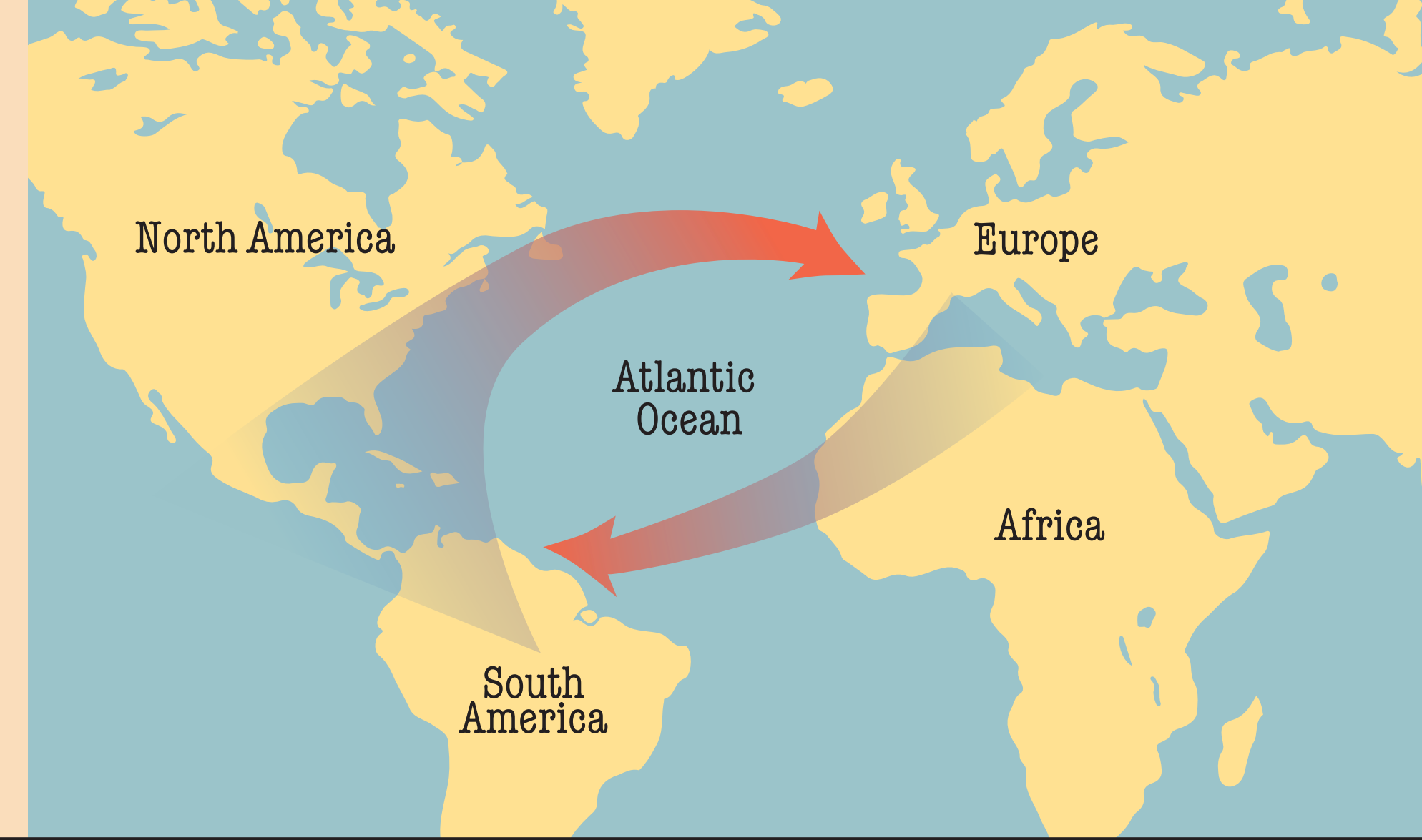


# EDIBLE HISTORY

## How Latin American Food Changed the World



Can you imagine a world without french fries, or ketchup, or chocolate? No corn tortillas for tacos, no popcorn, or corn on the cob? No tomato sauce for spaghetti or pizza? No peanut butter and jelly sandwiches? No beans for “rice and beans”? No guacamole or salsa to eat with chips? No vanilla ice cream? No pumpkins for Halloween? No turkey or sweet potatoes at Thanksgiving?

