

Dandelion

THE SCHOOL IS THE MENU



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THE SCHOOL IS THE MENU

What would your school look like in a dish? Dandelion invites your school to celebrate its unique character by creating a signature dish inspired by the school and everyone in it.

Over centuries, places across Europe and beyond have evolved distinctive food cultures. 'The School is the Menu' activity fast-tracks this process using stories gathered from your school community to inspire a new dish that captures the unique essence of your school.

Your dish can be served as part of Dandelion's Harvest event in September 2022 and will remain an enduring legacy for the school, truly belonging to the community who inspired it.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION AND STAGES

1) Finding and choosing stories

- a. Your group gather the unique stories about your school and community that will be used to inspire your dish. There are countless ways you can find your stories and it's for you to decide how much time you want to spend on the research. You might simply have a class discussion, or you might go further, with questionnaires, surveys, interviews, web searches, excursions and more. Ultimately you need to gather around twenty unique and varied facts about your school.

The Citizen Fieldwork section in the Dig Where You Stand resource might help you with gathering stories. Find this in the Music & Creativity section at www.dandelion.scot

Guidance sheet 1a: Suggested research activities with sample questions for searches, surveys, interviews and questionnaires.

- b. Teachers and/or pupils review gathered stories to make a strong shortlist.

Guidance sheet 1b: Factors to consider when reviewing and shortlisting your stories.

2) Use the stories to inspire your dish

Taking inspiration from the shortlist of stories, your group creates a brand-new signature dish for the school that can be revealed and shared at the Dandelion Harvest.

Guidance sheet 2: How to create a dish using stories as inspiration.

3) Think practically

Before finalising your dish, consider what resources are needed to prepare and serve it.

Guidance sheet 3: Practicalities to consider before finalising your dish.

4) Name and describe your dish.

Name and describe your dish so that the stories that inspired it can also be enjoyed by the community, as well as the dish itself. Write the recipe to ensure your 'The School is the Menu' dish will endure and be enjoyed for years to come.

Guidance sheet 4: How to name and describe your dish. How to write a recipe.

Step 1a Guidance Sheet:

Suggested research activities and sample questions for searches, surveys, interviews, and questionnaires.

There are countless ways you can research and discover your unique stories. Below are some suggestions and you can also come up with your own. You don't need to do them all, just enough to gather plenty of interesting and varied facts about your school.

1. School Grounds and Buildings Survey

No two schools are the same. What makes your school different? Imagine that you are an expert in school buildings and grounds distinctiveness. Survey your school actively looking for distinctiveness. There is a template on page 6 to help you.

2. Interviews with teachers and local residents connected with the school.

Interviewers should ask open questions, take notes, and follow up anything they find interesting with a further question. For example, "What is your favourite thing about the school?" "What would you change if you could?"

More suggested interview questions can be found in the interview template on page 7.

3. Group Discussion

Pupils can discuss in groups using the questions and topics suggested for the Interviews.

4. School Questionnaire

Invite pupils to complete a questionnaire, which can be anonymous, to find common preferences and aspirations. Questions could include; favourite colour, food, flavour, smell, flower, animal, cartoon character or superhero. Questions can also explore lucky numbers, dream travel destination, future career and life aspirations and so on. Submissions can be analysed to find the most common or average answers. Template on page 8.

5. Internet search

- What historical information is available online about the school?
- When was it built and what other global events happened that year/decade?
- What was on the site before the school and what might have stood there in ancient history?
- Has there ever been a major event at the school that made it into the news or has anyone famous (or infamous!) been a past pupil or teacher?
- What about the street that the school sits on; what trades were carried out there in the past, have there been notable nearby buildings that are now gone and what's the significance of the street or area name?
- What nationalities make up the school community and local area?
- What is the significance of the school or house names?
- What geology lies under the school?
- What food might have been grown, produced and eaten locally in the past and what food grows well nearby now, or is produced locally?

6. Dream Dish Survey

Ask each pupil to draw and colour their dream dish on a paper plate or in chalk. Ask them to imagine that this is to be their very last meal on Earth and that they can have anything at all. Ask participants to think hard about why they would choose that dish and what it means to them - perhaps some will be happy to share their reasons with the group. The Dream Dish plates make a great exhibition and can be analysed to find common preferences.

7. Visits

Visits to meet local food producers or to allotments are a great way to find out what ingredients grow well locally and what are the most iconic locally produced foods. It may also result in new connections with the local food community, who may help in devising your menu.



