Filé and the Sassafras Leaf | Teacher Guide

Louisiana Foodways Visual Studio • Lesson 017 • Grades K–2 • observational print • 3–5 sessions

Essential inquiry

How can we explore filé powder and regional food traditions through observational print and communicate an original idea?

Cultural or technical context

filé powder and regional food traditions. Louisiana foodways are living traditions with diverse Black, Indigenous, Creole, Cajun, Acadian, Vietnamese, Isleño and other contributors. Teach with credited sources and avoid treating one recipe as universal.

Learning targets

Students will demonstrate observational print; research the relevant context; create an original artifact or composition; justify at least one change after critique.

Materials and preparation

Drawing paper, scrap collage paper, pencils, markers, colored pencils, safe adhesive, optional photographs of locally credited foodways; no cooking required.

Differentiation

Teacher models a short sample; students select from two materials, use pictures or oral reflection, and work in 10-minute cycles.

Extension beyond Grade 12

Advanced learners may deepen their research, technique and documentation while keeping the same core inquiry.

Ten-step teaching sequence

01. Notice two contrasting examples or observations associated with filé powder and regional food traditions; name one uncertainty.
02. Investigate who made or uses the source material and what context must be represented accurately.
03. Complete two low-stakes trials of observational print; label what changed between trials.
04. Sketch three independent approaches to the question: filé powder and regional food traditions.
05. Select one approach; plan materials, ethical citation, composition and success criteria.
06. Produce a botanical composition with accurately labeled leaves. Record one decision that differs from the first sketch.
07. Give peer feedback using one visible detail and one clarifying question.
08. Revise at least one element based on evidence; photograph or annotate the change.
09. Present artwork with an artist statement, source credit and medium information.
10. Explain how the technique and concept developed, plus one next studio goal.

Discussion prompts

01. What evidence tells you something important about filé powder and regional food traditions?
02. How does observational print change the meaning of the result?
03. Which source is being credited, and whose voice is missing?
04. What feedback prompted a visible or audible revision?

Formative assessment

At entry: one baseline observation. During: two skill trials and a peer critique. Exit: final result, revision evidence and source credit.

Safety and accessibility

Provide choice of media, mobility alternatives, visual/auditory access supports, and permission-based documentation. No tasting or food preparation is required for foodways projects.

Reference and standards note

https://www.nps.gov/jela/learn/historyculture/louisiana-foodways.htm
https://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/CSE/creole_food_trad.html
Align locally with current grade-level arts standards; do not treat this resource as a verified Louisiana standards crosswalk.

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