Many of the foods that are part of our daily lives today were not known in the rest of the world before Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and reached Latin America.



**Columbus connected** the “Old World” (Europe, Africa, and Asia) and the “New World” (the Americas) for the first time in 1492. As he and other Europeans explored the Americas, they discovered new crops, animals, and plants that had never been seen in other parts of the world. The explorers took some of these new products back home to Europe. Settlers traveling to the Americas to build new colonies brought with them products from the Old World. As ships traveled back and forth between the continents a great exchange of goods, crops, and other things began to take place. This is known as the Columbian Exchange — since it all started with Columbus. It affected millions of people’s lives and changed the course of history.

The New World’s major contribution to the Old World was food products. When the new Latin American crops were taken across the ocean and grown in Europe, Asia and Africa, they changed people’s eating habits and became a very important part of the diets of many other cultures. These new crops were more nutritious and often easier to grow, so people became healthier and stronger, and fewer children and adults died from hunger and disease. The population of Europe, Asia, and Africa increased dramatically.

### From the Americas to Europe & the Rest of the World

Avocados	Papayas
Beans (kidney, navy, lima)	Peanuts
Bell peppers	Pecans
Cacao (for chocolate)	Pineapples
Cashews	Potatoes
Chili peppers	Pumpkins
Corn	Quinoa
Manioc (cassava, tapioca, yuca)	Squashes
	Sweet potatoes
	Tomatoes
	Turkeys
	Vanilla beans