Grounds and Building Survey

Use this template to help you to survey your school noting down things that make your building and grounds unique and distinctive. Consider interesting or unusual shapes in its construction, information plaques, brick/wall colours, architectural details, iconic trees/shrubs/flowers in the grounds (species, distinctive shape), your soil type (perhaps take a sample for analysis), birds nesting in/near the school, evidence of other wildlife.... Think of your own ideas too.

- How is the building and grounds distinctive - are there particularly interesting or unusual shapes in its construction, information plaques, brick/wall colours or other notable architectural details?
-
- Are there any large or iconic trees in the grounds, what species are they? Are they a distinctive shape?
-
- What kind of soil is it, perhaps there are some simple experiments that would tell us what's in the soil?
-
- Are there any birds nesting in/near the school, or evidence of other wildlife?
-

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Interviews

Try to ask open questions. An open question can't be answered with a single word answer such as yes or no. Take notes and follow up anything you find interesting with a further question. Think of your own questions too.

Interviewee Name:

- What makes you most proud of the school, why do you think it is special?

- How would you describe the school to someone who had never been?

- What's the funniest or strangest thing that's ever happened at the school?

- What are the tales and stories about the school (whether true or fantasy) that get passed on through generations of the school community?

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Questionnaire

Adapt the questionnaire with your own ideas. Analyse your results to find the most common answer or the average.

Favourite colour	
Favourite food	
Favourite smell	
Favourite flower	
Favourite animal	
Favourite superhero	
Your lucky number	
What do you imagine yourself doing for a job?	
What country would you most like to visit?	
You won the lottery! What's the first thing you'll buy?	

Step 1b Guidance Sheet:

Tips for reviewing and shortlisting your stories.

Once your research is complete, teachers and pupils should review the gathered stories and make a shortlist of around 20, each with elements that stand-out.

Here are some tips to think about as you decide which stories will give you the strongest inspiration for your dish.

- a. Shortlisted stories should be the ones that capture the imagination and that are surprising, funny, quirky or remarkable.
- b. Themes that re-occur during the research phase - things that seem to have come up time and again - deserve extra consideration.
- c. Discoveries made about your school and school community that are truly unique should be strong options too.
- d. The School is the Menu isn't just about celebrating local food – but that is an important element so, consider including ingredients that are grown locally, or iconic locally-produced foods in your shortlist.
- e. You may also have ingredients that are grown within the school grounds; in a growing cube, your own school veg or herb plot or even foraged. Perhaps members of your school community grow food at home or in an allotment.
- f. Of course, stories that have an obvious connection to food and cooking should be serious candidates. Look for references (however oblique or tenuous) to;
 - **Specific ingredients** – e.g. Rosemary Smith is a famous ex-pupil.
 - **Flavours** (salt, sweet, sour, bitter) – e.g. An iconic bitter ale is brewed locally.
 - **Fragrance** – e.g. Years ago, there used to be a biscuit factory further up the street.
 - **Spice** – e.g. The school house names are all birds, so perhaps bird's eye chilli could feature in your dish.
 - **Temperature** – e.g. The most common boy's name is Luke (warm).
 - **Texture** – e.g. A beloved school pet called Fluffy.
 - **Cooking techniques** – e.g. Toast is voted the pupils' favourite breakfast, so perhaps one of the ingredients could be toasted.
 - **Cooking implements** - e.g. Scotland's Porridge Champion 2016 lives in our street, so we might stir our signature dish with a spurtle.
 - **International cuisines** – e.g. The school has strong links to the Vikings so we might include Scandinavian flavours.
 - **Colour** - e.g. The school logo is purple so we might use beetroot in our dish.
 - **Shape** – e.g. The school building is a letter H, so this letter crops up throughout our dish description.

And so on!

Step 2 Guidance Sheet

How to create your dish using stories as inspiration.

Is there enough knowledge of food and cooking in your group to create the new dish? Consider inviting colleagues who like to cook, parents/carers or even a local chef to help – it's fun and won't take up much of their time. Before bringing your group together, ask each person to think about the gathered stories, noting down ideas of how these might be represented in a dish to bring to the meeting.

Tell them that no idea is too silly or far-fetched to be considered, nothing is off limits - as long as there is a connection to one of your stories.

