



**UNIT 1:
FOOD AND CULTURE**

L.8

ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

Note to Teachers

While some foods common to a food tradition may be indigenous, crops and the know-how to grow them have been transported across cultures for thousands of years. These adopted crops can become integral to a society's diet and identity. Lesson 8 uses rice to explore this phenomenon.

Rice, corn and wheat are among the most widespread and fundamental crops across the world. Rice alone feeds more than 1.6 billion people.¹ This lesson has three parts:

1. A discussion of the transmission of rice cultivation across the globe.
2. An exploration of the meaning of rice in Japanese and Geechee food cultures.
3. A lab preparing Hoppin' John, a dish that originated among West African rice planters and was adapted to Southern tastes.

Goals *In this lesson, students will*

- learn the causes and consequences of diversity in varieties of food crops.
- understand how deeply adopted foods can be integrated into a culture.
- appreciate the meaning of food as expressed through the voices of eaters.
- compare the meanings of adopted food in two different cultures.

Objectives

- Students will use a map and information cards to trace the path of rice cultivation over time and its uses in cultures that adopted it.
- Students will use that map and rice samples to learn about the diversity of rice varieties.
- Students will read, summarize, and share a series of short texts on Japanese and Geechee culture.
- Using their summaries, students will analyze the meanings of rice in each culture and compare the role of rice among the Japanese and Geechee.

1) National Geographic, "Food Staple" at <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/food-staple/>



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

Please use this margin to notate how to best adapt this curriculum to your students.

Materials

- Rice cultivation cards
- Student worksheets and reading handouts (one for each student)
- Projected, hanging, or individual copies of a world map
- Samples of uncooked (and, if you prefer, cooked) rice varieties

Instructions

Part I. The History and Spread of Rice Cultivation

1. For the first part of the lesson, distribute the rice cultivation cards among students working individually or in pairs:
 - a. Ask students to read their card carefully, looking for:
 - the society where rice is cultivated, and when the knowledge of rice cultivation arrived there;
 - where rice came from or where it went next;
 - a typical or traditional use for rice in that society.
 - b. Ask students to present what they have learned, identifying their society on the map and sharing the other information they discovered.
 - c. If you are projecting the map on a white board, or students are working on individual copies of a map, ask them to trace the movement of rice as students map the path of its transmission.
2. Step back for a moment and ask students what they take away from this exercise. Their responses may include the following:
 - There are two domesticated types of rice, but the predominant one is Asian.
Feel free to note here that new research may have uncovered a third cultivar, domesticated in the Americas!
 - Rice cultivation spread all over the world, except in the most extreme climates.
 - Rice is used in different ways by different cultures.
3. If you have a selection of rice varieties, now is a good time to bring them out. Encourage students to look closely at the varieties you have brought and to describe their differences.

The goal is to bring an added level of complexity to their understanding. Not only has rice cultivation traveled across much of the globe, new varieties have emerged in each new location. Remind them why rice varieties might exist—to adapt to different geographic and climactic growing conditions, to serve different cooking techniques, and to offer the pleasure that comes from variety.

Part II. The Meaning of Rice in Japanese and Geechee Culture

1. Preface this exercise by noting that rice is key to the diets and identities of many cultures. Two we will explore here are the Japanese and the Geechee from the coastal regions of the southern U.S.



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

The question students will consider: Does rice have a similar or different meaning in the two cultures?

2. Reading and analysis (10-20 minutes):
 - a. Distribute reading selections and the worksheet. Let students know that the text selections are numbered and address either Japanese or Geechee culture.
 - b. Depending on your students' reading abilities, assign chunks of reading as small as a numbered paragraph or as large as the full set of selections for either Japanese or Geechee culture. Ask students to work individually on this exercise—even students who have the same reading selection. Ask each student to read the assigned selection and to look for a claim about the meaning of rice.
 - c. Students may encounter words that are unfamiliar, but ask them to try to identify the claim in the passage.
 - d. Once students have read and considered their passage, ask them to summarize the claim in specific terms, in one or two sentences. Write that summary on the worksheet in the space corresponding to the paragraph number.
3. Discussion (10-15 minutes)

OPTION 1: If it is convenient for students to gather in two groups, ask them to separate into one group whose selections focus on Japan and another group whose selections focus on the Geechee.

