

National Dishes **Smarty**

Your tummy is rumbling. The table is set. And some tantalising smells are wafting through the kitchen door. So let's dig in to this delicious subject of 'food glorious food'. We all have our favourite dishes, the meals that we want time after time and the foods we crave. In this Smarty, we'll explore the special role that food plays in our life and in our cultures and traditions. So pick up your chopsticks, your fork and knife, or even your spork, and let's start this delectable feast for the mind.



Smarties are inspirational guides for educational activities. Click on the **red** button below to know more about them.

Smarties are complemented by our **Smart Spin** online encyclopedia. Click on the **green** button below to explore it.

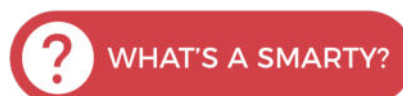


Table of Contents

1. Your Family's Dish

Discuss with your learner the traditional dishes of your household.

2. Your “National” Dish

Through discussion, your learner can develop a concept for their own “national” dish, and think through interesting scenarios.

3. Flour & Water Project

Your learner (and you!) will learn about some principles of cooking using mainly flour and water. Get the kitchen ready and let's go.

4. Chef's Table

A guided watching activity featuring the work of exceptional chefs.

5. What's for Dinner?

With some research, your learner may discover some fascinating facts about the meals they might take for granted.

6. Discover Dishes

A few questions to think about as your learner discovers national dishes.

7. Recommendations

A few recommendations for reading and watching.



1. Your Family's



SOMETHING TO DISCUSS

Dish

In this section, using the following questions, discuss with your learner the dishes and meals common and/or traditional in your household.

Most families have certain meals or dishes that everyone enjoys at special occasions and gatherings, certain times of the year, or even on a regular basis. It could be the meal you get to choose for your birthday, or a meal to celebrate a religious holiday. It could be the traditional breakfast that dad prepares early Sunday morning, or the delicious Friday dessert that grandma makes for all the cousins. It could be a secret recipe passed through generations within the family, or a famous dish that's a simple favorite no one can resist...

- What do you think is your family's 'national dish' (the meal that everyone loves, that you celebrate with, or that evokes very strong, special feelings)? How does it make you feel when cooking or eating it? Is it your personal favourite meal or does someone else always decide on it?
- Where does your family's national dish originate from? Which country, tradition or family member does it come from? Who typically prepares it for the family?
- If you were going to cook your family's national dish yourself, would you adjust the recipe or do anything differently? E.g. make it spicier, add more sauce, serve it with something different?
- There may be different countries and nationalities spread across your family. What is distinctive or special about these national cuisines that you've grown up with? Does everyone in your family like eating the same sorts of food, or are there family disagreements on whose food is best?! Which is *your* favorite?



- Do you notice any themes about the food you've grown up eating? Specific ingredients, herbs, spices, combinations, mealtime traditions?
 - Does your family have a sweet tooth or a salty tooth or are you a mixture? Do you yourself prefer sweet or savory food?
 - Do you have a friend with a very different family cuisine or 'family national dish' from yours? What do you like about their family's food tradition?
-

2. Your “National” Dish



SOMETHING TO DISCUSS

Discuss these questions with your learner to think through some scenarios and conceptualize a new dish.

Scenarios

- If you could only eat one dish for the rest of your life, what would it be? What about just only one type of dessert, only one type of breakfast or only one type of sandwich, for the rest of your life?*
- If you could only eat meals of only one [national cuisine](#) (e.g. only Italian, Chinese, Mediterranean, American, British, Moroccan, Mexican, etc.), what cuisine would that be?*
- If you could only know how to cook only one dish, what would it be? Would you like to be “the icecream expert” or the “king of breakfast”?

* Keep in mind that these questions are different from asking about your favorites, because it must also be food you won't be able to get sick of quickly, and be able to eat all the time (for example, ice cream can be what you like best to eat but might start hating it if you couldn't eat anything else).



