

Down South – Soul Food

Introduction: Hi, my name is Nina and I am an English-teacher at a combined senior high school in the south of Norway. This year I teach English in vocational courses for pupils studying the Programme for Restaurant and Food Processing. This is my first year at this programme, but I love everything about food, different tastes and cultures. This is why my colleague Peter who is your main teacher in the kitchen, and I have planned a cross curricular topic in English and Food Processing.

The topic is “Down South- Soul Food”. The setting is in New Orleans, one of the major cities in the state of Louisiana in the south of the USA. The city is famous for tourism, its playful atmosphere, a rich culture and unique food traditions. Peter and I are so excited to work with these themes together with you. Please listen to a conversation we had when we planned this educational topic for you:

English-teacher Nina: Hi Peter, it is so good to see you! You sure got a decent tan this summer.

Peter: Hello Nina, I had a great summer holiday too, and finally we meet. The start of a new school year is always so busy.

Nina: I agree, but still I have looked forward to meeting you. Are you ready for Soul Food and Carnival?

Peter: Food is always on my mind, I don't know about carnival though...

Nina: Well, you never know, Peter...our pupils have already started to read about Mardi Gras, which is the carnival celebration in the south states of the USA. The most famous one is in New Orleans in Louisiana.

Peter: The names sound French to me. You know French is a very important language in the world of food...

Nina: I think I have noticed that. He, he. The good thing about our project is that the food in New Orleans is a mix of several cultures and traditions. You are the expert here, Peter. Please tell us about the Cajun and Creole food.

Peter: Okay, I travelled to Louisiana as a tourist and as a teacher some years ago. You learn so much when traveling. There are differences between Cajun and Creole food as to the seasoning or spices that we use. I burnt my tongue the first time I tasted Cajun cooking, as it is often heavily spiced with cayenne pepper...

Nina: He, he. I know that Cajun food is inspired by French cuisine- and garlic, paprika, thyme, parsley and a little dash of cayenne pepper are common ingredients in Cajun kitchens. Actually, I haven't tasted food like this yet, so I look forward to tasting the dishes our pupils will be making during the next two weeks.

Peter: Yes, I'm prepping them now by teaching them about the different spices and mixtures of vegetables- or veggies- like onion, celery and bell pepper.

Nina: Bell pepper?

Peter: We call them paprika. They come in green, red, yellow- yeah?

Nina: Oh, right – you taught me a new word, thanks! When I think of it, they do remind me of bells. Anyway, I also enjoy having fun with costumes. I have always loved to act and use hats, dresses, shoes- you name it. I wonder if I should bring my carnival mask for class on Friday. I bought it in Venice, Italy. Then I can make a surprise entrance...

Peter: Eeeh, Nina. Mardi Gras or "Fat Tuesday," is months from now, the celebration with the carnival is normally in February. It's still August at the minute...

Nina: Sorry, I get so easily carried away, but I am really enthusiastic about this project, the hot spices and the food mixing with the colorful costumes and the rhythms of the carnival. Bell pepper, funny word...

Peter: So Nina, the school bell is just about to ring and we need to get to class and meet our pupils. I guess they are super excited to hear what we have planned for our project.

Nina: Just wait till they see our grand entrance...

Peter: Nina, seriously. Take a deep breath, and let us walk slowly and decently to our classroom!