

Ellis Island

Gateway to America



By Laura Smith

Unit Overview

Description: Target Ages and Grade Levels - This mini-unit is designed for lower grade elementary students.



Purpose: Gateway to America allows students to gain facts and information regarding the early history of Ellis Island and later to gain knowledge of its purpose. This mini-unit will reflect on the experiences of immigrants and the actual process of immigration as it took place on Ellis Island.

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Lesson Overview

Lesson One

Objective:

- Students will gain knowledge concerning the location of Ellis Island and New Amsterdam.
- Students will learn that Manhattan Island was once owned by the Dutch and known as New Amsterdam.
- Students will be understand that the island had no real purpose other than being used for a meeting place for fishermen.

Activity:

- Students will be able to study the structure of the oyster and seagulls, which were the first occupants on Ellis Island. The teacher may share with his/her class the introduction, chapters one and two of *Sam Ellis Island* by Beatrice Siegel.

Lesson Two

Objective:

- Students will discover who Samuel Ellis was and what viewpoint he held during the Revolutionary War.
- Students will become familiar with the terms Tory and Patriot.

Lesson Three

Objective:

- Students will learn that due to the war the island was used for other purposes.

Lesson Four

Objective:

- Students will discover that Castle Garden was located in Manhattan and used as the first immigration center. Due to it being inefficient and corrupt, plans was being made to develop Ellis Island into a new Immigration center.
- Students will become aware of the term corruption when studying the problems that existed at Castle Garden.



Lesson Five

Objective:

- Students will learn about the construction of Ellis Island and what was used to build up the land.
- Students will discover the difficulties immigrants experienced due to the rough journey aboard the steamships

Activity:

- Students will have a writing assignment expressing similar experiences regarding the joy of arriving at a destination.

Lesson Six

Objective:

- Students will discuss the financial difficulties immigrants experienced traveling on the ships to America. Teacher can share and discuss the photo of immigrants aboard the ship on the steerage section.

Lesson Seven

Objective:

- Students will discuss the frightening experience of being examined once arriving at Ellis Island. Teacher will share photos of immigrants going through physical and mental exams.

Lesson Eight

Objective:

- Students will discover who the immigrants are and where they came from.
- Students will gain knowledge of contributions made by several ethnic groups.
- Students will grasp and understand the term “Melting Pot”. Students will be able to share recipes and plan a food fair.



Ellis Island: A Home for Oysters and Sea Gulls

In 1630, New York City was known as Nieuw Amsterdam. The Dutch were settlers there along with Jewish, Flemish and Indonesian settlers. 800 African slaves were part of the community as well. However, they lived in an area of the city that was not protected from the Indians. Nieuw Amsterdam was just a small collection of wharfs, forts, homes and businesses.

In 1630, Ellis Island was known as Kioshk by the Mohegan Indians and Gull Island by the Colonists. The only life on the island was sea gulls and oysters. Dutch governors purchased the island from the Indians on July 12, 1630. At the time of the purchase the island was known for its rich oyster beds and was also referred to as Oyster Island.



Ring-Billed Gull

The Ring-Billed Gull is a medium-sized gull that is often called the "sea gull." This bird used to be quite abundant, and was called the Common American Gull. It was killed for its feathers (mostly used in hats), but has now recovered from a drastic decline in population numbers. It may be the most abundant gull in North America. This sea bird is found along ocean and lake coasts of North America. The life span is about 10 to 15 years. These water birds make a high-pitched squawking sound and a ky-eow sound.



Classification: Kingdom Animalia (animals), Phylum Chordata (animals with a notochord), Subphylum Vertebrata (vertebrates), Class Aves (birds), Family Laridae (gulls and terns), Genus and species *Larus delawarensis*.

Anatomy: The Ring-Billed Gull is about 18 to 21 inches (45 to 53 centimeters) long with a 20-inch (50 centimeter) wingspan. It weighs about 1.5 pounds (0.7 kilograms). Adults (who mature at three years of age) are mostly white. Juveniles are a mottled brown.

Diet: Ring-Billed Gulls are carnivores (meat-eaters) that hunt in the sea. They eat fish (including smelt), earthworms, insects, small rodents (like mice) and even road kill.