Design

- If you were going to design your very own “national dish”, what would it be? What ingredients would it include? What type of cuisine would it be or be inspired by (or would it be a fusion of different influences and taste profiles)?
- Would it be for breakfast, lunch or dinner (or all three)? Would it be a savory dish or a sweet dish? Would it have any side dishes or other accompaniments?
- How would you serve it (e.g. fancy plates or straight from the pan)? Would it be eaten by hand, with cutlery or chopsticks, or something else entirely?
- When would it be served - a special occasion, or any day of the week? At home with your close family, when the entire extended family meet, or even just with friends? How formal or casual do you imagine the meal to be?
- Try and prepare it for your family and friends. Experiment with different variations, combinations and recipes. Who knows, it might become a tradition.

3. Flour & Water Project



It's astonishing how many different doughs can be cooked based around flour and water. In this activity, your learner (and you!) is going to try to make as many edible creations using flour and water as the two central ingredients.

Choose from the following suggestions which dough to prepare. We provide example recipes for each one, but feel free to find others on your own, and modify any of them as much as you want. This activity is about the experience and the knowledge you can gain from it. We recommend documenting each attempt (such as in a table), noting details such as quantities, cooking time, consistency and flavor of the result, etc.



- ❑ Pizza Dough
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Pasta Dough
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Crepe Batter
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Belgian Waffle
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Tortillas
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Crackers
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Pancakes
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Sourdough
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Dumplings
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
- ❑ Cookies
 - ❑ [Example recipe](#)
 - ❑ [Cookie chemistry](#)
- ❑ Slime
 - ❑ [Instructional video](#)
 - ❑ [Non-newtonian cornflour slime](#)

Try to use lots of different cooking techniques to see what happens to your doughs. Try baking in the oven, [grilling](#), [deep-frying](#), [boiling](#), [microwaving](#), etc. Get creative by using [other types of flour](#) and adding other ingredients (eggs, butter, oil, milk, cheese, herbs



and spices) and see what amazing mixtures you can invent. Try experimenting to achieve different results to learn as much as you can and perfect your recipe.

Check out this interesting information about cooking with water and flour:

- [Water and flour golden ratio](#)
- [The secret of stretchy dough](#)
- [Science and magic of pastry](#)
- [Bread chemistry](#)
- [Science behind yeast](#)
- [Water types in baking](#)
- [Different types of flour](#)
- [Cookie engineering](#)
- [Boiling bagels](#)
- [Cake chemistry](#)
- [What is gluten](#)
- [History of baking](#)

Questions

- What type of dish were you aiming to make? A sandwich? A cake? Pasta? Did you experiment with different ratios and different cooking times and heat for the same recipe? What did you discover? What other factors influenced the result, such as other ingredients, the mixing, the type of water (hard or soft), the tools you used, the love you put into it?
- What type of flour did you use? Do you know whether the type of water you used (whether it was hard, soft, acidic or alkaline)? Did you experiment with different types of flour and water? What other ingredients did you use?
- What method did you use to evaluate the result of each attempt? Did you prepare a questionnaire or table to compare them? Did you rate them based on flavor, consistency, softness, moisture, crunchiness, etc.? Did you only trust your own palate or let others taste as well?
- What information were you able to gather from each experiment and from comparing different attempts? How did you use the information you gained to improve as you continued to experiment?

(Send us the recipe for your best attempt - [here](#) - we'd love to try it!)



4. Chef's Table



We just have to recommend the spectacular Netflix show, '[Chef's Table](#)', which spotlights some of the world's best chefs, from a diverse range of countries, cuisines and cultures. The following are thinking points for guided watching. They can be used for any cooking show or documentary that features the work of professional chefs.

