



THE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS OF THE HAMBURGER

GRADE: 6-8

SUBJECT: Language Arts

NATIONAL STANDARD(S)

(6-8) LA: 1.3, 1.10, 2.1-3, 3.1-9

THEME: Foods/Nutrition

FOOD AND FIBER TOPIC: II-D; V-A,C

LEARNER OBJECTIVE

The student will listen to numerous claims concerning the hamburger's origins and then compose an original tall tale on the subject.

VOCABULARY

Angus—Breed of black, hornless and hardy beef cattle, originally from Scotland.

BACKGROUND

Americans consume 25 billion hamburgers every year. Americans crave these patties of ground beef, topped with cheese, bacon, guacamole, mushrooms, sour cream, chili, grilled onions and every combination of ingredients imaginable, and placed between slices of bread. Some even like them plain. Per capita consumption of ground beef is estimated at close to 30 pounds a year.

Who invented the hamburger? Most people assume it was invented in Hamburg, Germany. Nineteenth century German immigrants did bring a style of cooking beef steak to America that was very similar to the way we cook hamburgers now. Steak cooked “in the Hamburg style” was sliced very thin and fried.

Yale University, in New Haven, Connecticut, lays its own claim to the humble hamburger. According to Yale legend, the hamburger's inventor was Louis Lassen, the owner and operator of Louis' Lunch, a popular lunch spot near the university campus. One day a customer came in needing a quick lunch. Lassen had a broiled meat patty on hand and simply slapped it between two slices of toasted bread.

St. Louis, Missouri, claims the first burger was served in that town. On April 30, 1904, a food vender selling beef patties at the World's Fair ran out of plates. He convinced the vender next to him to sell him a supply of bread and began selling his meat patties between two slices of fresh bread.

Residents of Seymour, Wisconsin, hold a “Home of the Hamburger” celebration every August 5. Residents of that town claim their own Charlie Nagreen as the hamburger's inventor. Better known as “Hamburger Charlie,” Nagreen was said to have been only 15 years old on August 5, 1885, when he first began frying his hamburger patties in butter and selling them from an ox-drawn cart at the county fair.

Most of the argument over who invented the hamburger centers around what makes a hamburger a hamburger. Some say it's not a hamburger unless the meat is fried. Some say those who simply placed the meat between slices of bread can't really claim to have invented the hamburger as we know it. The debate will continue, but as

far as the general public is concerned, the hamburger will go down in history as one of the best ideas ever.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

1. Lead a class discussion on what makes a story a tall tale. Challenge students to name some tall tales they have heard or read (Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, etc.) Discuss common factors that make these stories tall tales. List the characteristics on the chalkboard. (Character of story has extraordinary strength or abilities; common feats are exaggerated; hardships involving the character are always overcome.)
2. Share background information with students. Ask students if any of the stories sound like tall tales.
3. Make books that feature tall tales available to students. (See the “Resources” section of this lesson.)
4. Hand out student worksheets, and instruct students to create original tall tales about the humble beginnings of the hamburger. Publish and share the tall tales with other students or classes. Ask students to share their stories orally.

RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. Use the following statistics about the top ten hamburger chains in 1995 to create a class-created graph or table. The graph can be a pictorial graph. Display it in the cafeteria during the month of May to celebrate National Hamburger Month.

Rank	Chain	US Sales	US Stores
1	McDonald's	\$12,519,400	8,764
2	Burger King	\$5,330,000	5,557
3	Hardee's	\$3,580.00	3,954
4	Wendy's	\$2,940.00	3,414
5	Jack in the Box	\$977,984	1,094
6	Carl's Jr.	\$629,000	610
7	Sonic Drive-ins	\$518,765	1,112
8	Whataburger	\$338,000	446
9	White Castle	\$302,549	257
10	Rally's	\$221,100	333

2. Have students complete the statement “A hamburger isn't a hamburger unless it has _____.” List the components on the board and try to get the class to come to a consensus.
3. Have students discuss the nutritional value of favorite hamburger components and discuss what they can do to make their hamburgers more nutritious.

RESOURCES

Student Books

- Lyman, N. (1980). Paul Bunyan. Troll.
- Lyman, N. (1980). Pecos Bill. Troll.
- Osborne, M. P. (1991). American Tall Tales. Knopf.
- San Souci, R. (1993). Cut From the Same Cloth, American Women of Myth, Legend and Tall Tales. Philomel.

Walker, P. R. (1993). Big Men, Big Country: A Collection of American Tall Tales.
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Teacher Resources

American Meat Institute, 1799 N. Moore, Arlington, VA 22209.

Related Internet Websites

(see Food & Fiber Systems webpage – links)

EVALUATION

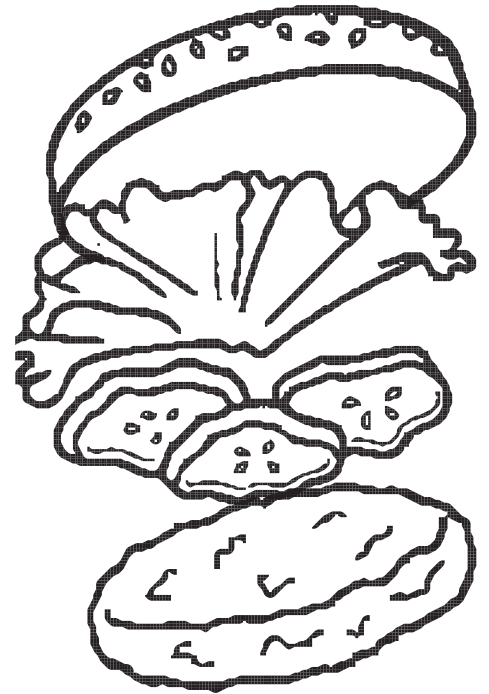
Did the students enjoy creating tall tales about the origins of the hamburger? Were they able to share their stories orally with the other class members?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

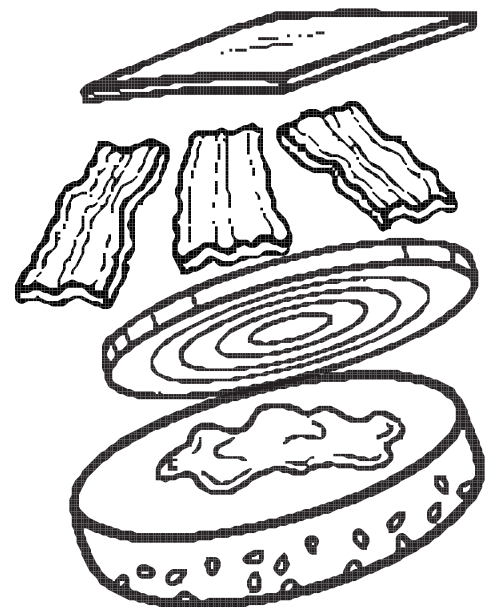
This lesson adapted from Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom, Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and 4-H Youth Development, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078.

Name _____

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The Humble Hamburger



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Food & Fiber Systems Literacy
Agricultural Education, Communications and 4-H Youth Development
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK



