Bearthday Celebrations: How Baking At Home Takes You Around The Globe

Elizabeth Hagan • Family & Consumer Sciences Educator • Kuemper HS, Carroll, Iowa

Birthdays are celebrated in a variety of ways across the globe. Each culture has unique and delicious baked goods that help individuals celebrate another year around the sun. In response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, millions of Americans were staying in, baking at home, and celebrating birthdays alone, so this lesson gives students the opportunity to bake, celebrate, and experience multicultural foods, all while staying home.

Objectives:
1. Briefly explain the history of birthday celebrations and cakes.
2. Identify and describe birthday traditions celebrated in various countries and cultures around the world.
3. Research and select a baked birthday dessert to prepare and plate in an aesthetically pleasing way.
4. Photograph and describe the birthday traditions to peers.
5. Prepare a baked birthday dessert for family member or friend for their birthday.
6. Form connections with others during the pandemic, using a baked good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1: History of Birthdays &amp; Birthday Cakes</td>
<td>Discuss birthday traditions and previous knowledge about birthdays. Describe the history of birthday cakes and birthday celebrations. Persuade the importance of baked goods in birthday celebrations.</td>
<td>Think-Pair-Share questionnaire. History of Birthday Cakes reading &amp; questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3: Food Presentation &amp; Food Photography</td>
<td>Define food photography and food presentation. Identify characteristics of well-plated foods. Describe why food plating is important.</td>
<td>Food Photography &amp; Presentation Guide slideshow. white paper, colors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4: Baked Birthday Dessert Lab</td>
<td>Prepare cultural baked good cooperatively in lab groups. Plate birthday cake is visually appealing way and photograph. Evaluate baked goods and peers’ baked goods based on sensory characteristics.</td>
<td>Baked Good Evaluation sheet. camera.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education: leadfcsed.org/national-standards.html

14.0 Nutrition and Wellness
14.1.2 Investigate the effects of psychological, cultural, and social influences on food choices and other nutrition practices.

8.0 Food Production and Services
8.5.10 Prepare breads, baked goods and desserts using safe handling and professional preparation techniques.
8.5.12 Demonstrate professional plating, garnishing, and food presentation techniques.
**BAKE SALE**

Make your cake baking skills and cupcakes count!
[link]

**Baking Glossary of Terms, Techniques** [link]

**Best Baking Guides** from Domino and C&H Sugar Test Kitchen Pros with links to baking basics, frosting, sugar, and cake decorating [link]

**Best Cake Tips** from C&H Sugar [link]

**Cakes and Cupcakes Recipes** [link]

**Cake Making Learning Track**
10 self-directed lessons with Chef Baker Bettie [link]

**Flour 101 — What flour is best for cakes?**
[Flour 101] [link]

**Types of Flour** [link]

**Frosting Guide — Give your cake the finish it deserves** [link]

**Leavening — The Difference between Baking Powder and Baking Soda** [link]

**Sugar in Baking — Its Many Roles** [link]

**Top Tips for Cakes**
Cake videos with Chef Gemma Stafford [link]

**Why Bake in Glass?** Cake Baking Infographic [link]

---

**In-a-Pinch Cake Baking Hacks**

**How to make powdered sugar at home** [link]

**How to Make Cake Flour**
1. Spoon, heap, level off 1 cup all-purpose flour.
2. Remove 2 Tablespoons flour and add 2 Tablespoons cornstarch.
3. Whisk until light or sift. Store in airtight container.

**Ingredient Substitution Chart** [link]

---

**Birthday Celebrations: A HomeBaking.org Educator Award Lesson** by Elizabeth Hagan, Kuemper HS, Carroll, Iowa
**History of Birthday Cakes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ANSWER KEY</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Points:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Instructions:** Read about the history of birthday cakes. Answer the questions relating to the text.

Birthdays are celebrated all around the world in a variety of ways with each culture having unique traditions that help individuals celebrate another year older. Baked goods are commonly used as a celebratory custom. Customs, traditions, and baked goods have evolved over time, but historians are unsure of the exact location where the origin of celebratory cakes first started.

Historians believe that Ancient Egyptians were the first to celebrate birthdays, because Egyptians believed that pharaohs became gods when they were crowned. Coronations were considered the “birth” of a god and celebration. Food, drink, and festivities occurred when each new pharaoh was born, similar to “birthday parties” today.

Cakes were also common celebratory foods in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. Ancient Romans typically served cakes at birthdays and weddings. The circle cakes were made from flour, nuts, leavened years, and honey. Ancient Greece celebrated birthdays with cakes, specifically the sixth day of every lunar year with moon-shaped cakes that included lit candles. The candles were offered up for Ancient Greece’s goddess of the moon, Artemis. The lit candles represented the moon’s shine. Artemis’ candles were considered the first “birthday candles.”

By the 1700’s, German children were greeted on their birthday with a cake that included candles, multiple layers, icing, and decorations. The candles totaled the child’s years in age plus one, to represent hope for another healthy year. In Switzerland in 1881, the first account of blowing out candles is recorded. Switzerland used candles on birthday cakes and each candle represented a year of life, then blew the candles out one by one.

