

BAKING YESTERYEAR

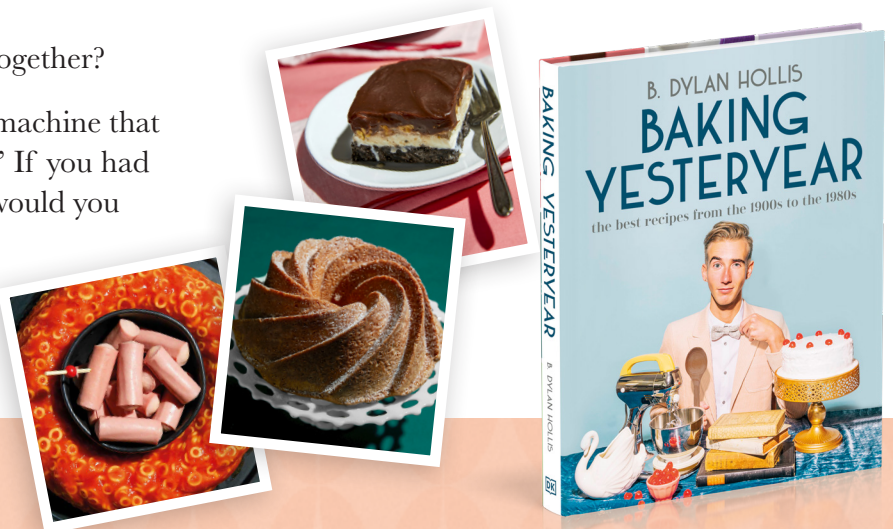
EDUCATOR ACTIVITY GUIDE

History has seen a number of ingenious recipes, and *Baking Yesteryear* covers some of the wackiest and most memorable from the 1900s. From the delectable Food for the Gods to the questionable SpaghettiOs Jell-O Ring, these recipes both reflect and enrich the cultural fabric of their time. As author B. Dylan Hollis aptly conveys, baking in the 1900s not only provided food, but was also a way to socialize, celebrate, and express creativity, as culinary artists unleashed their imagination onto their often delicious—and sometimes not—creations. Even today, social media stars (including Dylan!) use virtual mediums to create communities centered around the imagination that food offers.

The *Baking Yesteryear* educator activity guide offers discussion questions and cross-curricular activities that enrich students' creativity, collaboration, research, presentation skills, and problem-solving skills, while also encouraging critical thinking on the making—and baking—of history. While history lessons often highlight the impact of larger-scale events, learning about the past through the perspective of ingredients and recipes can offer a lens into the more mundane, day-to-day details of people's lives. This activity guide is recommended for students in grades 5–8 but can be adapted to the interests of older and younger students.

Discussion Questions

1. What dessert in *Baking Yesteryear* looks most delicious? What dessert did you find most shocking?
2. Pickle cheesecake. SpaghettiOs Jell-O Ring. Pork Cake. What is the most surprising ingredient you can think of to add to a dessert?
3. What recipes in the cookbook reflected each decades' cultural and sociopolitical state?
4. Why is food a useful medium for understanding the culture and history of a certain time?
5. What are some ways food brings people together?
6. Dylan describes his cookbook as a “time machine that is not only edible, but entirely delectable.” If you had a time machine, which period in history would you travel to and why?
7. What are some recent food trends that you have seen in your life?
8. Dylan shares recipes on social media with people all around the world. In what ways have you seen the internet and digital media influencing our conversations on food?
9. Have you ever cooked a dish? Where did the recipe come from?
10. Pick a dish that you think will withstand the test of time. Why do you think that is?



“It is one thing to read about the past in nonfiction, to view the past through films, or learn about it in lectures, but to be able to prepare, bake, and taste history is something very, very special indeed.”

—B. Dylan Hollis, *Baking Yesteryear*



Discussion Questions

Research Activity: Classroom Cookbook

Have students select any recipe of their choice (dessert or otherwise!) and research the history behind the dish. On individual note cards, each student should write the recipe, draw a picture of the dish, and compose a paragraph or short essay on how the chosen recipe reflects the history and culture of its time. Compile the note cards into your classroom’s own “*Baking Yesteryear*” cookbook!

Multimedia Activity: Dylan’s TikTok Challenge

Dylan’s social media accounts gave him the platform to share hundreds of recipes with the world. Have students write a script, record, and edit a 45-second to 60-second TikTok-style video by selecting a dessert of their choice and presenting the step-by-step instructions on baking the dish. Students can get creative and practice their storytelling skills by brainstorming a skit, drawing ingredients on paper, creating props, and more. This activity can be done in groups or as individuals.

Collaborative Activity: Time Travel Presentation

Assign groups of students a different decade from the 1900s and have them research the history and essence of each decade. Students should create a slideshow presentation of five slides that feature their findings on the food, fashion, music, important political events, and daily lives of people during the decade. Have students present their findings in a 3–5 minute oral presentation to the class.

Research Activity: Invent a Cake

From the Election Cake of the 1900s to the Watergate Cake of the 1980s, *Baking Yesteryear* explores the wonderful and wacky recipes that reflect each time period. With the base ingredients (flour, sugar, and eggs) already included, have students “create” their own cake by selecting five more wacky ingredients that characterize a famous historical event of their choice. Let students draw and decorate their time capsule cake, while labeling each ingredient and why they chose it to represent the event.