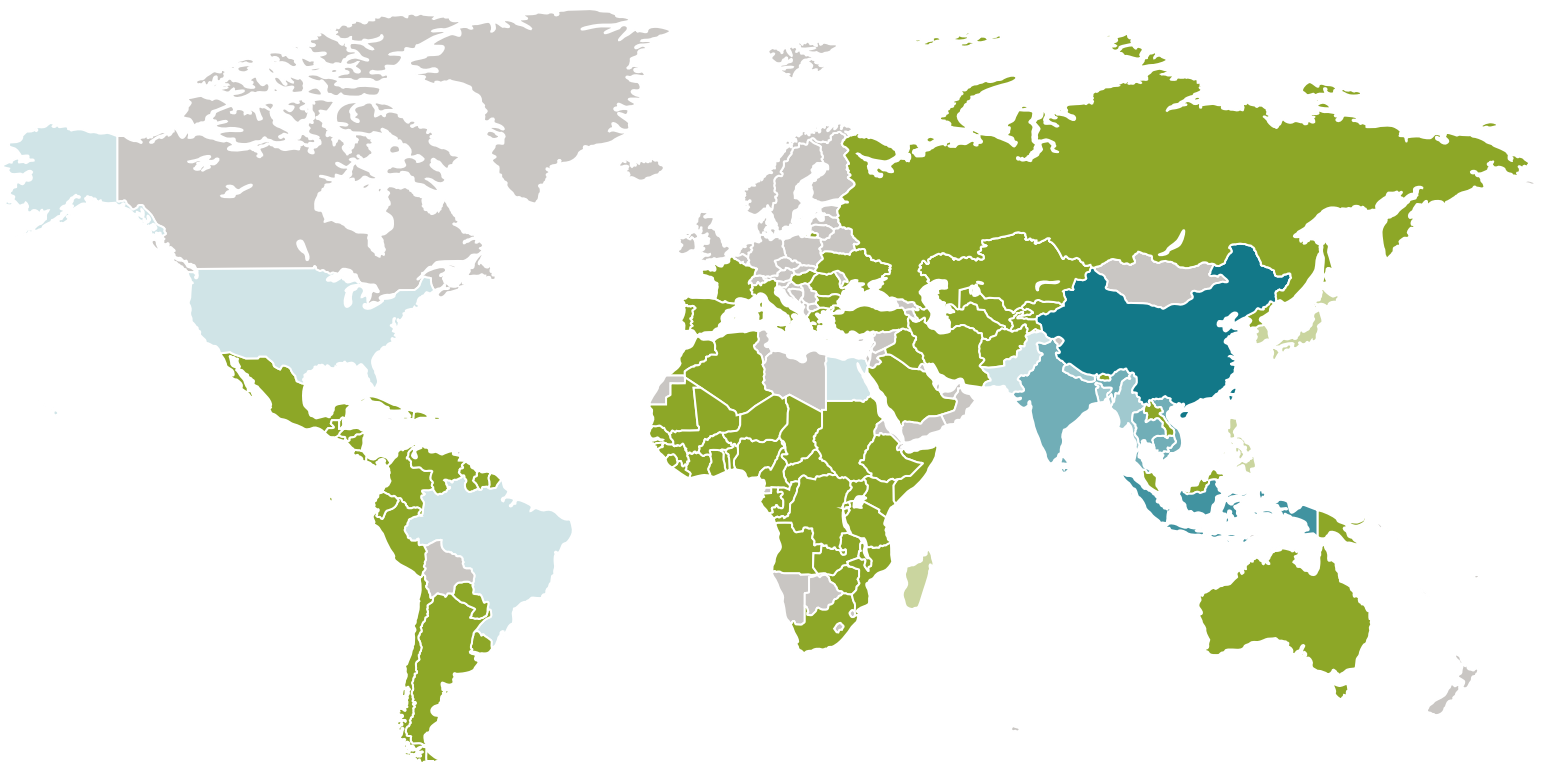
 - a. Ask students to share their summaries and invite the other members of the group to take notes on their own worksheets.
 - b. Encourage any students who worked on the same passage to listen carefully to his/her peer's summary and to reflect on their own in comparison.
 - c. Once everyone has shared and taken notes on each of the summaries, ask the group to consider the meaning that these selections together create and to record their observations on their worksheet.
 - d. Bring the full group back together to share each of the summaries and the broader observations.
 - e. Invite students to discuss the final question: what similarities and differences do they see in the meaning of rice to these two very different and distant cultures?

