

Food and Diet

What did the people who built Stonehenge eat?

Learning Overview

WHAT: Identify that animals, including humans, need the right types and amount of nutrition, and that they cannot make their own food; they get nutrition from what they eat (Year 3 Animals Including Humans).

HOW: By learning about what scientists can tell us about the food and diet of the people who lived during the building of Stonehenge. By keeping an accurate record of food and drink consumed by humans living today.

OUTCOME: Pupils will be able to compare food consumed during the building of Stonehenge with popular food available today. They will describe similarities and differences between the Stone Age and the modern-day diet.

Resources



Activity Sheet 2



Paper and coloured pencils for timeline activity

Vocabulary

Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, aurochs, edible.

Setting the Scene: What did Stone Age people eat?

1. Explain that the early part of prehistory is known as the Palaeolithic period or Old Stone Age. During this time, people were hunters and gatherers, tracking wild animals for their meat, catching fish and collecting nuts, fruit and insects from the forest.
2. Continue the discussion to include how Middle Stone Age is known as the Mesolithic period, when people ate meat from animals such as red and roe deer, aurochs (large, wild cattle), wild boar, and also fish and seafood. They also ate a range of edible plants including apples and berries, and honey from wild bees.
3. Explain that by the later part of the Stone Age, known as the New Stone Age, or the Neolithic period, people in Britain had begun farming so were able to raise animals for meat and milk, and also grow cereal crops, such as wheat and barley. Cereal crops were grown for food and were potentially made into bread and beer; though there is very little evidence for them making beer and it is hotly debated amongst experts. They continued to hunt wild animals as well as gather foods such as mushrooms, berries and other plants. Food such as pork, beef and cheese were probably very important everyday foods, as well as being eaten at special festivals and feasts, such as at Stonehenge.
4. Pupils could plot this information chronologically, using a timeline. For more information, they could refer to the early stages of the English Heritage Food History timeline: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stonehenge/history/food-feasting/food-timeline/>

What do scientists tell us?

5. Explain that scientists used to think that the Neolithic diet consisted mainly of meat – due to the high number of animal bones found at prehistoric sites. However, with better scientific techniques and equipment, scientists can now analyse things like teeth, pollen and mineralised poo to show that people were also eating a wide range of plants including roots, seeds and wild leaves.
6. Recap Activity 1 and revisit how scientists studying evidence left behind at Durrington Walls have been able to reveal the food and diet of the people who lived during the building of Stonehenge.
7. Share Activity Sheet 2 with the class and discuss the evidence that has been collected and some examples of the different foods eaten at Durrington Walls and similar Stone Age sites in Britain.

Exploring the Evidence: What food do we eat today?

8. Discuss whether the food listed on Activity Sheet 2 is still eaten by humans living today. Think about what types of food are available to us now and how eating habits have changed over thousands of years. Pupils may wish to refer again to the English Heritage Food History timeline: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stonehenge/history/food-feasting/food-timeline/>
9. Ask pupils to complete the table on Activity Sheet 2 by writing or drawing everything they eat and drink in one day and making sure that they produce an accurate record for scientific research.

And finally...

10. Reflecting on the food and drink recorded for one day, pupils should indicate which items might have also been eaten by the people building Stonehenge. They must be able to justify their answers and also talk about why some foods eaten today would not have been available at the time of Stonehenge.

**Fantastic Fact**

In the later part of the Stone Age, people grew cereals to make porridge and simple bread. However, there is no evidence of cereals at Durrington Walls, so perhaps it was not an important feasting food.