



The main food products of Sudan include cotton, groundnuts (peanuts), sorghum, millet, wheat, gum arabic, sugarcane, cassava (tapioca), mangos, papaya, bananas, sweet potatoes, sesame, sheep and other livestock. Some animals, particularly camels and sheep, are exported to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries.

In Sudan, if you are an important guest, a sheep will be slaughtered in your honour and many dishes then prepared using the meat.

Most vegetable dishes are served with a piece of meat in a thin broth, with a dash of oil. Beans are popular and are served stewed, then mashed and served with salad. Boiled potatoes are known as *batatas* and are usually served with a thin meat gravy. Very popular are yellow lentils, known as *adaas*, and *bamya* or ladies' fingers, often used as an ingredient in soups or stews. A dish called *mahshi* consists of tomatoes or aubergines stuffed with minced lamb or rice. As in most Arabic countries, fruits are peeled and cut in small slices for dessert. Officially, alcohol is not allowed under Islamic law as strictly applied.

On 25 May 2008, Irish Aid organised an event in the gardens at Dublin Castle that showcased many African and Irish musicians, poets and other performers. Other events that day included workshops on African craft-making, drumming sessions, and a bazaar through which visitors could stroll, enjoying samples of coffees and foods from a variety of African countries.

Look out for this type of event in the future as children might like to attend it.

IDEAS TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR CLASS



MAIN CROPS

Grain sorghum or **DURA** is Sudan's main food crop. It has been grown in Africa for thousands of years. It grows well in extreme heat and can survive for a long time without water. The sweet variety of sorghum is sometimes squeezed to extricate its sweet syrup.

MILLET and **WHEAT** are grain crops, like rice which is the staple starch. They are usually pounded into flour and used to make porridge and cakes. There are two main kinds of bread made: *kisra* is a thin, unleavened bread made from maize flour, and *gurrasa* is its thicker counterpart, often used as a base for meat and vegetable stews.

SESAME SEEDS and **PEANUTS** or **GROUNDNUTS** (brought to Africa from South America by the Portuguese over five hundred years ago) are cultivated for domestic consumption and increasingly for export. Peanuts are part of the bean family and grow very close to the surface of the ground, so they have to be cleaned before being eaten or turned into oil. Each shell will usually produce two or three nuts which are full of protein, invaluable in a war-torn and ravaged land.

GUM ARABIC or **GUM ACACIA** is a sticky substance that comes from the acacia tree which grows well in the south-western sandy region of Sudan. The gum is used in soft drinks, marshmallows and other foods, as well as being used for self-adhesive postage stamps!

OKRA or *bamya*, which was introduced to America and Europe from Africa, is a long, thin green vegetable grown by farmers in Darfur and used in Indian as well as in African cooking. It is an important ingredient in soups and stews and in a classic Sudanese dish, *bamia-bamia*, an okra lamb stew.

YAMS Those most commonly cultivated in Africa may have come from Asia in the first century AD. Yams are still a staple food in much of Africa, but are particularly important in Western Africa, where they are used to make *fufu* (a bit like porridge). There are many varieties of yam, and many varieties of sweet potato, many quite alike. Some of the yams commonly cultivated in Africa were very large, but yams are disappearing from many war-ridden countries such as Sudan because war, and natural disasters such as drought, have taken their toll, not only on the human population but also on the natural resources. In emergencies, people eat everything available and aren't in a position to leave enough seed for replanting the following year.

- Why doesn't the class prepare a Sudanese feast for parents and siblings? Some parents might help, and the children could serve the guests in the hall or classroom. Handmade and handwritten invitations could be sent out in advance. Maybe the feast could coincide with Africa Day, celebrated annually on 25 May to commemorate the founding on that date of the Organisation of African Unity, now the African Union.

Find out more about other aspects of life in Sudan, and compare with other countries

- Do a study on schooling and find out how similar and how different school life in Sudan is compared with school life in Ireland. Children might examine these topics in groups. They could select different topics or issues, look at other countries and compare them eg:
 - *Subjects on the curriculum* – did you know that in Ghana all students learn to drum, while in Nigeria children learn to garden at school?
 - *Examinations*: in Nicaragua, children cannot move to the next grade unless they pass an end-of-year exam, and in Japan children spend hours preparing for entrance exams to middle and high schools.
- Do girls have the same access to schooling as boys?
- Length of the school day (months in the school year) – in Spain, children and teachers take a siesta in the middle of the day and go back to school in the late afternoon; in Nicaragua, children get two months holidays in November and December.
- Do children wear uniforms? If so, are these optional or obligatory?
- Free or private education: do families pay for their children's education or is it paid for by the state?
- Are there schools offering specialist training in some subjects in Sudan? In China, for example, children can go to Children's Palaces for education in sports and arts.