

## Argentina: Empanadas

### Time Needed

- Varies depending on desire of leader.

### Skill/Grade Level

- The intention of this lesson is to be utilized for any grade level, but with modifications based on the needs of the audience.

### Core Area

- Leadership & Citizenship
- Agriculture
- Communication

### Life Skills

- Giving
  - Responsible Citizens
- Working
  - Marketable Skills
- Being
  - Self-Responsibility
- Relating
  - Accepting Differences
  - Social Skills
- Caring
  - Sharing
  - Empathy
  - Concern for Others

### Educational Standards

- National 4-H Mission Mandates

### Core Curriculum

- Kentucky 4-H Leadership & International Programs

### Objectives

Through the Kentucky 4-H International Program participants will:

- Experience** different cultures through geography, history, symbols, language, government, economy, agriculture, customs, religion, arts, food, and fun facts.
- Share** about their culture while exploring different cultures.
- Process** connections between different cultures.
- Generalize** interdependencies of different cultures.
- Apply** knowledge to work cooperatively with others from different cultures.

### Introduction to Content

According to the U.S. Department of Education International Strategy Report (2012-2016), in order for youth to succeed in the 21st century workplace, they must develop knowledge and understanding of other countries, cultures, languages and perspectives. The overall mission of 4-H is to provide opportunities for youth and adults to work together to create sustainable community change. This is accomplished within the use of three primary content areas, or mission mandates, - citizenship, healthy living, and science. The 4-H Citizenship Mandate places emphasis on young people being engaged and active members of their community, country, and world. Citizenship is the foundation needed to help youth gain a broader understanding of life.

### Curriculum

4-Hers will increase their global competencies by:

- Identifying their role in the global society,
- Investigating the interdependences of cultures,
- Appreciating the accomplishments of other cultures,
- Cooperatively work with others from varying cultures.

### Materials

Materials are included within each section of this curriculum.



Learn more at [www.kentucky4h.org](http://www.kentucky4h.org) or contact your county extension office.



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## Learning Objectives

- Define the term “foodways” and explain why food-related traditions are an interesting and important way to learn about families, communities, and cultures.
- Recognize that culture is not static or fixed, but rather adapts across time and context.
- Gain knowledge of different career paths, including the work of an anthropologist, sociologist, and historian.
- Describe the “globalization” of empanadas and how this traditional food has been adapted due to migration, resource availability, cultural preferences, etc.
- Identify Argentina on a map and share some facts about the people and customs of Argentina.
- Develop an increased appreciation and understanding of Latin American foods by preparing Argentine empanadas and visiting a local Latin American grocery store.
- Gain a sense of accomplishment by successfully preparing a delicious and nutritious meal.
- Improve basic skills in planning and cooking food.
- Learn how to collect food stories from family members and diverse tradition-bearers in one’s community.



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## Introduction

- **Empanadas** are hand-held pies stuffed with a variety of delicious fillings that are extremely common in Latin America. Rich and poor alike serve them for impromptu dinners, stick them in lunch boxes, and enjoy them at public gatherings. Home cooks teach their children to make empanadas using special family recipes, but they also buy them from a multitude of shops, where you can often find a dizzying array of filling options (both sweet and savory). Sometimes they are fried and sometimes they are baked.
- This lesson introduces youth to Argentina, where empanadas are a culturally important national food. Through this curriculum, students will learn about Argentina and the history of empanadas. It will introduce the concepts of **foodways** and **globalization** and help youth think about the value of collecting and sharing food stories. They will then learn how to prepare two different types of Argentine empanadas, including how to seal and crimp them in two ways. If possible, youth are encouraged to visit a local Latin American grocery store to explore the various foods and search for pre-packed frozen empanada pastry. To extend learning, a supplemental activity focuses on learning about personal, family, and local food-related traditions and history.

## Warmup Activity

- Have you ever heard the term, “**foodways**?”
- The storied history of where our recipes and food traditions come from is what anthropologists call the study of “foodways.” As Darnton (2012) explains, “food traditions that have been passed through your family are more than just recipes – they’re windows into the culture and history of those who came before you.” Foodways, then, include all the customs around how you think about and prepare food – how you have been taught to grow, gather, preserve, cook, market, and use it in daily life. For example, perhaps you have a food tradition in your family that involves roasting a lamb for Greek Easter. These traditions could be written down or just passed on orally or through example, but we can learn a lot about ourselves and other people by exploring these foodways. They connect us to specific people, places, and times, but they are not static. Foodways fall away, get revived, or become adapted to new times and people. For example, there is renewed interest and excitement around canning tomatoes and making jam as local foodways are being rediscovered. When you dig deeply into the foodways that are alive in your family and community, you come to appreciate the critical role that food plays in our lives and our connections to each other.
- Activity: Spend 10 minutes asking youth to share their answers to the following questions (there are no right or wrong answers). This activity is adapted from the “Foodways Card Game” on page 5 of the [Foodways: A 4-H Folkpatterns Project](#), written by Marsha MacDowell (1978), which was a collaboration between Michigan State University Museum and Michigan 4-H Youth Development. Questions can be written on index cards where each player picks one and then asks the question to another person (as outlined in the original activity) or it can be adapted for a virtual group meeting where the facilitator asks the questions to different youth, allowing several to answer each question.
  - What food do you eat when you are sick?
  - What makes a pie a pie?
  - What foods remind you of weddings?

