

Mail Date

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## Smithsonian Exhibition Explores the Diverse Food Traditions of America

The food on the American table may not define exactly *what* we are as a nation, but the traditions surrounding our foods speak volumes about *who* we are. They are staggeringly diverse and constantly evolving. “Key Ingredients: America by Food,” a new Smithsonian traveling exhibition, delves into the historical, regional and social traditions that merge in everyday meals and celebrations of the American table.

The newest exhibition from Museum on Main Street, a partnership of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) and state humanities councils, “Key Ingredients” will open at the end of May in Utah and Illinois. The exhibition will be on view at the Museum of the San Rafael in Castle Dale, Utah from May 30 through June 27. A second copy of the exhibition will open at the West Chicago City Museum in West Chicago, Ill. May 31 and will remain of view through July 12.

Through a selection of artifacts, photographs and illustrations, “Key Ingredients” examines how culture, ethnicity, class, landscape and tradition influence the foods and flavors we enjoy across the nation. The exhibition also looks at the evolution of the American kitchen and how food industries have

responded to the technological innovations that have enabled Americans to choose an ever-wider variety of frozen, prepared and fresh foods. The exhibition also addresses the entrepreneurial spirit on which many food production companies are based, such as food pioneers Heinz, Campbell and Borden.

An interactive website, [www.keyingredients.org](http://www.keyingredients.org), has been developed in conjunction with the exhibition. The site, which will go live in April, invites people across the country to share their family recipes and food stories, learn about other food traditions and identify favorite small town eateries.

The exhibition is part of the Museum on Main Street, which serves museums, libraries and historical societies in rural America. The SITES-Federation of State Humanities Councils partnership, established in 1991, was formed as a creative response to the challenge faced by rural museums to enhance their own cultural legacies.

Each year, SITES shares the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside of Washington, D.C. One of the Smithsonian's four National Programs, SITES makes available a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown not only in museums but wherever people live, work and play: including in libraries, science centers, historical societies, community centers, botanical gardens, schools and shopping malls. In 2002, SITES celebrated 50 years of connecting Americans to their shared cultural heritage. Exhibition descriptions and tour schedules are available at [www.si.edu/sites](http://www.si.edu/sites).

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