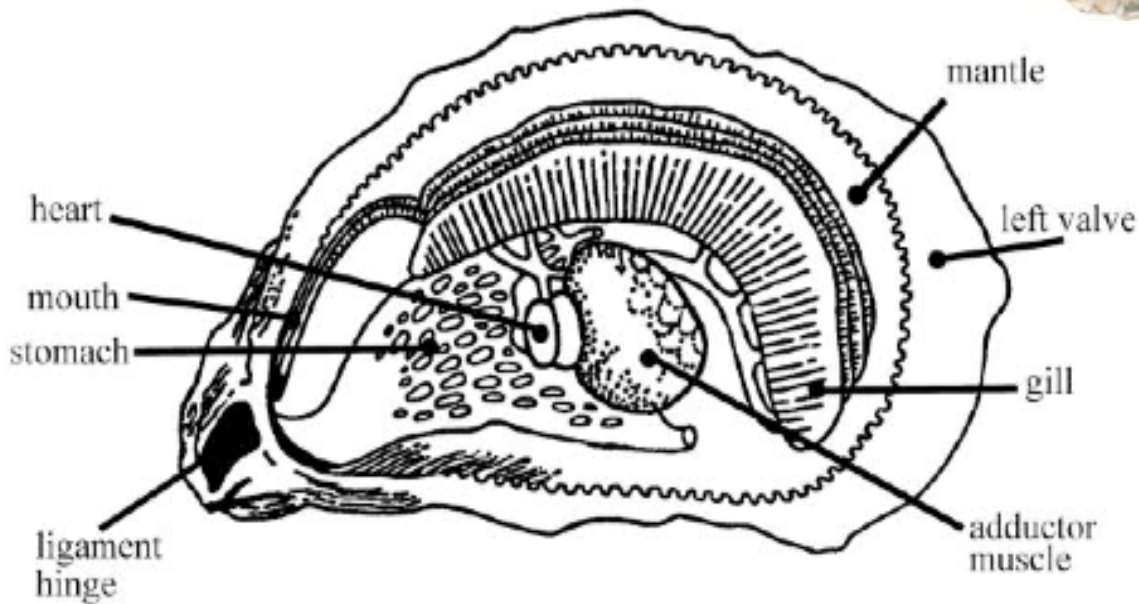
Predators: Predators of the ring-billed gull include the coyote, fox, raccoon, dog, mink, rat, great-horned owl and others.

Reproduction: Like all gulls, the Ring-Billed Gull is a colonial breeder. It nests along inland lakes and along the seacoast with hundreds of other gulls. Females lay three buff-colored eggs in each clutch. Nests are made of grass and plant stalks.



Oysters

Oyster Diagram



Oysters are soft-bodied animals that have two hard, protective shells. This is a bivalve. They spend their entire lives in one underwater location. The shape of the oyster's shells varies, depending mostly upon how crowded they are in the oyster bed.

Anatomy: The two hard, rough-textured shells are attached by a muscular hinge (the adductor muscles) at the narrow end. The shell is generated by the mantle - a thin layer of tissue separating the shell from the soft body. When an oyster is threatened, it closes its shells using the very strong adductor muscle. Oysters draw in water through their gills, and extract oxygen and filter out floating algae. They use the algae for food. An oyster changes its sex during its life; it starts out as a male and often ends as a female. The largest oysters are up to 3 feet long, but most are a few inches long.

Pearls: Pearls are sometimes found in oysters. When a grain of sand or other irritating substance gets stuck between the oyster's mantle and shell, the oyster secretes nacre. This shiny substance coats the grain of sand. Over the years, a lustrous pearl is formed.

Predators of the Oyster: Many animals eat oysters, including whelks, sea stars, and people.

The Next Hundred Years

Over the next hundred years or so, the slaves of Nieuw Amsterdam can be credited with building up New York City. However, Ellis Island remained just a strip of soft mud and clay. From end to end it measured approximately 2.5 acres. Perhaps because of the richness of the oysters it was know as a place for fisherman to meet, and dig oysters and fish. Since the island was set very low in the bay, it barely rose above the high-tide level. In order for the land to be used for building it would need to be built up by adding soil to rise up the island.