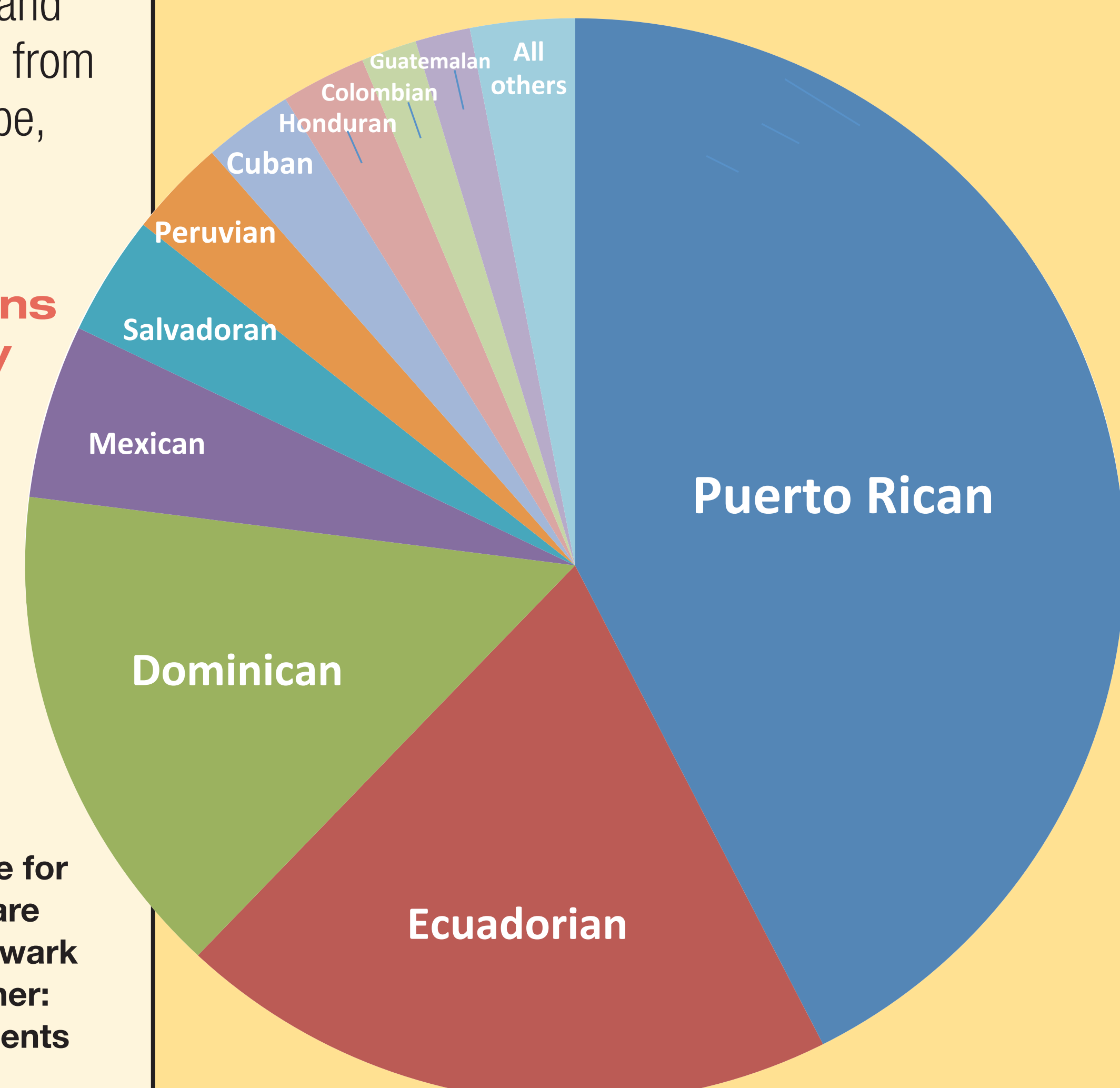


### Latin America

There are 20 countries in Latin America — an area from the northern border of Mexico to the southern tip of South America, including the Caribbean. The Andes Mountains run all along the western edge of South America, from north to south, through seven South American countries: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. The Andes are the longest continental mountain range in the world, and the highest outside of Asia.

### Latin Americans in New Jersey

New Jersey is home to people from every country in Latin America — from Mexico to Argentina. Latinos make up almost 20% of the population and are the largest minority group in the state. Some have been here for generations, others are recent arrivals. In Newark the numbers are higher: 34% of Newark residents are Latino.







# EDIBLE HISTORY

## How Latin American Food Changed the World

### TOMATO

**The tomato** originated in the Andes. The Aztecs and other civilizations ate tomatoes as part of their regular diet. But when they reached Europe, they were initially grown only as interesting and colorful decorative plants. It took 300 years for the tomato to become accepted as a food.



In the 19th century, people in southern Italy began to mix pasta with tomato sauce and eventually tomato sauces became typical of Italian food in general.

Today, we find tomatoes everywhere: in ketchup, salads, Mexican salsa, in many types of Spanish, Latin American and Middle Eastern dishes, and — in one of America's favorite foods — pizza.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ Tomatoes come in different colors. In addition to the common red tomato there are also white, yellow, orange, and blue varieties.
- ✓ A fruit pretending to be a vegetable? Since it has seeds and grows from a flowering plant, the tomato is really a fruit, not a vegetable like most people think.
- ✓ The word "tomato" comes from the Spanish *tomate*, which in turn comes from the Nahuatl (Aztec language) word *tomatōtl*.
- ✓ Even though it is a fruit, the tomato has been named the official state vegetable of New Jersey. Go figure.



### CORN

**People living** in central Mexico developed corn — also known as maize — at least 8,000 years ago. From Mexico, corn spread north into the Southwestern United States and south down the coast to Peru. Native people throughout North and South America eventually came to depend upon this crop for much of their food.