OPTION 2: If it is difficult to get students in two groups, work as a full class.

 - a. Work through the Japan selections:
 - Ask students to take turns sharing their summaries as their peers take notes.
 - Step back to ask for observations on the meaning the selections taken together reveal.
 - b. Do the same for the Geechee selections.
 - c. Open the floor for a full-group discussion on the similarities and differences between these different and distant cultures. Does rice have a similar or different place in the identity of each group?
4. Close this discussion with an opportunity to ask questions or add insights not already on the table.

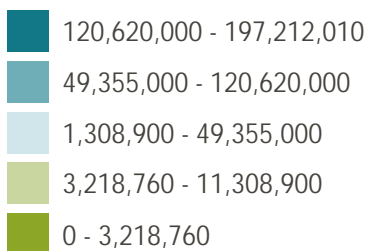


ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE



RICE PRODUCTION

Metric tonnes by Country



2010 world rice production (<https://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=17614>)



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE**HOPPIN’
JOHN***16 Students***Equipment List**

- 16 cutting boards
- 16 knives
- 16 peelers
- 2 Induction burners
- Blender
- 2 small pots
- Large saucepan w/lid
- 1 large bowl
- 2 cup wet measure
- 4 cup wet measure
- ¼ teaspoon measuring spoon
- 2 Wooden spoons
- Sieve
- Strainer
- Blender
- Slotted spoon
- Large serving bowl
- Serving spoon
- Large serving bowl
- Serving spoon

Food Items

- 2 quarts vegetable stock
- 1 cup Anson Mills Sea Island Red Peas
- 1 ½ cup onion
- 1 cup carrot
- 1 ½ cup celery
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 10 thyme sprigs
- ½ jalapeno
- Kosher salt
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 cup Anson Mills Carolina Gold rice
- 5 Tbsp unsalted butter
- Cider vinegar
- Sliced chives or scallions for garnish



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

Ingredients

PEAS

- 2 quarts vegetable stock
- 1 cup Anson Mills Sea Island Red Peas, soaked in a pot of water in the refrigerator overnight
- 1 ½ cups medium dice onions
- 1 cup medium dice peeled carrots
- 1 ½ cups medium dice celery
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 10 thyme sprigs
- ½ jalapeño, chopped
- Kosher salt

RICE

- 4 cups water
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup Anson Mills Carolina Gold Rice
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed

RED PEA GRAVY

- Reserved 1 cup cooked red peas
- Reserved 2 cups cooking liquid from the peas
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- Cider Vinegar
- Sliced chives or scallions for garnish

Directions

FOR THE PEAS:

1. Bring the stock to a simmer in a small pot. Drain the peas and add to the stock, along with all of the remaining ingredients except the salt. Cook the peas, partially covered, over low heat until they are soft, about 1 hour.
2. Drain the peas, reserving their cooking liquid, and measure out 1 cup peas and 2 cups liquid for the gravy; return the rest of the peas and liquid to the pot and keep warm.