One of the early owners of the island used it as a picnic area. Perhaps many New Yorkers took boats over to the island and enjoyed a pleasant summer afternoon under the cool shade trees.



Sam Ellis's Island

In 1763, a man named Samuel Ellis came into possession of the tiny island. He thought that he could use the island to expand his growing fish business established in New York City. His thought was that he could catch herring and shad off the island, and use the land for storage of tools and boats. As he looked across from New York to the tiny island he could never have imagined that this island would have so much meaning to many people within the next one hundred years. Perhaps in his mind he thought about the fact that 150 years earlier the island belonged to the Mohegan Indians.

In the late 1860s, Ellis Island was known as Gibbet Island and was a place where criminals were executed. By the time Samuel Ellis had taken ownership of the island in the 1770s, the island had taken many name changes: Kioshk, Oyster, Dyre, Bucking, Gibbet, Anderson. Until that point in time the island had been a feeding ground for Gulls and a hanging ground for pirates.

The 1770s were a time of war in the United States and New York suffered political and social unrest. Samuel Ellis and many people were in favor of the British ruling America. Others, known as rebels, believed that they no longer wanted to be ruled by the British. A war resulted between the Americans and the British. It lasted for years and, because of opposite views on who should rule, New York suffered damaging fires to one third of the city. George Washington was leading the fight against the British. Many of the people who felt loyalty to the British fled to Canada. The entire congregation of two thousand members of Trinity Church fled to Canada along with its rector. Samuel Ellis remained in New York even though those who supported the British ran the risk of being killed by the Rebels.



The Island Changes

After the war, in January 1785, Sam Ellis attempted to sell his small island. No one was interested in buying the island, so it remained part of his estate. At this time he began to purchase land in New York and New Jersey and became very wealthy.

Since Sam Ellis did not sell the island. However, he did grant permission for the government to build a garrison. His grandson, Samuel Ellis who inherited it upon birth, died in infancy and the land remained in the family for many years.

In 1798, New York converted the island into a recruiting station. Stone buildings were erected. Soldiers camped and were trained there. For many years the government did not have a clear title to the land, as the Ellis family disputed the rights of John Berry, to whom they sold it. Berry sold the land to New York State and the state sold it to the U.S. government.





Ellis Island Known as Fort Gibson

During the War of 1812, Ellis Island was known as Fort Gibson and was used as a fortification in case of attack by the British. For 80 years it remained a storage depot for ammunition.

During this time, New York became an area that grew with immigrants from Europe. With this expansion of people to New York City came excitement that led to the steady flow of people from all over the world entering our country. New York had developed into a city with many business opportunities and a wealth of culture.

Many Immigrants by the 1800s were being offered farmlands for little or no money. Many business owners were paying for immigrants to come to this country to work for them. Immigrants were coming to America by the millions in the 1850s because they desired freedom of religion, speech and a better way of life for their families.

Since the early Colonial times, each state made an effort to exclude criminals, paupers and diseased aliens from entering America. Since a million and a half Europeans arrived in the 1850s alone, the state needed to have a system by which immigration could be monitored, in order to avoid having undesirables enter the country and to make sure that people entering the United States had jobs and a place to live.



Ellis Island Opens

In 1855, Castle Garden, located in Manhattan, was an immigration center. At one time the beautiful building was home to an elegant concert hall as well as being used as a fort. During the time period when Castle Garden was used as an immigration station, inspection officers were accepting bribes from undesirable immigrants in order to enter the country. During the mid 1800s, thousands of immigrants poured into America, making the process of inspection poorly done due to corruption and greed by some officers. Since Castle Garden was no longer efficient to process the thousands of people entering the United States, the United States Government was searching for a better location.

Mr. Pulitzer suggested that Ellis Island be used for an immigration center. Construction began in 1890 and landfill from the New York City tunnels and subways was transported to build up the island to support its buildings. The plan was to build several wooden buildings that could house not only immigrants, but could also have storage places for baggage. The island had grown from 2.2 acres to 27 acres.



Castle Garden



Who Were the Immigrants and Where Did They Come From?



Immigrants are people who travel to another country and settle there to live. Millions of people migrated to the United States during the late 1800s. They came from England, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Russia, Poland, Sweden, Ireland and even the islands of the Caribbean.