After Columbus arrived in America, more Spanish explorers followed, settled, and learned how to eat maize from the native people. Traders carried it back to Europe and introduced it to other countries.

Today, corn is the most produced grain in the world. The United States is the largest producer. It grows 40% of the world's total harvest.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ The word "maize" comes from the Spanish word *maíz*, which in turn comes from the Taino word *mahiz*. Tainos were the native people living in the islands of the Caribbean at the time Columbus arrived.
- ✓ Latin American countries grow many more varieties of corn than the United States. In Peru and Mexico, you can find corn of all different shapes, sizes, and colors, including purple, white, and blue.
- ✓ Many Latin American dishes popular in Newark's Latino communities are maize-based: tortillas, tamales, tacos, pupusas, arepas, sorullitos de maíz.



**Chicha morada** (Peru) is a sweet beverage made from purple corn. People were making and drinking chicha morada in Peru thousands of years ago, even before the time of the Inca Empire. It is still a very popular drink today and you can find it in most Peruvian restaurants and markets in New Jersey.



**Tacos** (Mexico) — corn or wheat tortilla folded around a filling of beef, pork, chicken, seafood, or vegetables.



**Sorullitos de maíz** (Puerto Rico) are corn fritters stuffed with cheese.

### Tamales

(Mexico & Central America) are made with corn-based dough and are filled with beef, chicken, pork, cheese, beans, or vegetables. They are wrapped in leaf paper (green banana, plantain, or corn husk) and steamed or boiled.





# EDIBLE HISTORY

## How Latin American Food Changed the World



### POTATO

**Potatoes originated** in the Andes Mountains in South America. They were first grown thousands of years ago in the area that is now Peru. During the 1500s, the Spanish brought the potato to Europe where it quickly became a vital part of the European diet since it was very nutritious and easy to grow.

European crops — such as wheat — needed a lot of open space and good weather to grow. They had to be harvested and then taken to the mill to be processed. On the other hand, potatoes grow below ground so they are not as affected by the weather. They grow quickly, need little water, and each plant produces a very large number of potatoes which can be picked, cooked, and eaten right away. The poorer people in Europe could now easily grow this very nutritious food in small backyard plots to feed their families.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ In Peru, there are more than 4,000 varieties of native potatoes, mostly found in the Andes region. They come in many colors, sizes, and shapes.
- ✓ You can survive eating only potatoes and milk. The potato contains a lot of starch (carbohydrates) which make it a high-energy food, and it supplies all the vital nutrients except calcium and vitamins A and D. The milk supplies those.
- ✓ The word potato comes from the Spanish word *patata*.
- ✓ Potatoes were the first vegetable to be taken into space.



- ✓ Potatoes are the vegetable eaten most frequently in the United States; the average American eats about 130 pounds of potatoes per year.
- ✓ Peruvian families have brought many traditional potato dishes to New Jersey.

#### Causa rellena

is a Peruvian dish made by alternating layers of seasoned mashed yellow potatoes with avocado, chicken, or seafood.

#### Papa a la huancaína

(Huancayo style potatoes) is a classic Peruvian dish made with boiled yellow potatoes with a creamy, spicy sauce.



### PEANUT

**Peanuts are native** to South America. The Incas used peanuts in religious rituals and put them in tombs with mummies to feed the spirit in the afterlife. When the Spanish explorers arrived, they found peanuts being offered for sale in the marketplace of Tenochtitlán — the ancient name for Mexico City.

Europeans took peanuts from South America to Africa in the 1500s and they soon became a basic crop for West African farmers.

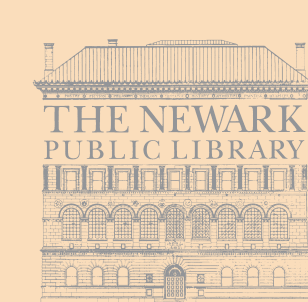
Because they were very nutritious and were easy to carry, slave traders stocked peanuts on their ships to feed enslaved Africans on the trips across the Atlantic Ocean. Since peanuts came to North America with the slave trade, for a long time in the U.S. they were considered to be poor quality — “food for slaves and pigs” — and most people would not eat them.

