

Museum on Main Street

LOCAL PROGRAM & EVENT IDEAS

Key Ingredients

Section 1: A Land of Plenty

Programs

- Coffee Klatsch: Family/community hunting, gathering and fishing traditions—storytelling of favorite camps, fishing holes
- Lectures/demonstrations Native American food traditions
- History of irrigation practices, flooding cycles, technology, water wars
- Town land plot history—how did we come to grow/produce what we do?
- International and/or immigrant influences on local agricultural practices

Events

- Museum-sponsored public food gathering event (fish, berries, nuts, wild rice, etc.)
- Fishing tournament
- 4-H animal husbandry day
- Native food festival, demonstrations, cook-offs

Section 2: Local Flavors

Programs

- Historical lecture on the local origins of food industry that the town is best known for
- Oral history project examining the town's first growers/providers of best and least known local products
- Coffee klatsch focusing on seniors' memories regarding shopping for food, farmers' markets, vegetable gardens, visiting the butcher, etc.
- "What's Our Dish?" demonstration or video
- Public policy discussion—How do we market our local dish? Are we interested in more marketing? What's lost/gained in food/town promotion?
- Work with state folk art agencies: feature demonstrations/lectures by practitioners of eating traditions found within the state or region but not represented in the community—German, Polish, Thai, Polynesian, etc.

Events

- Children's U.S. food products/geography bee
- Host local farmers' market on museum grounds
- "What's Our Dish?" cook-off; hold contest for "best of" local favorite dish

Section 3: Dynamic Delivery

Programs

- Lectures: Historical changes in food technology (e.g. preservation, pasteurization, packaging, refrigeration)
- Coffee Klatsch--life before refrigeration, microwaves, ranges, running water

- To underscore theme of food readily available from other places, offer an open mic evening of “The first time I ever tasted . . . , “ (pineapple, oysters, etc.)
- Discussions/lessons on visual literacy: deconstructing food advertisements

Events

- Canning, drying, preserving demonstrations (resulting goods given to senior centers, families in need)
- Kids marketing contest—advertisements made for fictional or real local food products

Section 4: A Festival of Feasts

Programs

- Coffee Klatsch--rail dining, airline dining, cruise dining; barbecue memories, “the finest meal I’ve ever had,” “the worst meal I’ve ever had”
- Powwows from local tribes or as dance demonstrations from neighboring tribes
- Tradition exchange demonstrations: take single ingredient and have different ethnic groups demonstrate mainstream and unique applications in specific cuisine (e.g. rice, corn, sugar, etc.)
- Lectures: history of eating out in America, biographical features of food entrepreneurs/pioneers
- Public policy discussion: Fast Food Nation

Events

- Cook-offs / fund raisers for museum
- Exhibition/museum promotions made at local food festivals or fund raisers
- Barbecue cook-off/tasting or demonstration (master grillers, smokers, etc.)
- Museum volunteer field trip to other festivals
- Museum-sponsored field trips to out-of-town dining (fund raiser)
- “Chef for a Day”—in-town chefs swap restaurants or out-of-town chefs visit local diners for a day

Section 5: Home Cooking

Programs

- Coffee Klatsch: memories of Thanksgiving, weddings, manners and mistakes, eating fancy at home
- Lectures: True, Untold History of the First Thanksgiving; Thanksgivings Around the World: Religious and Secular feasts; Martha Stewart: Monster or Mentor?
- Survey of cookbooks and influences of women’s magazines on home cooking
- Oral histories: learning to cook, TV dinners, baby foods, Christmas foods, sharing recipes with neighbors, blessing & religious traditions of the table

Events

- Miss Manners: Food Etiquette Lessons
- Recipe Swaps (select different dish for different day: soups, breads, salads, desserts)
- “The Well-stocked Kitchen”: local kitchen suppliers demonstrate the key ingredients of every home kitchen

- Cook-offs—Thanksgiving dishes, wedding and birthday cakes
- Cookbook sale
- In association with community education services, affiliated cooking classes
- Table setting contests

Overall Program & Event Ideas

Programs

- Food in American Film Festival (might include *Big Night*; *Chocolat*; *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*; *Diner*)
- Food in International Film Festival (might include *Like Water for Chocolate*; *Eat, Drink Man, Woman*; *Babette's Feast*; *Tampopo*, *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*)
- Video/Installation Performance Art: *Liza Lu's "Kitchen"*
- Lecture/discussions: "Hunger in our Town;" "Gluttony in America: One of the Deadly Sins"
- The language and etymology of food, food in literature/poetry
- Food historians' explorations of "new" ingredients to local and American cooking (cumin, cilantro, tofu, rice paper, etc.), origins and impact
- History of fast food, vending machines, vegetarianism, food stamps, Slow Food movement
- Food safety— book discussion: *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair
- Public policy discussion: Genetically altered foods, GMO movement

Events

- Food in Theater (*The Long Christmas Dinner*, Thornton Wilder; *Chili Queen*, Jim Lehrer; *Bus Stop*, William Inge; *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, Kaufmann & Hart)
- Food Safety/cleanliness demonstrations
- Food drives for homeless shelters, churches, senior centers
- Beer & wine tasting fund raisers
- Ice sculptures
- Choral or symphony concerts feature food in music, on Broadway, etc.
- Kitchen science demonstrations
- Health, diet, and supplements debates
- Tours of food factories, markets
- Museum community cook book, compiled and resold as fund raiser
- Local "Iron Chef" competition
- China collectors display, finders, and appraisal day