MEANWHILE, FOR THE RICE:

1. Bring the water, salt and cayenne pepper to a boil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium, add the rice and butter, stir once, and bring to a simmer. Simmer gently, with a lid covering the pot until the rice is al dente, about 15 minutes.
2. Let the rice sit undisturbed for 5 minutes, then drain in a sieve. Return rice to pot and cover until ready to use.

2 ALT. *use if you have access to an oven:* Drain the rice in a sieve and rinse under cold water. Spread the rice out on a rimmed baking sheet. Dry the rice in the oven, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes. Scatter the butter evenly over the rice and continue to dry it, stirring every few minutes, for about 5 minutes longer. All excess moisture should have evaporated and the grains should be dry and separate.

FOR THE GRAVY:

1. Put the 1 cup peas, 2 cups cooking liquid and the butter in a blender and blend on high until smooth, about 3 minutes. Add cider vinegar to taste. (The gravy can be made up to 3 days ahead and kept in a covered container in the refrigerator; reheat, covered, over the lowest possible heat, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching.)

TO COMPLETE:

1. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the peas to a large serving bowl. Add the rice and carefully toss the rice and peas together. Pour the gravy over them, sprinkle with chives or scallions, and serve.



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION

China

Rice (*Oryza sativa*) was domesticated 8,200–13,500 years ago (about 10,000 BCE) in the Pearl River valley region of China along the Yangtze River.

Rice farming and cultivation traveled along the Yangtze River toward India.

China is currently the world's largest producer and consumer of rice.

India

Rice cultivation began in India around 2000 BCE. It traveled via the Yangtze River from China. Rice farming and cultivation moved south towards Sri Lanka.

In the Hindu tradition, rice represents sustenance and prosperity and holds an important role in many rites of passage. In Hindu weddings, rice is sprinkled on the bride and groom as a blessing.

Sri Lanka

Rice was a major crop in Sri Lanka as early as 1000 BCE. It arrived in Sri Lanka via India.

Lamprais is a popular Sri Lankan dish of savory rice, mixed meat and vegetable curries baked in a banana leaf. The dishes' origins lie in the Dutch colonization of Sri Lanka from by a group known as the Dutch Burghers around the 17th century.

Greece

Rice may have been introduced to Greece and the neighboring areas of the Mediterranean by returning members of Alexander the Great's expedition to India around 344–324 BCE. From a hub in Greece and Sicily, rice spread gradually throughout southern Europe and to a few locations in northern Africa.

Prior to the 1950s rice was considered a delicacy only eaten on special occasions. It is the traditional grain with which many Greeks stuff their Christmas turkeys and it is an important food on wedding tables all over Greece.

Sicily

The crop may have been introduced to Sicily around the 4th century BCE by some of the returning members of Alexander the Great's expedition to India.

After the 15th century, rice spread throughout Italy and later to France during the age of European Exploration.

Arancine (rice balls) were invented in the tenth century during the Kalbid rule of Sicily. Stuffed with meat and coated with a light, crispy batter, rice balls are similar to foods based on recipes known in the Middle East during the Middle Ages.

Northern/West Africa

The African species of rice (*Oryza glaberrima*) has been cultivated since about 1500 BCE. Its cultivation stayed mostly in West Africa and declined in favor of the Asian species, *Oryza sativa*, which was introduced to East Africa early in the common era from Southern Europe (pre 1000 CE) and spread westward.

Varieties of important rice and bean dishes among the peoples of West Africa remained a staple for their descendants subjected to slavery in the Spanish New World colonies, Brazil and elsewhere in the Americas. Agriculture traditions surrounding rice travelled with enslaved Africans to the Americas.



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION

Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal)

Rice was brought to the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) between the 10th and 13th century. Rice most likely came to Portugal from Italy.

Spanish colonization introduced rice to Latin and Central America.

Paella, a rice and seafood dish, is a popular dish in Spain.

Brazil

Rice was introduced to Brazil in the 1520s by the Portuguese and the enslaved Africans whom they brought there.