Peanuts and peanut butter were a key part of the food rations given to soldiers in World War I and II. Eventually, peanuts became a popular snack eaten everywhere.

Today, peanuts and peanut butter are the most popular nut choice in the United States: 67% of all nuts eaten.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ Peanuts have more fat than cream; more protein, minerals, and vitamins than beef; and more calories than sugar.
- ✓ Americans eat around 700 million pounds of peanut butter per year. The average American child will eat 1,500 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches before graduating from high school.
- ✓ It takes about 540 peanuts to make a 12-ounce jar of peanut butter.
- ✓ “Goober” — a nickname for peanuts in the U.S. — comes from *nguba*, the word for peanut in Kilongo, a Bantu language of Central Africa.
- ✓ The American botanist and inventor, George Washington Carver, is known as “the Peanut Man” or “the Grandfather of Peanuts” because he spent years developing and promoting numerous products made from peanuts, and created 105 food recipes using peanuts.
- ✓ Presidents Thomas Jefferson and Jimmy Carter were peanut farmers.







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### CHOCOLATE

**The cacao tree**, native to the tropical regions of Central and South America, is the source of one of the world's most popular products: chocolate. The fruit of the tree has up to 60 seeds inside. These seeds, called cacao beans, are used to make chocolate.



Cacao was grown and enjoyed by the peoples of South America for thousands of years before the Europeans arrived. The Mayan Civilization was the first to use cacao beans to make chocolate. But Mayan chocolate was very different from the chocolate we know today. It was a bitter drink made from crushed cocoa beans, chili peppers, and water. There was no sugar in Central America. The Maya used chocolate in religious ceremonies as well as in everyday life.

Explorers brought cacao beans back to Europe where people began to prepare chocolate by adding other spices and cream and sugar.

Traditional Mexican hot chocolate today is a spicy drink made with chocolate, vanilla, cinnamon, chilies, anise, and other spices.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ Cacao beans were so valuable to the Aztecs that they used them as money.
- ✓ The word "chocolate" comes from the Spanish *chocolate*, which comes from the Nahuatl (Aztec language) word *xocolatl*.
- ✓ Hershey's kisses were first introduced in 1907. Today, the Hershey Company produces over 70 million chocolate kisses every day.
- ✓ During the week leading up to Valentine's Day, Americans buy more than 60 million pounds of chocolate.



### QUINOA (keen-wa or kee-no-uh)

**Quinoa is a grain** that comes from the Andean regions of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia. It has been an important food crop for people in the Andes Mountains for centuries, but was not popular anywhere else until recently, when the rest of the world discovered how nutritious and valuable it is.

Quinoa can be eaten in so many different ways: it can be cooked and served like rice; or mixed into chili or meatloaf; or combined with vegetables or beans for a salad; or made into brownies or banana "rice" pudding; or enjoyed as a hot cereal or pancakes for breakfast. The combinations are endless.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ Quinoa is considered a 'superfood' because it is a terrific source of proteins, vitamins, and minerals.
- ✓ The Incas considered quinoa to be sacred and called it *chisaya mama* which means "the mother grain." The Inca emperor would plant the first seeds of the season using tools made from gold.
- ✓ From Peru to Mars? NASA is considering quinoa as food for astronauts going on extended space flights since it is easy to store for a long time and it is very nutritious and easy to digest. Quinoa is also being studied as a possible crop to grow in space.
- ✓ The name "quinoa" comes from the Spanish spelling of the Quechua word *kinwa*. Quechua is the language of one of the native peoples of the Andes Mountains in South America.



QUINOA SALAD WITH VEGETABLES AND BEANS



WHITE CHOCOLATE-SUNFLOWER-QUINOA BITES

WHITE, BLACK AND RED QUINOA