The tradition of using decorating cakes and candles has continued for many Americans, with European descent, as customary for birthday celebrations. The cakes have evolved to include multiple layers, fillings, and flavors. Also, cake variations, such as cupcakes are commonly used in the US. Other cultures celebrate with different types of cakes, but some variation of the birthday cake has become a staple in almost all cultures across the world. Celebratory cakes continue to evolve from their sweet history, dating all the way back to Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

---

**Think–Pair–Share**

**THINK:** Answer the following questions independently.

1. **How do you celebrate birthdays in your household?**
2. **What are some common birthday traditions that you have heard of family or friends celebrating?**
3. **What role did German bakeries play in the development of birthday cakes?**
4. **Why did Pagans cultures light candles and sing?**
5. **Where did people start blowing out the candles?**
6. **What traditions discussed in the text relate to your own birthday cake and celebration experiences?**

**SHARE:** Discuss as a large group.

**Think–Pair–Share (continued)**

**PAIR:** Share your birthday traditions with a partner.

**SHARE:** Write down two things you learned from your partner.

**SHARE:** Write down two things you learned from your classmates.
Birthday Traditions Around The Globe

Instructions: Label on the map where each tradition originated.

1. United States of America
2. Egypt
3. Greece
4. Germany
5. China
6. France
7. Japan
8. India
9. Norway
10. Mexico

Birthday Traditions and Cake Lab Guide

Country or Culture Selection: I am selecting ____________________________, because...

Geography: Describe the location and mark on the map below where the tradition started.

History: How did the tradition first begin? Describe in detail.

Food Presentation: What makes the celebratory dessert unique? How is the food presented in a visually appealing way?

Any additional notes on the tradition or cake:

Cake Recipe Selection Lab Preparation

Yield: ______

Recipe Source: _______________________________________________________________________________

Ingredients:

Procedures

Lab Member Indicated
Baked Good Evaluation

Name: ANSWER KEY Date: Points: /10

Instructions: After preparing the baked good, evaluate based on the sensory characteristics. Sample and compare your baked good to your peers' cultural baked goods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Aroma</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Flavor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Overall, which was your favorite tasting and why?
2. Which was the most visually appealing and why?
3. Which baked good had the best texture and why?
4. Which was your favorite aroma and why?
5. How does sampling all of the different baked goods change your view of birthday celebrations?

Additional Instructions:

Baked Good Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ANSWER KEY Date: Points: /10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructions:</strong> After preparing the baked good, evaluate based on the sensory characteristics. Sample and compare your baked good to your peers' cultural baked goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Overall, which was your favorite tasting and why?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Which was the most visually appealing and why?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Which baked good had the best texture and why?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Which was your favorite aroma and why?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. How does sampling all of the different baked goods change your view of birthday celebrations?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Food Photography: Social Media Post

Name: ANSWER KEY Date: Points: /20

**Instructions:** Take a photograph of your birthday cake in a visually appealing way and write a caption that briefly describes the cake, culture, and traditions. This post will be hung around the classroom, so others can see your traditional cake. Optional: You can post this on social media to see other's reactions.

Your post should include:
- Country
- Food prepared
- Description of ingredients and food
- Brief history of the food

**Caption:** "Khak" is a traditional Egyptian sweet cookie that is commonly used to celebrate birthdays. The Khak has been used since Ancient Egyptian times and is imprinted with "Ra," the sun god, to celebrate another year around the sun. The cookie is prepared with flour, butter, sugar, nutmeg, vanilla, cinnamon, and milk. Nuts are also sometimes used. "Khaks" are popular Egyptian treats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ANSWER KEY Date: Points: /20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructions:</strong> Take a photograph of your birthday cake in a visually appealing way and write a caption that briefly describes the cake, culture, and traditions. This post will be hung around the classroom, so others can see your traditional cake. Optional: You can post this on social media to see other's reactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your post should include:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Food prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Description of ingredients and food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Brief history of the food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caption:</strong> &quot;Khak&quot; is a traditional Egyptian sweet cookie that is commonly used to celebrate birthdays. The Khak has been used since Ancient Egyptian times and is imprinted with &quot;Ra,&quot; the sun god, to celebrate another year around the sun. The cookie is prepared with flour, butter, sugar, nutmeg, vanilla, cinnamon, and milk. Nuts are also sometimes used. &quot;Khaks&quot; are popular Egyptian treats.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perfect Birthday Cake Recipe

**Ingredients for the cake**
- 1 1/2 cups (3 sticks) butter, softened
- 2 1/4 cups granulated sugar
- 6 large eggs
- 1 Tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 1/4 cups milk
- 1 1/4 cups sprinkles, plus more for garnish, if desired

**Ingredients for buttercream**
- 1 1/2 cups butter, softened
- 6 cups powdered sugar
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- pinch of kosher salt

**Instructions**
1. Make cake: Preheat oven to 350˚ and line three 8" cake pans with parchment paper. In a large bowl using hand mixer (or in the bowl of a stand mixer), beat together butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla and mix until combined.
2. In another large bowl, whisk together flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and salt. Add half of the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, beating until just combined. Pour in the milk and mix until fully incorporated. Add remaining dry ingredients and stir until just combined. Fold in sprinkles.
3. Divide batter evenly between prepared cake pans. Bake until slightly golden on top and a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean, about 30 to 35 minutes. Let cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make buttercream: In a large bowl using a hand mixer, beat butter until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Add powdered sugar, sour cream, vanilla, heavy cream, and salt and beat until smooth.
5. Assemble cake: Place the bottom layer of the cake on your serving platter and spread with buttercream; repeat with the second layer of cake. Place the last layer of cake on top, then frost the entire cake with buttercream. Garnish with more sprinkles, if desired.

**Source:** Perfect Birthday Cake by Lena Abraham