Rice and beans are so important in Brazilian cuisine that when people say something is “o arroz com feijão” (the rice and beans) of something, they mean “the basics” or “the foundation.”

South Carolina, USA

The first record of rice in North America dates from 1685, when the crop was produced on the coastal lowlands and islands of what is now South Carolina.

It is thought that enslaved West Africans who were transported to the Carolinas in the mid-18th century introduced the complex agricultural technology needed to grow rice.

After the Civil War, rice growing nearly disappeared in South Carolina, due in part to the end of forced labor.

California, USA

Rice cultivation began in California before the Civil War during the California Gold Rush from 1848 – 1855. It was brought by Chinese immigrants and grown in small amounts for their own consumption. Commercial production of rice in California began in 1912.

By 2006, California produced the second largest rice crop in the United States, after Arkansas.

Australia

Rice was one of the earliest crops planted in Australia by British settlers (late 1800s), who had experience with rice plantations in the Americas and the Indian subcontinent.

Australia's rice production long exceeded local needs, and rice exports to Japan have become a major source of foreign revenue. Although rice growing in Australia is highly profitable due to low land prices, several recent years of severe drought have led many to call for its elimination because of its effects on extremely fragile aquatic ecosystems.



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

5

JULIE DASH

from
RICE CULTURE

In Arlene Voski Avakian, ed., Through the Kitchen Window (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 19-23. PERMISSION REQUESTED.

6-10

JOSEPHINE BEOKU-BETTS

from
WE GOT OUR WAY OF
COOKING THINGS': WOMEN,
FOOD AND PRESERVATION
OF CULTURAL IDENTITY
AMONG THE GULLAH

From Carole Counihan, ed. FOOD IN THE USA (New York: Routledge, 2002), 276-294. PERMISSIONS REQUESTED.

Note to Readers: Bullet points represent statements made in interviews conducted by the author with Geechee women. The speakers are indicated in parentheses.

II. The Meaning of Rice among the Geechee

5. We come from South Carolina, a region where rice has always been an issue. We come from a long line of Geechees. We are the descendants of African captives that worked the low country and sea islands that stretch out along the coastlines of both South Carolina and Georgia. Geechees, or Gullahs as we are called by anthropologists, are rice eaters of the highest order. Some of our older family members, like Aunt Gertie, would have a serving of rice with every meal. For breakfast they would eat rice with milk, butter, and sugar; lunch was anything over rice. Dinner could include macaroni and cheese or any other starchy foods, but there would always be a serving of rice as well. Call it tradition, call it courage, call it what you may, the bottom line is Geechees gotta have it!

Before we were rice eaters we were rice planters and harvesters.

6. Because of Gullah women's daily involvement in food preparation in the home, they are very conversant with the stories and traditions passed down in their families about the significance of rice to their culture. On the occasions when I stayed as a guest in the study participants' homes and helped prepare evening meals, women often shared stories and folktales with me, as well as songs and dances connected with their rice culture. . . Several elderly women also recalled a time when rice held such a special place in their communities that children were not permitted to eat it except on Sundays or special occasions:
- They have folklore on rice down here. One of the things we grew up with, for instance, after birth of a child you wasn't given rice—nice rice. Because rice is supposed to been too starchy for the newborn baby to digest, and so you wasn't given rice to eat at all. (Velma Moore, 1991)
 - Some of the old folks believe that rice was also a cure for sick chickens, believe it or not. If your chicken were looking like they were kind of sick, you was to feed them raw rice, and it supposed to make the feel better, So they will take raw rice and toss them in the chicken yard. (Velma Moore, 1991)

7. Gullah women also control the interaction of their food practices with those of the dominant culture by emphasizing the preferred place of rice in the main meal. For example, even though foods associated with other ethnic groups are generally eaten in Gullah families (e.g., lasagna, pizza, hamburgers), the women I interviewed tend to categorize such foods as snacks, not meals. To illustrate this point, the following discussion took place between me and one participant.

