

Ecological World Cuisines

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

As college students, we are approaching adulthood and have to learn to cook our own food that is nutritious and appetizing. Just as important, we have to learn to cook food that is culturally meaningful as a way to avoid the homogeneity of packaged and fast foods. At the same time, we should learn more about where our food comes from and how it is produced so that we can be engaged indirectly in the fight against the modern corporatization of the food industry and actually help the impoverished farmers who produce our food. To that end, the Ecological World Cuisines (EWC) program will expose its members to: 1) culturally meaningful dishes from regions and countries around the world, and 2) the environmental impacts, economics, and social justice issues surrounding food production, distribution, and consumption. The program will do this through actual cooking, learning social and environmental responsibility regarding food choices, and weekly research and discussions about food issues and cultural stories.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1) Every program member will learn specific meals, desserts, and beverages from 20-25 regions, countries, or cultures worldwide throughout the entire year. At the end of the year, each member will know how to cook at least 6 dishes. Through individual research and group activities, they will also learn the cultural significance behind each dish.**

Action Steps

- A) Four teams of 3-4 members will cook a meal for the entire suite each month (one team per week).
 - B) For each week, another team will do background research on the cultural significance of the week's dishes. The cooking team and the research team will facilitate an educational discussion to share the knowledge they gained during mealtime. Research will focus on the ingredients used, social meanings attached to the dishes, related lore and myths, etc.
 - C) Create a 'Recipe Archive' of all the dishes that program members have cooked. The last section of this archive will be a 'Best Dishes of the Year' where program members highlight the dishes that were most meaningful and delicious for them. This archive will be passed onto the following year's program members.
- 2) Every program member will be educated on the environmental, economic, and social issues surrounding the dishes. Upon gaining a better**

understanding of the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed, program members will be informed of more environmentally and socially responsible food choices.

Action Steps

- A) Before buying groceries and ingredients for a particular dish, cooking team will research: 1) whether or not they should buy the particular ingredients based on the negative environmental and economic impacts the ingredients' production, distribution and consumption may have; 2) if there is an impact, what substitutes are there for the ingredients; and 3) where to best buy the particular ingredients in Burlington. Then, during meal time, program members will discuss the information with the rest of the suite.
- B) Whenever possible, program members will work with the Marche to buy produce that is marked "organic" or "local" and then actually find out where the produce is grown and how it was distributed.
- C) Invite activists, researchers and other experts to give guest lectures on how the processes of production, distribution and consumption of food have an impact on the earth's natural resources and an economic and social justice impact on farmers, low-income populations, and landowners.
- D) Go on at least one field trip per semester to gain visual knowledge on a special topic of interest.
Examples: 1) Dairy farm to learn about ethical animal raising
2) Hydroponics farm to learn ecological farming alternatives
3) Pat Brown's farm to learn about personal farming skills

3) Every program member will learn more, in general, about the country, culture, or region where a particular dish came from.

Action Steps

- A) After each meal of the week, all program members contribute an interesting fact or story pertaining to the society where the dish came from. Examples include news article of recent events, myths and legends, famous historical figures, and geographic features.
- B) Watch a movie sponsored by a UVM department's film series (where applicable) or by a Global Village program that is related to food.
- C) Attend lecture events or artistic performances that are related to the cultures whose food program members are cooking that week or have cooked.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Since Ecological World Cuisines is focused on the equitable and ethical consumption of food, its community service projects will emphasize the act of giving food to those who have limited or no access to healthy, affordable food.

Fall 2008- Program members will participate in the Serv-A-Thon, in a program that is related to providing food resources to Burlington's low-income, disadvantaged communities. If no such program exists, we will simply volunteer at a food shelter

Spring 2009- EWC will work with collaborate with other L/L programs and sponsor a Multicultural Food Exposition where the UVM community can enjoy delicious food. During this event, money and food donations will be collected and donated to a food-related charity organization in Burlington such as COTS.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER L/L PROGRAMS

- 1) Global Village- sponsor a film that is relevant to the cultures whose food we cook. Ecological World Cuisines can provide appropriate snacks.
- 2) Italian House- organize food events to understand the history Italy through its cuisines.
- 3) Africa House- organize an event where we hear old folk stories and prepare dishes that were eaten while hearing these stories.
- 4) Any interested L/L programs- hold our Multicultural Food Exposition

Ecological World Cuisines fits in the program categories of *Diverse Cultures* and *Health Professions and Wellness*.