NAME:_____ DATE:_____

Saratoga
National Historical Park

"Soldier Fare" —ACTIVITY KEY

—Soldiers' food in the American Revolution—

Goals, Themes, Objectives

Goals:
For students to become familiar with foods common to 18th century soldiers and the quantities needed to sustain an army of the time.

Themes:
Soldiers in the 18th century received rations of minimal quality, and often in minimal quantity.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to list four foods generally eaten by American Revolutionary War soldiers.
2. Students will be able to calculate amounts of food and water needed for soldiers of that time period.
3. Students will develop an understanding of the hardships of life for an 18th century soldier, and of the supply struggles for an army of that time.

Supplies Needed

- photocopies of worksheets
- scrap paper for calculations
- pencils

Summary

Soldiers in the 18th century received a daily ration of food. This was usually of low quality, and many times minimal in amount. These meager amounts, though, added up, creating a major logistical challenge for the army. How did they manage to take care of all those men?

Such challenges as supplying food and water for an army were just a part of the total picture of what life was like for a soldier in the American Revolution. Then, as now, a soldier's life is very difficult. Few of us will ever experience such extremes, but we can begin to develop an understanding of, and perhaps a respect for, what those soldiers endured.

Introduction

Vocabulary words:

ration [pronounced "**ray**-shun"] –a general term for the amount of food a soldier was given each day

pint ["**pynt**"] –a unit of liquid measure, equal to 16 ounces (twice the average school milk carton), or a little less than a 20-ounce beverage bottle

salt pork –pork (think of a pork chop or thick piece of ham) preserved by immersion in salt water, or packed in raw salt, for weeks or months at a time

Revolutionary War soldiers were given a certain amount of food each day. This was their daily ration. A regular soldier's ration was made up of:

- 1 pound of beef –or 2/3 pound of pork or fish, OR about ½ pound of salt pork or dried, salted fish
- 1 pound of bread –or 1 pound of flour to make their own bread
- salt
- butter
- 1 pint of peas –or a pint of cornmeal or oatmeal

Baking one's own bread with that flour took the form of "fire cake", a mixture of flour, salt, and water. The ingredients were mixed to form a stiff dough, which was shaped into small, flat loaves and baked on hot rocks. Not very tasty, but it's better than having nothing to eat at all!

Scenario to read to your students:

You are in charge of feeding a number of American soldiers who have just fought in the first day of the Battles of Saratoga, September 19, 1777. They are very hungry. Calculate how much food you will need to provide them with their daily rations.

ANSWER KEY

Remember:
A regular soldier's ration was supposed to be:

- 1 pound of beef –or 2/3 pound of pork or fish, OR about ½ pound of salt pork or dried, salted fish
- 1 pound of bread –or 1 pound of flour to make their own bread
- some salt
- some butter
- 1 pint of peas –or a pint of cornmeal or oatmeal

1. Ten soldiers would need how many pounds of beef for one day? __10__
2. Those ten soldiers would need how many pounds of bread for one day? __10____
3. Twenty soldiers need how many pints of peas for two days? ___20____
4. Fifty soldiers would need how many pounds of salt pork for one day? ___25____

Doctors tell us that an average adult should be drinking about one gallon of water per day. Applying that to the soldiers, how many gallons of water would be needed for:

1. Ten soldiers for one day? ___10____
2. Twenty soldiers for five days? ___100____
3. One hundred soldiers for 30 days? ___3000___
4. Fifty soldiers for 20 days? __1000__

But water is heavy, weighing about eight pounds per gallon. So, how much weight would the army need to transport in the four water questions above?

1. ___80 pounds___
2. __800 pounds____
3. __24000 pounds_
4. ___8000 pounds___