

## Key Ingredients: America by Food

### Exhibition Description

What exactly are kolaces, spaetzle and pierogies? What is in burgoo and gumbo anyway? How did yams and pigs come to America? Most of us eat day in and day out without giving a second thought to the wealth of history and culture that shapes our dining habits and taste preferences. Our recipes, menus, ceremonies, etiquette, and even our fast food are directly affected by our country's rich immigrant experience, the history and innovations of food preparation technology, and the ever-changing availability of key ingredients.

*Key Ingredients: America by Food*, explains the little known, the everyday, and the obvious through an entertaining and informative overview of our country's diverse regional cooking and eating traditions. It investigates how culture, ethnicity, landscape and tradition influence foods and flavors we enjoy across the nation. *Key Ingredients* demonstrates how food on the American table is rooted in centuries of continuous borrowing and sharing between people across generations, across cultures and across the land. In addition, it underscores the contributions made by Native America cultures to our palate and eating habits. It also addresses the entrepreneurial spirit on which many food production industries are based, such as those of food pioneers Heinz, Campbell, and Borden.

The project website, [keyingredients.org](http://keyingredients.org) invites people across the country to share their family recipes and food stories, learn about others food traditions and identify favorite small town eateries. Basque families in Nevada can swap recipes with Finnish towns in Wisconsin and Cuban communities in Florida.

The project proves to be most effective at the local level. *Key Ingredients* inspires the gathering, celebration, and preservation of the finest of what rural America has to offer. Host institutions may create activities and events that are both fun and informative. Cook-offs, oral history projects, folk demonstrations, publications, storytelling, chili and barbecue festivals, and ancillary exhibitions are just a few of the possible activities. When the Smithsonian comes to town, tell everyone to bring a favorite "hot dish" and sit down to share stories, laugh, and of course, . . . . . EAT!