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- Can you think of a folk saying that has food in it (for instance, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away”)?
- Who sits where around the table for a family meal?
- Does your family have a special name for a food or dish? How did it get this name?
- What spice does your family use the most often?
- Have you ever attended a potluck dinner? What did you take to pass?
- How do you eat corn on the cob (across like a typewriter or up and down)?
- As you can see from this exercise, there are all sorts of traditional activities and beliefs associated with food in your daily life, even if you seldom stop to think about it. That is our goal for today – to begin to see food as a window into our own culture and identity, and to find connection with others from different cultures through a deeper appreciation of their foodways. Now that you’ve developed a little taste for the study of foodways and why it is so much fun, let’s introduce you to Argentina

## Background Information

- Can you find **Argentina** on a map? (*wait for feedback*)
- Argentina is part of Latin America, which is a region of the world stretching from North America through Central America and the Caribbean and down to South America.
- As you can see from the map, Argentina occupies a significant portion of the southern continent. It is the world’s 8<sup>th</sup> largest country, about a third of the size of the US. Like most of Latin America, people speak Spanish in Argentina, although there are strong indigenous influences; Quechua and Guaraní are other important languages spoken there. Given its massive size, there are tremendous variations across lifestyle, geography, and economy in different regions of the country – from the capital of Buenos Aires (which is called the “Paris of South America” given its European influences) to the southern tip of Patagonia with its breathtaking glaciers and wildlife up to the Northeast corner of the country where rain forests surround Iguazu Falls, one of the great wonders of the world.
- Importantly, the history of empanadas is bound up in the global movement of people and goods through wars, conquests, and economic disruption. It is thus a great example of how **globalization** impacts what we eat.
  - Have you ever heard the word, “globalization?” What does it mean to you? (*ask students to share the first words that come to mind*)
  - Some people think about it in terms of the spread of culture. For example, the fact that you can buy a McDonald’s hamburger in Moscow, Russia or Corbin, Kentucky, and that it tastes very similar. Others think about how people are “migrating” or moving to new countries to escape dangerous situations or seek out new opportunities. Finally, some other people think about globalization in terms of how products are moving around the world. So, for example, back in the 1950s, US Steel in Pittsburgh used iron and coal from US mines in Kentucky to make steel and General Motors in Detroit bought that steel to make cars, most of which were sold in the US, but some were exported to Canada. Now, however, we know that if you buy a car from an American manufacturer like GM, the parts may come from South Korea, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, and Canada. A global assembly line is required to produce today’s “global car.”
  - So one starting definition for the word “**globalization**” might be: “increasing integration and interaction among people, companies, and governments of different nations.”
  - When did globalization start? When Marco Polo began his voyages in the 13<sup>th</sup> century? During the Open Door policy of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century? Closer to our own time? What do you think? (*ask students for their input*)
  - One way to think about it is to recognize that we have always been moving towards more integration and interaction as a human race. But there are different waves of intense periods of globalization, and we are in an intense period right now (which started in the 1970s).

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- How do empanadas fit into the story of globalization?
- The earliest hand-held pies on record are from Persia, which is modern day Iran, and date back to 250 BC. These foods were perfect for nomadic cultures and soldiers because they were portable and the rustic dough kept the food from spoiling. The most common filling included minced lamb, spices, and dried fruits, in the Arab style. In their quest to conquer Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire spread these portable meals everywhere they went. They became known as “empanadas” in Spain. Then, when the Spanish Empire began its global expansion, empanadas were spread to Latin America through the conquistadores.
- Empanadas are found across Central and South America, but every country has its own adaptations based on local ingredients and tastes. For example, potatoes were first cultivated by the Incas in what is modern-day southern Peru and northwestern Bolivia. When you bite into a Bolivian empanada (which they call *salteñas*), you will find a soupy, stew-like interior filled with potatoes, peas, beef, and raisins. Shaped as a football with a braid across the top of the pastry, the dough is an orange-yellow hue because they add an indigenous seasoning called achiote. Head down to the grasslands of Argentina where cattle dot the landscape and empanadas are much drier, stuffed with beef, onions, chopped eggs, and green olives, in dough folded in a half-moon shape with a decorative seal.
- Now, with the mass immigration of millions of Latin Americans to the United States, empanadas are showing up in restaurants and stores even in small towns, and North American children are beginning to learn about them and create their own new twists to include their favorite flavors!

