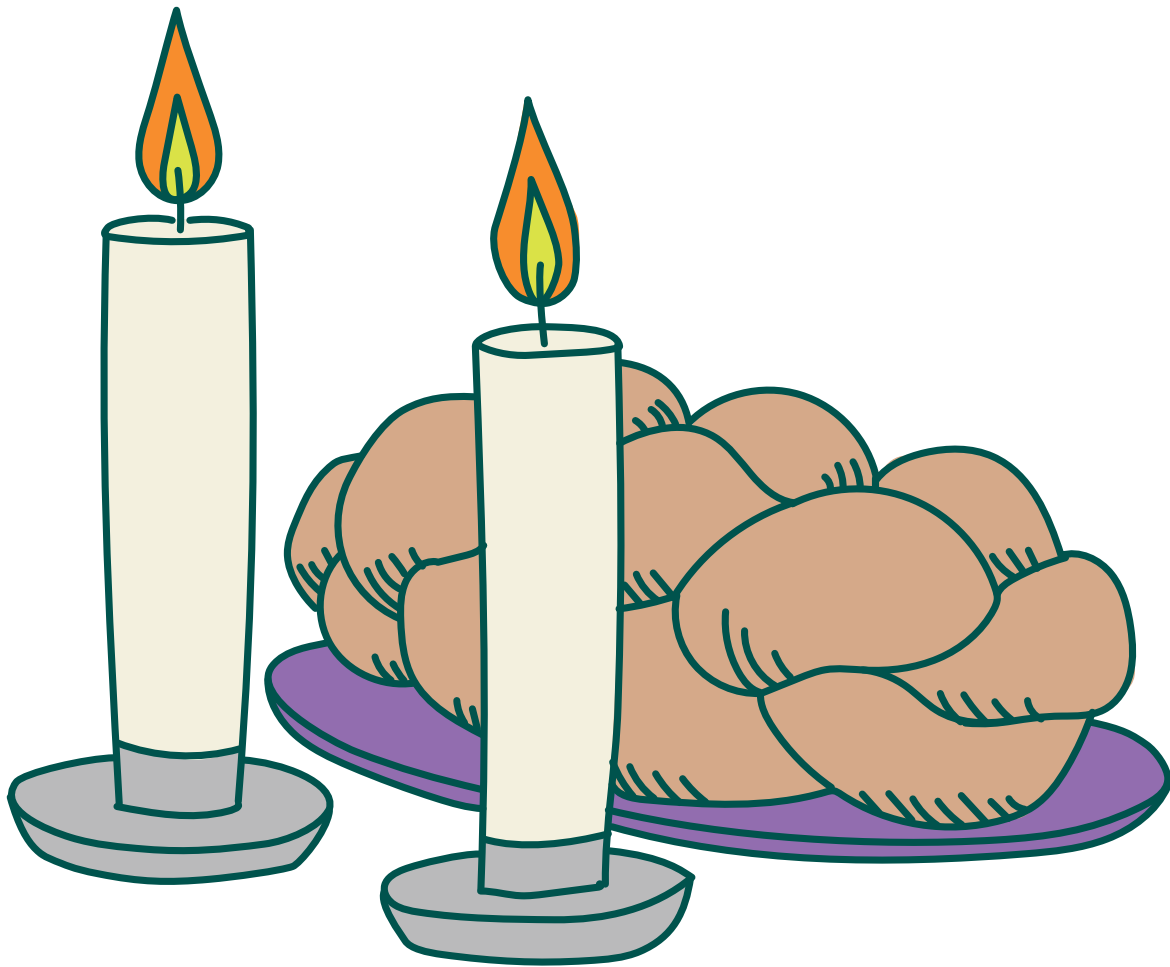
# MEALTIME TRADITION EXAMPLE

**Japan:** In Japan, people prepare *bento*, a box-shaped container, for lunch. It has fish or meat, vegetables, and rice in separate compartments. It's popular for parents to make bento boxes for their children's lunch at school and shape the food into cartoon characters. When eating a hot noodle soup, it's OK to make slurping sounds.



