



# Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan

## Cooking Colonial Foods

**School:** Veterans Memorial School  
**Subject:** Social Studies

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**Grade:** Elementary

### Introduction:

This lesson would be a great follow-up after a visit to any type of living colonial life program. (For the Massachusetts area there are many such places: The Wenham Museum, Plimouth Plantation, Sturbridge Village, etc.)

The lesson is intended as one small part of a complete unit that focuses on local and regional historic sites, their purpose, significance, and relevance to the colonial period of our country's history and how the study of these sites can tell us about the people that lived during these times. This lesson assumes the students have some prior knowledge of colonial life.

Cooking with young students can be fun. The following recipes are the ones I thought to be most authentic to the time period and the easiest to make. These recipes are tried and true, having been passed down through at least five generations of the paternal side of my family (although I did cross references each recipe to get exact measurements and cooking times).

### Objectives:

- Students will come away with a better understanding of colonial life.
- They will be able to identify common household tools.

### Materials:

- General kitchen and baking tools.
- Please see each individual recipe for ingredients.



At the Saugus Iron Works 17<sup>th</sup> Century Cooking Demonstration

### Recipes:

Recipes are included for: [Colonial Gingerbread](#), [Spider Johnnycake](#), [Minute Man Johnnycake](#), [Butter](#), [Indian Pudding](#), and [Sweet Potato & Molasses Pudding](#).

Other easy classroom cooking class ideas: Hot Mulled Cider, Cranberry Sauce, Cranberry Relish, Pumpkin Pudding, Bread Pudding... there are so many!



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## Colonial Gingerbread

Cream together:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup brown sugar  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup butter

Add: 1 egg  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt (a pinch)  
1 teaspoon ginger  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup buttermilk  
1 cup molasses  
2 cups flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda

Mix well and bake in 8" or 9" pan for 1 hour at 325°.



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## Spider Johnnycake<sup>1</sup>

¾ cup cornmeal

1 cup flour

1 tablespoon sugar

½ teaspoon salt (a pinch)

1 teaspoon baking powder

1½ cups **plus** 2 tablespoons milk

1 egg, well beaten

2 tablespoons butter

Sift dry ingredients together into a good-sized bowl.

Add 1 cup and 2 tablespoons of milk and the egg.

Mix only enough to dampen the dry ingredients.

Melt butter in the fry pan or 8×8 baking pan.

Pour remaining milk (½ cup) over the butter.

**Do not stir.**

Bake at 400° for 25 - 30 minutes.

Serve hot with butter. (Make your own white cornbread is baking — see [included recipe](#))

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<sup>1</sup> “Cornbread was made by the Indians before us, as everyone knows. Whether you call it cornbread or johnnycake (which I cling to), it was once upon a time called Journeycake. No matter what you call it, this recipe for Spider Johnnycake is right to serve with Pea Soup. In Maine, when we refer to a spider, we mean a cast iron pan with a handle, used for frying. Originally with legs, it was used over the coals on the hearth. If you don’t own a spider, then use an 8×8 pan for baking this johnnycake.”

From *Keep Cooking the Maine Way* by Marjorie Standish.



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## **Minute Man Johnnycake**

(supposedly this recipe was used by the minute men of New England)

¾ cup cornmeal

1 cup flour

½ teaspoon salt (a pinch)

2½ teaspoons baking powder

2 tablespoons sugar

1 cup milk

1 egg, well beaten

2 tablespoons melted fat (the modern alternative would be butter or vegetable oil)

Mix dry ingredients by sifting.

Add egg and milk.

Then the fat.

Mix well.

Pour into greased pan.

Bake at 400° for 25 - 30 minutes.

Serve hot with butter. (Make your own while cornbread is baking — see [included recipe](#))



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## Butter<sup>2</sup>

½ pint whipping cream

A small pinch of salt

Glass jar with tight fitting lid (mayonnaise, baby food, jelly jars)

Fill jar half full or less with cream.

Add a small pinch of salt (depending on size of jar).

Screw lid on tightly.

Begin shaking jar.

Shake jar until cream thickens (about 10 minutes or less, depending on size of jar) it will turn into a solid yellow ball and the thin buttermilk will separate from it.

Enjoy it on your Johnnycake!

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<sup>2</sup> Colonists used wooden butter molds to make designs on cakes of butter.



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## Indian Pudding

4 cups milk, scalded

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup cornmeal

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup molasses

1 teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar

2 tablespoons butter

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon nutmeg

*Optional:* dates, raisins, and/or nuts can be added, too

Scald milk in double boiler.

Slowly add cornmeal. Cook about 25 minutes.

Add remaining ingredients.

Pour into greased baking dish.

Bake at 275° for 2 hours.

Can be served warm or cold.



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## Sweet Potato and Molasses Pudding

(Modern Version)

3 eggs

1 cup molasses<sup>3</sup>

Pinch salt

1¼ cups milk

12 ounce can evaporated milk

2 teaspoons soft butter

1 teaspoon nutmeg

1 teaspoon cinnamon

3½ cups raw, peeled sweet potato, diced

*Optional:* ½ cup raisins and/or chopped pecans

Preheat oven 325°, grease 2 quart baking dish.

Put egg, molasses, salt, milks, butter, spices, and 1 cup sweet potato in blender. Process until smooth.

Slowly add remaining sweet potato, processing until smooth.

Pour into baking dish.

If desired add raisins and/or nuts; stir gently.

Bake 70 minutes.

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<sup>3</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, molasses was the most common form of sweetener. Many New England families bought it by the barrel. Molasses is the only sweetener that also provides significant nutrients.