



Nepal

Lesson 4

Nepalese Food and Festivals

Lesson Story:

Think about some ways that you and your family celebrate holidays. Do you get together with other extended family members? (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) Do you share special foods for certain holidays? (like turkey and cranberries and pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving) And do you have special games or traditions you always do for certain days? (like exchanging gifts at Christmas, or watching fireworks on the Fourth of July)

People in most countries have similar ideas about how to celebrate special days. Although the names of our holidays and the reasons we celebrate them might be different, the ideas are generally the same. Let's take a look at the festivals and holidays the Nepalese people observe, and how they like to celebrate.

There are more than 50 festivals celebrated in Nepal every year. Some are national festivals, which everyone celebrates and others are religious festivals, celebrated by those who adhere to a specific religion. No matter what the festival though, all are celebrated with much color and enthusiasm, and in every case, the large, extended Nepali family is on hand for each celebration.

New Year's Day is known as "Navavarsha", and is celebrated on the first day of the first month of the Nepali official calendar. This day usually falls around the middle of our month of April. Since this is a national holiday, businesses are closed and everyone celebrates by going on picnics and getting together with family and friends.

The most popular festival in Nepal is called "Dashain". It lasts for 15 days during our months of September and October. The festival is held in honor of a Hindu goddess named Durga. She is seen as the mother goddess, and all Hindu homes are cleaned and decorated and painted as an invitation to Durga to visit the home and bless it with good fortune for the year to come. In preparation, many days are spent in shopping for new clothes and gifts, and much food is prepared, both for the days of feasting with visiting relatives, and as offerings to take to the temples. Each day, food and gifts are brought to the temples honoring Durga and left there to "earn" the goddess's good favor. Thousands of sheep, goats, ducks, and chickens are killed during this time, as the feasting families eat more meat during this festival than all the rest of the year. Meat is also left at the temples to please the mother goddess. (As with Christmas in the United States, many who do not regularly practice the Hindu religion will celebrate this festival to some degree because of its popularity.)

Many, many other festivals are observed each year, some lasting one day and others lasting several days, or falling on consecutive days. There is a Cow Festival, a Brothers Day, a Festival of Lights, a Married Women's Festival, a Mother's Day, and the celebrated birthdays of many religious or nationally important people. Some are celebrated by everyone in the country and others by only certain ethnic or religious groups of Nepali people. As we have seen, many people eat only rice and

vegetables on regular days. But on holidays and festival days, special meat dishes or special desserts might be prepared to share with the visiting family members and friends. Sharing food is very important to the Nepali people. It is common to ask even strangers to share a snack or a meal on a regular day, so when something special is prepared, it is always shared with neighbors and friends before the family eats. The family usually eats sitting on the floor, with the mother or the grandmother serving. When everyone has eaten, she will eat last, often eating the leftovers from her husband's plate as a sign of endearment and close intimacy.

People all over the world enjoy and look forward to fun days of celebration. Special foods are almost always part of those celebrations. Learning about holidays in other parts of the world helps us to understand the lives of others, and tasting the foods others eat allows us to experience a small part of their lives. Even though there are many differences in the clothes we wear, the food we eat and the way we live our lives, God made all people in the world to have the same basic needs. All of us need food and water and shelter from the weather. We need love and we need relationships with other people. God also made us to need Him.

Pray that the people of Nepal would have the opportunity to hear of God's love for them, and that they come to see that God's love for them will bring more joy than all of the festivals anyone could ever celebrate.

Nepalese Musical Instrument

Nepalese Stick Drum

- Gel Markers, paint and stickers to decorate drums
- No-Run School Glue
- Pointed Tip Scissors
- yarn
- beads
- recycled plastic containers
- dowel sticks

This stick drum is meant to be a toy replica of the damaru drums used in Nepalese Buddhist Religious festivals. Since almost every festival in Nepal has some religious significance, it is difficult to learn about Nepalese holidays without including the religious elements.

1. Find a small recycled plastic container with a tight lid, such as a margarine tub. Remove the lid. Poke a small hole in both the center of the lid and the center of the bottom of the container.
2. Cut yarn that is about 3 times as long as the depth of your drum. Push yarn through the holes. Tie a fairly large bead to each end of the string. (Make sure the string isn't too long, or it will get tangled. To play your drum, the bead will hit the container when the stick is twisted between the palms.)
3. Cut a hole the size of the dowel rod in one side of your container, and in the side directly opposite the first hole.
4. Push a short, fairly thick dowel stick, a stick fallen from a tree, or a recycled wooden spoon into the holes. Wrap yarn around the outside edges where the stick enters and exits the drum. Hold the yarn in place with glue. Glue the lid to the drum. Allow to dry.
5. Decorate your drum with markers, stickers, or paint. Enjoy playing music with your classmates.

Nepalese Recipes

Dal Bhat is the typical staple daily food of many Nepalese. It can be seasoned in a variety of ways, as seen with the "optional ingredients" in the recipe. Rice, vegetables and lentils are fairly easy to grow in this climate, and are the only foods eaten by many families for most of the year. Served with Puri and Mango Ice Cream, children can taste an authentic Nepalese meal. Serve on a cloth spread on the floor. Sit on mats or carpet around the cloth with shoes removed for a true dining experience.

QUICK DAL BHAT (LENTILS WITH RICE)

1 cup red lentils (soaking in cold water for an hour greatly reduces cooking time)
1 tablespoon butter
½ teaspoon Cinnamon
Salt to taste
Brown or white rice

Optional:

3 tablespoon onions (chopped)
2 tablespoon tomatoes (chopped)
½ teaspoon turmeric powder
½ teaspoon garlic paste

Optional Garnish

few leaves of fresh cilantro (to sprinkle on top after done)

1 Boil lentils with all ingredients in 2 cups water until just tender (not mushy).
Boil rice according to package directions.
2 Garnish and serve hot with rice.

PURI (FRIED FLOUR FLAT BREADS)

2 cups all purpose (or part whole wheat) flour
1 cup lukewarm water
1 Pinch of salt
Oil for frying

1 Knead flour with water into slightly sticky dough.
2 Cover loosely and rest dough for 15 minutes.
3 Break off walnut sized pieces.
4 Dip in flour, and roll out thin and round.
5 Heat oil in bottom of heavy pan.
6 Fry puri until slightly brown on both sides.
7 Drain excessive oil and serve hot with Dal Bhat or any curried vegetable.

MANGO ICE CREAM

1 ripe Mango (sliced, with skin and seed removed)
2 cups Vanilla Ice Cream
1-2 tablespoons Sugar (to taste)

1 Put Mango in Blender. Blend it well with sugar.
2 Add ice cream. Blend it for less than a minute.
3 Freeze the mixture for 1/2 hour and serve.