As you watch try to:

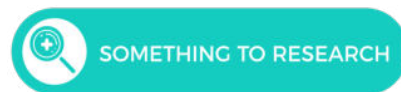
- Think about what makes these chefs so special, and what makes each one so unique. What quality or qualities do they all possess that have made them so exceptional, and which ones makes each chef different than the others.
- Understand how the country and the environment has impacted or influenced how the chefs create their food. Notice the ingredients or cooking techniques or presenting styles they use, and see whether they are using traditional recipes and techniques or more modern, innovative ones.
- Notice how these chefs do more than just prepare meals. Their food is a work of art. Think about how food can incorporate many different art forms and stimulate many different senses all at once. Does it make you think differently about the food you typically eat and how it can be made more artistic and influence more senses?
- Spot any dishes that you might have eaten. Did you like it when you tried it? Do you think these chefs might have made a better version?
- Spot any dishes that you've never tried or might never have heard of. Do you think you'd like them? How do you think they taste like?
- Spot any interesting cooking techniques you might not be familiar with, or exotic ingredients you haven't tasted before. Which ones are you most curious about? Can you find a way to try them or do some research about them?



Here are recommendations for other films about chefs, for which the thinking points above may also apply:

- [Spinning Plates \(2012 documentary\)](#)
- [Three Stars \(2010 documentary\)](#)
- [Kings of Pastry \(2009 documentary\)](#)
- [Chef \(2014 film\)](#)
- [Julie & Julia \(2009 film\)](#)
- [Ratatouille \(2007 animated film\)](#)

5. What's for Dinner?



Have your learner do some research into the dishes she or he is used to eat at the dinner table at home (or any other meal), to find some interesting insights hiding in the food they might take for granted.

- At dinner time, take a moment to really think about the plate of food that's in front of you. Where did it come from (and no, I don't mean the kitchen)? Where did it originate? What tradition, nation or culture is it associated with? What type of cuisine does it belong to?
- Where did the person who prepared it pick up the skills or knowledge to cook it? Was it taken from a recipe book or learned from another family member? How many generations in your family have cooked and eaten this meal?
- Where do the ingredients themselves come from (we don't mean the store)? Identify as many ingredients or components of your meal as possible, and then start to dig deeper. Find out where those ingredients first came from. Are they



local to your area or country or are they imported from abroad. Are they grown in the land organically, or manufactured in a big factory.

- Is this meal typical to your area or country or is it from another country or culture. Try to research where else in the world this meal is eaten.
- Can you dig up some historical examples of this meal, or times that this food might have been eaten in the past? For example, would kings and queens of old have eaten it, or is it considered “peasant food”? How was it first invented and when? Has it always been prepared like this, or did it evolve over time and used to be quite different? These days, are there different ways of preparing it, such as with different ingredients or served differently? Do you think this meal will keep changing? Do you think it’ll be much different in the future?

Note: This does not necessarily have to apply to a dinner if there is a more interesting meal at a different time of day. Try to do this activity with different dishes to get different answers each time and even compare the answers.

6. Discover Dishes



Have your learner spin through the [collection](#).

You may prompt their minds to wonder about the following.

- When you find a dish, you may want to wonder:
 - ◆ What makes it special?
 - ◆ Where did it originate from?
 - ◆ What’s its history (when was it “invented”, did it change throughout the years, etc.)?



- ◆ How is it part of the local culture (is it served during religious holidays, is it part of a tradition passed from one generation to the next, is its preparation a meaningful activity, etc.)?
 - For some of the dishes you're discovering, think (and even research): Why is it the national dish of the country or region? Is it mainly because of the local culture and history? The availability of produce and ingredients? What about the climate and economy?
 - Among the dishes you've discovered, which ones have you tried before? Of the ones you tried, which are your favorites? Of the ones you haven't, which are the ones you think you'd like? Which are the ones that seem most odd and even off putting? Which ones seem the most interesting, and why?
-

7. Recommendations

Books



SOMETHING TO READ

- "The Edible Atlas: Around the World in Thirty-Nine Cuisines", by Mina Holland
- "Food Journeys of a Lifetime: 500 Extraordinary Places to Eat Around the Globe", by National Geographic
- "Food Anatomy: The Curious Parts & Pieces of Our Edible World", by Julia Rothman

Shows



SOMETHING TO WATCH

- A Cook's Tour, hosted by Anthony Bourdain
- I'll Have What Phil's Having, hosted by Phil Rosenthal