Most immigrants came to America so that they could get jobs and settle in big cities or on farms. Many immigrants had jobs waiting for them when they arrived. They brought with them their many talents and were hard working people who contributed to America by helping to build new cities. Immigrants worked in factories to produce goods sent to other countries, and some established their own businesses once they arrived on American soil.

Very often immigrants came to America because the system of government caused them to suffer, and some were not allowed to practice freedom of religion. So they saved what money they had and sailed to America.



Difficult Times

In the year 1890, a third-class passenger aboard a boat that traveled to America paid \$12 for a ticket. They didn't even get a room for that money. Immigrants slept in the steerage area with all their belongings. Suitcases, trunks and sometimes just the clothes on their backs were the only items they brought with them from their native lands. Food aboard the ship was expensive, so many immigrants brought food with them from their homelands.

The trip often was difficult, as immigrants faced storms along the way. Seeing the Statue of Liberty was a welcomed sight as the boats carried thousands of soon-to-be Americans towards Ellis Island.





Passage to Freedom

Once immigrants passed The Statue of Liberty, they began to cheer as they thought about the life that lay ahead of them. They would have to pass inspection, which took place in the many rooms in the great hall. Inspectors wanted to know if immigrants had any legal problems, or if they were criminals entering America. Everyone went through what was known as a three-minute examination. Immigrants were checked for physical defects as they walked up a long staircase. If they had a limp they were marked on their clothing with an “L”. If they had trouble seeing or appeared to be mentally impaired, they received another symbol on their clothing that meant that they might have to go back to their country. After passing the physical and mental exams, they would be free to exit through a door that led to Manhattan or transportation to anywhere in the United States they wished to go. That doorway was the immigrants’ passage to freedom known as The Gateway to America.

A Bittersweet Experience

Arriving in New York, immigrants were led off the boats to the great hall to be inspected. This meant that each person was given a physical examination and asked questions to determine if they were both physically and mentally well. Some immigrants were considered not well enough to support themselves and were sent back to their countries. Going through the exams were very frightening to the immigrants. At times, relatives were separated because one family member did not pass an exam.

Many newcomers to America settled in New York City. Boys and girls had to find work in factories to help their parents. They worked long, hard hours and often did not get an education. When immigrant children did not work, they often could be seen playing stickball in the streets of New York. They lived in tenement houses, which were old and in need of repair.



Mental Health Examinations



Annie Moore

On January 1, 1892, Annie Moore, a fifteen year old girl from Ireland, became the first immigrant to set foot on Ellis Island. She sailed to America with her two brothers on the ship *Nevada*. Their parents had been in America for three long years before they could afford to send for Annie and her brothers. Since she was the first person to enter the new immigration hall, Annie received a ten-dollar gold piece as a souvenir.





A Symbol of Hope to Many

Ellis Island has become a symbol of hope to millions of people. At one time it was just a muddy little island that was home to the sea gulls and oysters. The Indians saw value in the island as did Samuel Ellis. He enjoyed looking across the waters from New York to the small island. I would like to think that maybe he dreamed that his small island would someday be used for great things. Today it reminds all of us of the great contributions of so many immigrants who graced our shores and who came through The Gateway to America to help make our country a melting pot. You can visit this island and view the restoration done to the original building. This project took place in 1990 and a wall can be viewed with the names of many immigrants written on it. Every American should visit the museum and go back in time to learn about the struggles and joys of the American immigrants.



America Is Considered A “Melting Pot”

America is a “melting pot” because of the different nationalities living together. Each nationality contributed to their community by bringing a touch of their former homeland. Many immigrants opened bakeries selling the pastries and breads of their countries. Today, one can still find an assortment of ethnic foods in their communities. Jewish delis, back in the early 1900s, prepared foods familiar to Jewish immigrants such as potato salad, cole slaw, or perhaps a potato knish. Immigrants enjoyed going to a neighborhood store and speaking in their native tongue. They would ask for the foods that reminded them of their homeland.

Write a two paragraph essay on ethnic foods you enjoy and why.

Name _____



Facts About Ellis Island

<u>Word Bank</u>	
picnics	Kioshk
New York Harbor	immigration
oysters/seagulls	New Jersey
California	newspaper office

Finish the sentence with the correct fact.

