

## 5. A journey back in time

In the time of your grandparents, oranges were given as gifts to children at Christmas. Why were oranges so precious back then and why are they no longer considered that way? To better understand how our agri-food system works and how it has changed over the years, students will conduct an interview with a senior (elderly person).

### Learning Objectives

#### Have students:

- Become familiar with the agri-food system through a personal experience.
- Compare past and present food systems and identify the main similarities and differences in terms of social (culinary) practices, the environment and health.
- Become aware of the fact that chronic food-related illnesses are now on the rise.

### Areas of Learning

English as well as geography, history and citizenship education.

### Materials

- Interview sheet, one photocopy per student (Appendix 1)

### Preparation

Read the technical data sheet from the *La Terre dans votre assiette* teaching kit, Volume 1, and Feuille 1, *Histoire et diversité*: [http://eav.csq.qc.net/terre/pdf/cahier1/01\\_Cahier1.pdf](http://eav.csq.qc.net/terre/pdf/cahier1/01_Cahier1.pdf)

### Presentation

With the students, return to the example of the oranges given as Christmas presents. Using this general historical fact, introduce a number of concepts related to the food and farming system: where food comes from, the distance travelled by food, food transportation, the food production chain (Who produces our food? Who transports it? Who sells it?), etc.

### Did you know?

- At the start of the century, the food Quebecers ate was produced through the labour of more than 200,000 farms. Of this number, only 30,000 farms still remain today, and we are losing an average of 5 to 6 farms every week.
- In 2004, more than 700,000 Canadians needed the assistance of food banks every month, constituting twice as many people as in 1989.

## Assignment (15 min.)

1. Tell the students that, for their homework, they will have to conduct an interview with a senior (elderly) person (grandparents, elderly neighbour, a relative, etc.) in their surroundings, to discover how the food system has changed over the years.
2. Hand out the Interview Sheet (Appendix 1) to the students. With the group, think of a few questions to ask the senior and add them to the questionnaire: what did they eat, where did their food come from, etc.?
3. In the group, ask the students to list their favourite foods and to fill in the left column of Question 1 on the Interview Sheet.
4. Allow the students enough time to conduct the interview.

## Integration (30 min.)

1. Back in class, ask the students how the interview went and what surprised them the most. Go back over each of the questions and ask the students to present their findings:
  - What did the seniors eat when they were the student's age? Where did food come from? Who grew the food? Who prepared and cooked the food? Did the food they eat change with the seasons? Did the seniors bring their lunch to school? Was the food they bought over-wrapped, or even wrapped? Did all seniors eat the same foods? Did the food they ate change according to the place where they lived? If so, how? How are things different now?

2. In the group, identify the main differences and similarities in the food system from one generation to the next:
  - Is food more readily available nowadays?
  - Today, are the foods we eat better for our health? Was there more, or less obesity and diabetes among young people when the seniors young? Why?
  - Do more, or fewer people have enough to eat now?
  - In which food system, does food travel the least? Which food system is the best for the environment?
  - What were the advantages and disadvantages of the food our grandparents ate when they were young? Do the students prefer the foods we eat today? Why?

## Enrichment

- Invite a senior to come to class to talk about the way food was when he or she was young.
- In the group, create a mural illustrating the food system over the years. Base yourselves on the interview and magazines to create drawings, and find picture of the things people used to eat and the way food was distributed, etc.
- Find photos, past and present, of your area (neighbourhood, city, town or village) and compare them. What changes can they see (farmland that has been urbanized, a river that has become a road, etc.)? What impact have these changes had on farming and the eating habits of the people living in that area?



## Take Action!

To encourage students and their family to eat more locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables, and to know where their food comes from, invite them to :

- Plan an outing to a local farm or to a U-pick farm : <http://www.equiterre.ca/agriculture/alimentation/agrotourisme.php>;
- To discover how to preserve local vegetables (through freezing, drying, canning, etc.) : [http://alimentsdici.info/system/files/u1/recueil\\_2006-03-16\\_14.pdf](http://alimentsdici.info/system/files/u1/recueil_2006-03-16_14.pdf);
- To start their own garden or to join a collective garden (at school, on their balcony, at a community garden or at the botanical garden) : <http://www.schoolgardenwizard.org/>, [www.jeunespousses.ca](http://www.jeunespousses.ca) or [www.jardinons-alecole.org](http://www.jardinons-alecole.org).

## References

Martin Fournier (2004), *Jardins potagers en Nouvelle-France*, (vegetable gardens in New France), Septentrion.

Paul-Louis Martin (2002), *Les fruits du Québec : histoire et traditions des douceurs de la table*, (fruits of Quebec, culinary history and traditions) Septentrion, 219 p.

# Appendix 1 🍅 Interview sheet

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Your age \_\_\_\_\_

Senior's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Senior's Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

In what year was the senior the same age as you? \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship with the senior

grandparent    friend of the family    neighbour    other

What country or area did the senior live in? \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about the senior \_\_\_\_\_

What did the senior's parents do for a living? \_\_\_\_\_

In what setting did the senior live?:

In a city or town    In a village    On a farm    Other

## At the Table ...

1. What did you eat when you were young?

	Me	The senior
For Breakfast?		
For Lunch?		
For Dinner?		



<b>For Snacks?</b>		
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2. Was the food menu different on Sundays and for special occasions?

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3. Did you eat the same things in the spring, summer, fall and winter?

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4. Who did the cooking? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Where did you buy your food? Were there grocery stores and supermarkets?  
What were the food stores like (small, large, open every day, etc.)?

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6. Did your family have a garden? If so, who worked the garden?  
If not, who grew your food (neighbours, Canadian farmers, farmers in other countries)?

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7. What did you do with leftovers? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Was all the food wrapped? How was it preserved?

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9. Did you take a lunch to school? If so, how was it wrapped?

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10. Did everybody have enough to eat? Were there times of the year that were more difficult than others? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. When you were young, did you eat "jubes"? Chocolates?  
Did you drink pop (soft drinks)? Often? Why?

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12. Were obesity and diabetes common illnesses when you were young?  
Did more children or fewer children suffer from these illnesses than today? Why?

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13. What do you think of the food young people eat today (in terms of health,  
the environment and availability, etc.)?

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14. Would you rather have been a kid today (food, life in general, etc.)? Why?

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