## Materials Needed

- Recipe for Argentine empanadas (with a North American twist!) Recipe is at the bottom of this curriculum.
- [Instructional cooking video](#) (featuring a 7-year-old cooking with his mother, Nicole Breazeale)
- Pre-made, frozen empanada pastry dough (*tapas para empanada* discs are available at Latin American grocery stores; more information included with the recipe) – or make from [scratch](#), if easier (you only need flour, salt, butter, water/milk, and egg). 30 medium-sized pastry shells needed for each filling.
- Frying pan, baking sheet, knife, cutting board
- Ingredients for beef empanada filling: 3 tbsp oil, 3 lb ground beef, 1.5 cup green olives, 2 hard-boiled egg, 1 tbsp paprika, 1 tbsp cumin, salt and pepper to taste (filling can be halved or divided into thirds if youth are making empanadas by themselves at home; recipe is for 30 beef empanadas)
- Ingredients for onion/cheese empanada filling: 2 tbsp oil, 2 lbs onions, 3 tbsp fresh tarragon (or smaller quantity of dried tarragon), 2 lbs shredded mozzarella, salt and pepper to taste (filling can be halved or divided into thirds if youth are making empanadas by themselves at home; recipe is for 30 empanadas)



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## Instructions for Argentine Empanadas

1. First, visit a local Latin American grocery store and see if you can find the pre-made pastry dough, called *tapas para empanadas*, which will be in the freezer section. While you are there, explore the aisles and see what additional food products you might find from Mexico, the Caribbean, Spain, and Central and South America. Don't be afraid to ask questions! [Sandra Guierrez's \(2011\) cookbook, \*The New Southern-Latino Table\*](#), has a great chapter called, "Navigating a Latin Tienda," which describes what you will likely find in the produce, meat, dairy, frozen, bulk, dry, preserves, and bakery sections of these stores. (For more information about locating pre-frozen empanada dough and differentiating the different types and brands, read the notes at the bottom of this lesson; you can also make the dough from scratch, if preferable. There are many recipes on the internet, but [here is one](#) authored by a Latin American)
2. Defrost your packages of pre-made pastry dough in the fridge overnight (there are typically 12-15 pastry shells in each package, thus 2-3 packages are needed for *each* recipe; the recipes included below each make enough filling for approximately 30 empanadas, serving around 6-8 people).
3. Watch the instructional video, read through the recipe instructions, and make sure you have all your ingredients at hand. Your work surface and tools should be clean and disinfected.
4. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with hot, soapy water.
5. Prepare filling #1. For the beef empanadas, finely chop the onions, green olives, and hard-boiled eggs. In a few tablespoons of oil over medium heat, sauté the onions until they become translucent. Add the ground beef and fry until cooked through. Add paprika, cumin, salt, and pepper, and let mixture simmer for 15-20 minutes. Adjust seasonings. Mix in olives and hard-boiled eggs and let mixture cool. (Make sure to wash your hands and work surface carefully after touching raw meat!)
6. Prepare filling #2. For the cheese and onion empanadas, finely chop the onions and fresh tarragon. Sauté the onions in oil over medium heat until they become translucent (they should be sweet), around 10 minutes. Add the fresh tarragon (or less of the dried herb), salt, and pepper, and continue to cook for another minute or two until flavors blend together. Adjust seasonings. Add cheese, mix well, and let filling cool.
7. Take out the empanada shells while the fillings are cooling (about 30-45 minutes). Do not take them out of the plastic until you are ready to begin. Pre-heat oven to 375.
8. Prepare your work surface for the filling and crimping process. Lay out your pastry shells, your two fillings, and a couple of baking sheets.

## Extended Learning

- Research empanadas in other cultures or other foods that resemble the empanada.

## Civic Engagement

- Research more about the relationship between the United States and Argentina.
- Learn about the government of Argentina. What did you discover?

## Communications

- Organize a pen pal program with the help of the 4-H International Program.
- Give a demonstration on how to make an empanada in the 4-H Communications Program.

## Future Readiness

- Join the Kentucky 4-H International Program to expand your understanding of your role in food pathways.

## Volunteering

- Ask your family to host an international delegate through Kentucky 4-H.

## Junior Mentor/Teen

- Plan and conduct a workshop where you show others how to make an empanada.

