

Food in the Civil War South: Source Analysis

Instructions: Read through all of the sources two times. On the **first read**, put a star by a detail that stands out to you in each source. If there are words you do not know, mark them and find out what they mean. On the **second read**, look for patterns across different sources. When you notice an idea or detail that comes up in more than one source, use a colored pencil to underline each time a source mentions this idea or detail. Use a different color for the next pattern you notice. Answer the questions that follow. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates.

Source 1: From *Southern Cultivator*, vol. 20, nos. 3 and 4, March and April 1862, Atlanta

“The entire Press of the Confederacy is united in on voice of exhortation and warning to the tillers of the soil, to RAISE NO COTTON, this year—to plant CORN! And RICE and Sugar, and WHEAT and GARDEN VEGETABLES! To raise hogs and beeves and sheep and poultry.... It is not now a matter of *choice* with us: it is a matter of *necessity*.”

Source 2: “About Vinegar,” in *Southern Cultivator*, vol. 21, nos. 8 and 9, July and August 1863, Atlanta

“Its cooling, thirst-sufficing properties render it peculiarly grateful in hot climates, and to those living upon salted meat, deprived of fresh vegetables and fruits. In excess, it prevents digestion, and is injurious; but used with moderation, it assists and quickens digestion; keeps the stomach in tone and prevents bilious disorders; hence its generally wholesome properties make it a part of the rations furnished by most government to their soldiers and sailors. Our own army is but badly provided for in this respect, and our brave soldiers almost invariably mention pickles as one of the most desirable things that can be sent them by their friends at home. Salt and vinegar is often one of the best things that can be given in the cases of dysentery so fatal in camps.”

Source 3: “Substitute for Tea,” in *Southern Cultivator*, vol. 22, no. 3, March 1864, Atlanta

“A new style of Confederate Tea, which is very much approved by those who have used it, is used by mixing half a teaspoon of tea with a tablespoonful and half of blackberry leaves, which have been cured by drying them on a cooking stove. The blackberry leaf can be found at any season in sheltered places, and will soon be abundant.”

Source 4: “To Make Corn Bread,” in *Southern Cultivator*, vol. 22, no. 3, March 1864, Atlanta

“Two quarts corn meal, one quart rye, one quart sweet milk, one teacup of molasses, one spoonful of salt, and one teaspoonful of soda. Beat with a spoon until well mixed. The crust, if not burned, will make excellent coffee.”

Source 5: “Syrup in Place of Bacon for Negroes,” in *Southern Cultivator*, vol. 22, no. 1, January 1864, Atlanta

“Owing to the scarcity of Bacon, and indeed of meat of all kinds, and the absolute necessity that the greater part which is made shall go to the subsistence of the army, negroes on nearly all plantations will necessarily receive but a small part of their usual allowance of animal food. Many intend to give them scarcely any bacon; but with their usual or an increased allowance of bread and ordinary vegetables raised in plantation gardens, supply them with molasses or sorghum or the cane instead of bacon. As a relish to eat with their corn bread, syrup is much liked by negroes... But it is very doubtful whether syrup will at all answer as a substitute for meat for any great length of time. A working man like a working horse, must have something besides...to build up his body, to

repair the waste of his tissues and to give him strength and activity....

“As for the white members of the family, if those in health receive a fourth even of their usual animal food for a season, with a full supply and variety from the vegetable kingdom, they will perhaps find much less inconvenience that they anticipate, and a large supply can be saved to feed our army.”

Source 6: “Substitute for Coffee,” From Confederate Receipt Book: A Compilation of over One Hundred Receipts, Adapted to the Times, 1863

“Take sound ripe acorns, wash them while in the shell, dry them, and parch until they open, take the shell off, roast with little bacon fat, and you will have a splendid cup of coffee.”

Source 7: “The Salt Boilers,” in Southern Cultivator, vol. 20, no. 2, February 1862, Atlanta

“Our immediate sea coast is said to be thronged with parties engaged in boiling salt, and many have succeeded in making a good supply. The quality of the salt thus made is excellent, and some which we have seen was as good as the bests quality of ground salt.”

Source 8: “Preserving Meat without Salt,” From Confederate Receipt Book: A Compilation of over One Hundred Receipts, Adapted to the Times, 1863

“We need salt as a relish to our food, but it is not essential in the preservation of our meats. The Indians used little or no salt, yet they preserved meat and even fish in abundance by drying. This can be accomplished by fire, by smoke or by sunshine, but the most reliable mode is by all these agents combined. To do this select a spot having the fullest command of sunshine. Erect there a wigwam five or six feet high, with an open top, in size proportioned to the quantity of meat to be cured, and protected from the sides, so that all the smoke must pass through the open top.”

Source 9: “Indian Sagamite,” From Confederate Receipt Book: A Compilation of over One Hundred Receipts, Adapted to the Times, 1863

“Three parts Indian meal and one of brown sugar, mixed and browned over the fire, will make the food known as ‘Sagamite.’ Used in small quantities, it not only appeases hunger but allays thirst, and it is therefore useful to soldiers on a scout.”

Source 10: “Apple Pie without Apples,” From Confederate Receipt Book: A Compilation of over One Hundred Receipts, Adapted to the Times, 1863

“To one small bowl of crackers, that have been soaked until no hard parts remain, add one teaspoonful of tartaric acid, sweeten to your taste, add some butter, and a very little nutmeg.”

Source 11: “Pap for Infant Diet,” From What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking, Soups, Pickles, Preserves, Etc., a cookbook by Abby Fisher, 1881

Abby Fisher was born into slavery and was an enslaved cook in the South. Her recipes suggest she was an accomplished chef. After the Civil War, she and her husband moved to San Francisco where she dictated her recipes to a group of women who recorded and published them.

“Take one pint of flour, sift it and tie it up in a clean cloth securely tight, so that no water can get into it; and put it in boiling water and let it boil steady for two hours, then take it out of water, and when it gets cold take outside crust from it. Whenever you are ready to nurse or feed the child, grate one tablespoonful of the boiled flour and stir it into half a pint of boiled milk while the milk is boiling, sweeten the same with white sugar to taste. When the child has diarrhea, boil a two-inch stick of cinnamon in the pap. I have given birth to eleven children and raised them all, and nursed them with this diet. It is a Southern plantation preparation.”

Name: _____

Questions

1. Which sources directly refer to shortages of food or hunger?
2. Which sources imply a shortage of food?
3. List the foods that the sources suggest are scarce.
4. Which sources refer to illness or disease? What connections do the sources make between illness and food shortages?
5. Which sources make references to native people?
6. Which sources refer to enslaved people or free people of color?
7. What pattern(s) did you identify across the sources? List as many as you can and then identify one that you think is most important.