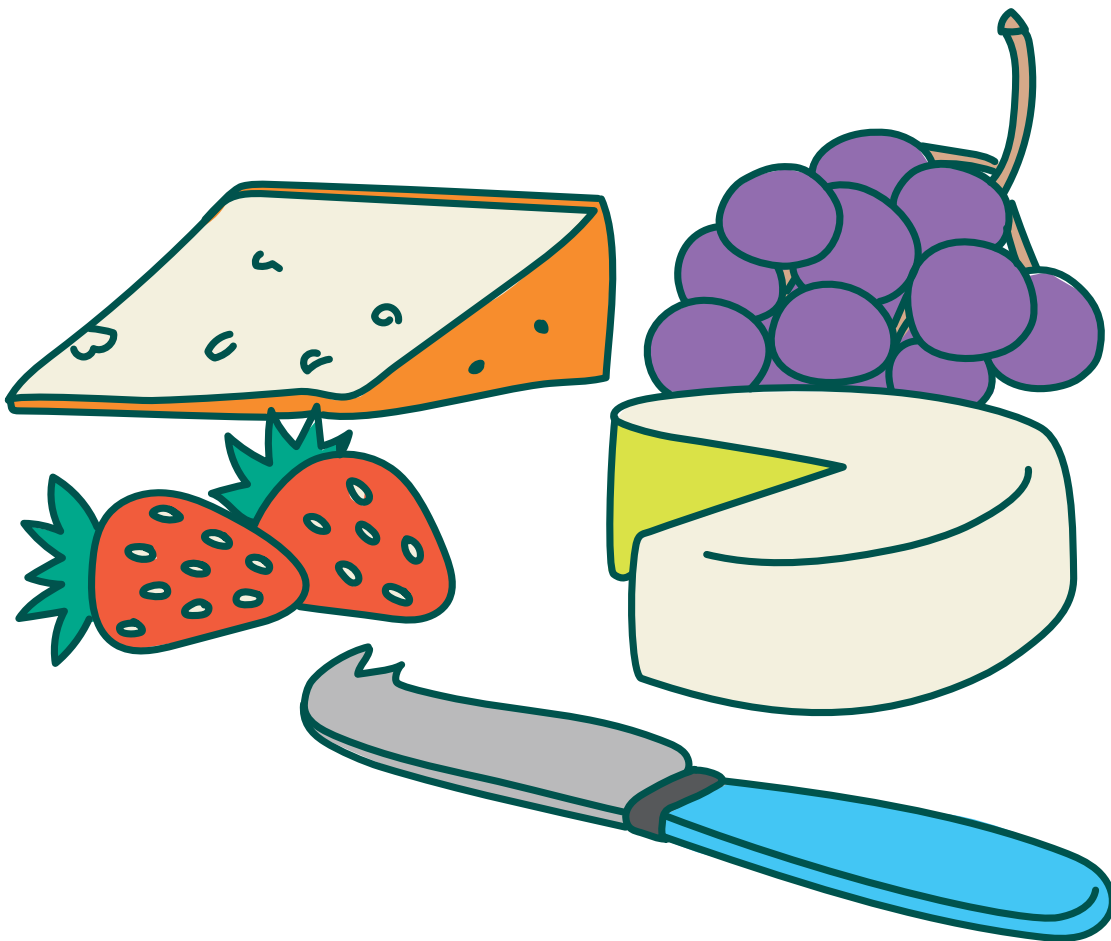
# MEALTIME TRADITION EXAMPLE

**Israel:** In Israel, people who are Jewish honor *Shabbat*, which is from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. During that time people are expected to rest and not use any technology. Dinner includes *challah*, a light egg bread, and is a time to connect with friends and family over candlelight.



# MEALTIME TRADITION EXAMPLE

**France:** In France, people like to eat a nice long meal together. Usually meals are a communal time that lasts at least one hour, and families and friends talk and enjoy each other's company. You should always keep your hands above the table. French people often eat cheese and fruit as dessert.



# MEALTIME TRADITION EXAMPLE

**Argentina:** In Argentina, people often eat dinner late in the evening. A popular meal to have is called *asado*, which is a barbecue of all different kinds of meats made on a grill called a *parilla* over an open fire. Another tradition is for people to share a tea drink called *mate*. Friends will drink mate from a gourd cup and pass it around, sharing a straw called a *bombilla*.