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## Procedure:

9. Place a large spoonful of empanada filling in the middle of the pastry circle. Generally, the more filling you can fit in the better because many people prefer a very stuffed empanada. That said, when you are first learning to fill them, more is not always better. People tend to overstuff and then struggle to get them to close, resulting in a lot of rips & leakage. Don't overfill at first, but once you get rolling, you can increase the amount of filling.
10. Moisten the edges of the circle with a small amount of water (you can skip this step if the dough is very soft) and fold the dough over the filling to make a half circle. Press the edges together *tightly* to seal (try not to break the dough with your nails!). Then form the empanada into desired shape and further crimp the edges based on the filling. Argentines use the word "repulgar" to describe this sealing/crimping act. Staying consistent in the way you seal/shape each filling helps to distinguish the various types of empanada after cooking.
11. In the instructional video, we teach you two different types of folds/seals: the type for *carne* (or beef!) and the type for *jamon & queso* (ham & cheese – although we omitted the ham & followed the recipe for cheese/onion empanadas below so we would have a vegetarian option).
12. Bake (ideally on parchment paper—they can leak!) empanadas in the oven for approximately 25-30 minutes, until light brown (you can also fry, if you prefer).
13. Serve warm. Buen provecho!
  - Note: Empanadas are also a great food to freeze. Prepare the empanadas and before baking, pop them in the freezer! When you are ready to eat them, just take directly out of the freezer and bake or fry them (they don't need to be defrosted beforehand). A great last-minute meal.

## Reflect and Apply

1. Did you enjoy cooking and eating the empanadas? What was your favorite part of this hands-on activity?
2. What is something you learned about Argentina and empanadas? How does it make you think differently about Latin Americans?
3. If you had an opportunity to visit a Latin American grocery store, what was that like? Did you discover any interesting new foods?
4. Think about your own culture. What foods and food traditions are important to you? Why? Where did they come from? Can you trace back the roots of those foods?
5. What role do you play in the gathering, preparing, or sharing/selling of important foods in your life? Might you take on additional roles in the future? What will you need to learn?
6. What do you know about food that is culturally important to others in your family or community?

## Evaluation

For in-person programs, print out the evaluation and distribute to youth who participate in the program. The online Qualtrics evaluation link can be shared for online programs.

[https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_7ZJKVoVJKWUm0yF](https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7ZJKVoVJKWUm0yF)

Please contact Nicole Breazeale (nbreazeale@uky.edu) and she will send you the data for your particular county after the evaluation has been completed by program participants. You may also request edits/changes in wording, per your context.

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## Expand Your Experience

- To learn more about local foodways, consider interviewing family or a diverse array of community members. **Storytelling** is one of the best ways to unlock important cultural knowledge – especially when you have a lot to learn about a person’s background or cultural context; furthermore, stories speak to our hearts as well as our heads, thus facilitating connection and understanding across difference. Good story-based prompts include: Can you tell me a story about a long-standing food tradition that is important to you or your family? Where did it come from? Why does it mean so much to you? Are there any new food traditions that have recently become important to you? Can you tell me more about that?
- Finally, using a foodways and storytelling framework to learn about the importance of food in our communities requires being thoughtful and inclusive about whose stories we collect – and how we listen. Try to put aside your preconceived notions and stereotypes about different groups and their “expected” food traditions. For example, as Latin Americans (particularly Mexicans) have settled in rural communities in the South, many of their kids—say, for example, those living in Western Kentucky—have developed a strong taste for Hickory-smoked pork or mutton served on toasted bread with sliced raw onions and dill pickles. Similarly, families who have lived for generations in Northeastern Kentucky are now craving tacos and fajitas. Be curious about the unexpected ways that foodways and globalization have made our lives richer and more interesting. Culture is not a static thing!
- Want an example of how exciting it is to explore different ways of knowing the world through food? Consider reading Michael Twittie’s (2017) book, *The Cooking Gene*, which is written by a culinary historian. He writes a memoir tracing his family’s southern food recipes back through his ancestry – both black and white – from Africa to America. The book has won many awards.
- Does this kind of research sound fun to you? If so, you may consider a career as an **anthropologist**, **sociologist**, or **historian**. These are all professionals who spend their work lives investigating the social world and how we got to where we are today. To piece together the past and better understanding our current reality, these scientists rely on a variety of tools, including direct observation, interviewing, surveying, but also analyzing photographs, documents, and other historical artifacts. To learn more about these jobs (and college majors), feel free to contact Nicole Breazeale.
- Want to learn more about Argentine and Latin American food? Check out the three cookbooks listed in the references section, including two by Guierrez and one by Hoss de la Comte.
- For more activities and lessons focused on foodways and food environments see:
  - MacDowell’s (1978)’s *Foodways* curriculum
  - Center for Ecoliteracy’s (2010). *Nourish: Food + Community* curriculum guide (particularly “Activity 3: Food traditions”)
  - John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future’s (2020) Foodspan Project (particularly “Lesson 12: Why we eat what we eat”)



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