In the 1600's only _____ could be found on the Island.

The Indians called the Island _____.

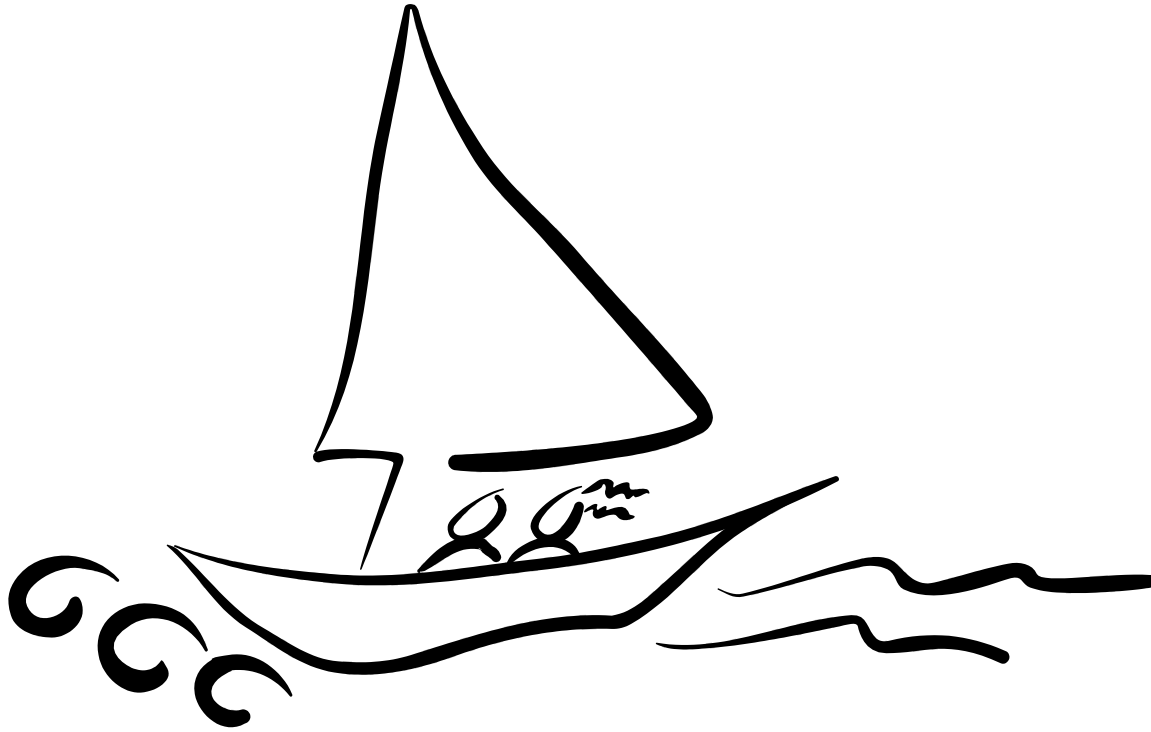
Early Settlers used the Island to have _____.

Ellis Island is located in _____.

The State that borders New York is _____.

In the late 1800's Ellis Island was used as an _____ center.





Between 1892 and 1954, immigrants came to America by way of Ellis Island. Many immigrants had to travel aboard ships as third class passengers, which meant that they did not even have a bed to sleep in. They stayed with their belongings in the steerage area. Often, immigrants had to bring food from their homeland to eat while aboard because they could not afford the cost of buying food on the ship. Storms frightened the immigrants and some felt that they would die before reaching America. Many immigrants cried and cheered as they arrived in New York Harbor and viewed the Statue of Liberty. A short distance beyond the Statue of Liberty, the immigrants were greeted by Ellis Island. Many were happy and sad at the same time. They were sad to leave their loved ones back home, and happy to come to America to start a new life. They had read or heard that American streets were paved with gold.

Have you ever been so happy about arriving to someplace that you cheered when finally getting there? Write a paragraph describing the experience.