Betty: Well, occasionally there is, you know, maybe lasagna. That is an occasional thing. Um, pizza is something the kids love. And we have that like—that is never a meal. That's like if you have a bunch of guys dropping over and you are going to have pizza and pop, or tea, and a salad, you know, something like that. But it is never a meal, never.

Interviewer: For you it is like a snack.

Betty: Yeah, it is more like a snack. Yeah, definitely. It's like a snack... You need to have some type of rice. (Betty Smith, 1992)



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

8. Dependence on rice as a staple food is the most significant way the Gullah express cultural identity through food practices. Rice is the main food that links Gullah dietary traditions with the food traditions of West African rice cultures; women play a primary role in fostering the continuance of these practices. In such cultures a person is not considered to have eaten a full meal unless rice is included.

Although most Gullah families no longer cultivate rice regularly, people are still conscious of its significance. Rice was described as the central part of the main family meal by at least 90% of the women interviewed. Typical were responses like:

- Many people feel if rice isn't cooked, they haven't eaten. Take my grandson, for instance. No matter what you cook, whether it's potatoes or macaroni, you have to prepare a separate portion of rice for him. Otherwise, he'll feel like he hasn't eaten. (Carla Bates, 1989)
- Rice is security. If you have some rice you'll never starve. It is a bellyful. You should never find a cupboard without it. (Precious Edwards, 1992)

9. **Interviewer:** As an African American living in this area, what do you think makes the food you eat different?

- Culture and what's available to you. I call it a "make do" society on Sapelo because you can't run to the supermarket to get things. We are plain cooking. We use salt, pepper, and onion as basic additives. Our flavoring comes from the type of meat we put in it. Bacon is white folks' food, pig tails, neck bones, and ham hock is what we use. Soul food is what other Americans call it, but we consider these to be foods we always ate. We never label ourselves or our food. (Velma Moore, 1991)
- On Sapelo you got things like red peas and rice. You know they cook the same things on that side over there too, but we assume that we have the monopoly on it, that nobody cooks it the way we cook it...although they call it the same thing, the ingredients may be a little different than they use, or the taste is definitely different. So it's considered Sapelo food. I mean very few places you go [where] they cook oysters and rice or they cook clam and gravy the way we do, and stuff like that. So we got our way of cooking things. So we pretty proud of calling it Sapelo food. Yes. (Vanessa Buck, 1989)

By claiming these features of the food system as their own through daily cooking practices, and by situating this knowledge in the community through the use of such words as "we" and "strictly ours," the Gullah women maintain the credibility and validity of a familiar and recognizable tradition in resistance to pressure to conform to dominant cultural practices.

10. Much effort is being made to keep these traditions alive through oral tradition and everyday practice. Observers are pessimistic about what the future holds for a people who now consider themselves an endangered species. One of the leading concerns expressed by residents of these communities is that the survival of this coastal culture is threatened by the rapid economic growth and development of tourist centers in the region. . . .



L.8

Rubric: RICE CULTURE AMONG THE JAPANESE AND GEECHEE



ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

RICE IN JAPANESE CULTURE

SUMMARIES:

What claim does your paragraph make about the meaning of rice? In your own words, summarize that claim in one or two sentences here. Be specific and write your summary next to the number of your paragraph.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



L.8

Rubric: RICE CULTURE AMONG THE JAPANESE AND GEECHEE

ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

GEECHEE RICE CULTURE

SUMMARIES:

What claim does your paragraph make about the meaning of rice? In your own words, summarize that claim in one or two sentences here. Be specific and write your summary next to the number of your paragraph.

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____



L.8

Rubric: RICE CULTURE AMONG THE JAPANESE AND GEECHEE

ADOPTION AND INTEGRATION: RICE CULTURE

GEECHEE RICE CULTURE

9. _____

10. _____

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

What big ideas do you hear in these excerpts about the meaning of rice in Geechee culture? (Why is rice important and what habits or practices illustrate that importance?)

What differences and similarities do you detect between the Japanese and Geechee?