Ellis Island

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 r p o m l f a h x a a m p o p i c n i c x j e f x
 o n g b o j k q t z g i f p o e j k e c r v k t x
 t y u c o h d c p s d g l v g h w y p w a o q n l
 s d a c r t q i y d n v a a u w r u e l e s r l w
 i h c t u d n v j a e a u g t f d o s j t q m x n
 h k h s o i k w h e x m i s e i i g b k e h n a h
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 s u f q j p d l l z r e k p n n e r f d g d i e s
 s t n a r g i m m i t i j c p i a m z h n i h s h
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 d k z b n q t o w h e a q o s s t i a t h s p s o
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 d w z f i c j h y l l g a q s w i v k k m h j m l
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 l t r i m e g o j d w i y g h b w j n y z z v l c
 w z d b l q p d r w a e u z r n k h s i t i r b r

america	dutch	inspector	manhattan	russia
asian	examinations	irish	merchant	seagulls
baggage	german	island	neighborhood	ship
british	history	italian	ocean	slaves
chinese	immigrants	jewish	oysters	
disease	indians	kioshk	picnic	



Recipes from around the world

Try some of these interesting recipes for your family

Equipment

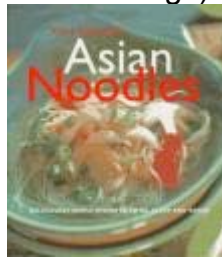
Measuring cups and spoons
Cutting board
Sharp Knife

slotted spoon
pot holder
ladle

medium saucepan with lid
long-handled wooden spoon

Ooodles of Noodles

(Makes 2 servings)



Ingredients:

4 cups vegetable broth
2 ounces dried vermicelli
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh or frozen peas
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced firm tofu
1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
1 teaspoon Asian sesame oil

1. Pour the vegetable broth into the medium saucepan, cover and set over high heat. Bring the broth to a boil. When it boils, reduce the heat to medium.
2. Remove the lid. Add the vermicelli and peas. Simmer, uncovered, stirring frequently with the wooden spoon to keep the pasta from sticking together, for 5 minutes.
3. Add the tofu and continue to simmer until the noodles are al dente (tender but still firm to the bite) and the peas are tender, about 2 minutes longer. To test, use the slotted spoon, scoop out a few noodles and a few peas. Set them on the cutting board to cool for a few seconds. Taste them. If they are tender, they are done.
4. Using the potholder, carefully remove the saucepan from the heat. Stir in the chives and sesame oil. Ladle into soup bowls and serve immediately.

Plantanos Maduros Fritos

Fried Sweet Plantains, a Spanish vegetable

(Makes 6 servings)

Soft in the center and crisp outside, these sweet morsels are best eaten with a seasoned main course.

Ingredients:

Vegetable or peanut oil for frying

5 medium-size, very ripe plantains (skins should be black), peeled and sliced 1/4 inch thick diagonally

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat 1 inch of oil to 376 degrees F, or until a plantain round sizzles when it touches the oil.
2. Fry as many rounds as will fit in a single layer, until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes for each side, turning with a slotted spoon.
3. Drain on a paper-towel-lined platter and serve immediately. (If you are frying a large number of plantains, keep them warm in a 200 degree F oven until ready to serve.)

* Students should ask permission and help from parents when frying foods.



Brochette - Italian Bread



Ingredients:

10 to 12 Roma tomatoes, chopped
4 to 5 crushed garlic cloves
Basil or lemon thyme
Salt and cracked black pepper
 $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ c. good olive oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ bottle capers (optional)

❖ Serve on thick crust Italian bread rounds

Variations: A good brand of canned chopped tomatoes, drained instead of fresh. You can sprinkle with shaved Parmesan cheese.



Crumb Apple Pie - American

(Makes 6 servings)

Ingredients:

4 c. sliced apples (or 1 can sliced pie apples, drained)
¼ c. orange juice
1 c. sugar
¾ c. enriched flour
½ tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. nutmeg
Dash of salt
½ c. butter

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Mound apples in buttered 9-inch pie plate.
3. Sprinkle with orange juice.
4. For topping: Combine sugar, flour, spices and salt. Cut in butter until mixture is crumbly, and then scatter over apples.
5. Bake in oven 45 minutes or until apples are done and topping is crisp and slightly browned.
6. Trim with twisted orange slices tacked with cloves.
7. Serve warm with pitcher of light cream or scoops of vanilla ice cream.



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