- **Some stories will inspire a direct and obvious suggestion for elements of the dish;**
 - A famous past pupil called Basil.
 - A dominant ethnic population in the school community.
 - A distinctive walnut tree in the playground.
 - A common favourite food among pupils.
 - The school is part of a fishing community.
- **Then you might find slightly more oblique inspirations;**
 - There used to be a steam-powered factory on your site that could inspire a steamed element to your dish.
 - You discover that the ground under the school has distinctive rock layers that could inspire layers in your sandwich
 - The school's runaway favourite cartoon character is Iron Man - leading you to include iron-rich spinach in your dish.
 - Roses grow around the school entrance, so you might use rosehip syrup in your dish.
- **And then you might find even more oblique connections;**
 - The distinctive shape of your school road could inspire a similarly-shaped drizzle on your signature soup
 - Repeated references to the warmth of the school community could inspire you to consider mustard or chilli
 - Your school's proximity to the beach might lead you to include sand-like couscous in your signature salad.
 - The ongoing success of your netball team may lead you to serve your dish in a rectangular (netball court shaped) compostable bowl.

Encourage the group to be irreverent, to think laterally, to suggest connections wherever they see them. Keep going! You may come up with your dish really quickly or you may need to get together a couple of times to refine things.

Soon, you'll find that you have a list of possible ingredients and ideas about how those ingredients could be sourced, prepared, cut, cooked, combined or presented - all linked to your original, unique stories. Perhaps you even have a few ideas of what the final dish will be, ready to take on to the next stage.

Step 3 Guidance Sheet

Practicalities to consider and finalising your dish.

You'll already have lots of exciting thoughts about what your school's new signature dish might be – but before settling on it, think about the resources you have (or can find) to cook and serve the dish – it has to be practical. Questions you might consider are;

1. What food preparation, cooking, storage and refrigeration resources do you have in school to make your dish?
2. Is hiring/borrowing equipment or partnering with a local food enterprise an option?
3. How will the Parent Council be able to support you?
4. How will the dish be served at the Dandelion Harvest, what equipment is available?
5. How many people will eat/sample your dish? And so, what quantities of food and what production/refrigeration space will be needed?
6. How quickly will it need to be served and therefore how simple/complex should the presentation of the dish be?
7. Should it be hot, or cold or doesn't it matter? Should it be vegetarian, or vegan. Will it be practical to include a vegetarian option, or other special dietary requirements?
8. What eating utensils are available?

Having thought about practicalities you may decide that your 'The School is the Menu' dish should be something relatively simple - a soup, a sandwich/wrap, a salad, a biscuit - or more complex such as a pie, a pizza, a pudding.

It doesn't matter whether you decide to keep it simple or to be ambitious, your school creation will still be unique, magical and yours.

It's time to finalise your dish and by this point it won't be difficult. Bearing in mind practicalities and your list of inspired elements, you'll find that your final signature dish will become clear and take shape.

Try to include as many of the inspired elements as you can but don't worry if some of the shortlisted stories end up on the cutting room floor, no one will know.

Congratulations! Methodically and quite naturally you've created a new dish inspired by your school and all the people in it, you've put your school on a plate. It may seem like a strange way to go about it but trust us - your community will love it.



Step 4 Guidance Sheet:

Tips for naming and describing your dish.

Thoughtful naming and describing will mean that the stories that inspired your dish can be enjoyed by your community, as well as the food itself. A recipe will ensure your 'The School is the Menu' dish will endure and be enjoyed for years to come.

1. Name your dish - you can choose something straightforward, simply saying what the dish is, or something mysterious and abstract that links to your stories, it's up to you. You'll probably want to include the name of your school in your dish title too.
2. Write a description of your dish - using the inspirations as your source material, summing up the key elements and the stories behind them.
 - Be as concise as possible but don't leave anything out. Go over the description a few times, tightening it up each time.
 - Use plenty of adjectives, similes and metaphors, turns of phrase, puns, humour and wit to make the description engaging and light-hearted.
 - Ensure you stay true to the stories that give your dish its integrity.

Here's an example of a dish description – this one was part of a signature menu for Guisborough - a town in North East England;

Vegetable Button Tart, Braised Swede, Chips & Beet Gravy

You'll not find anyone in Guisborough without a link to the old Burtons shirt factory, hence our buttoned-up tart. Veggies are local and donated, and who doesn't love a pie? Staple of the miners on whose backs the town was founded. Their labours, digging for alum used to dye cloth, are reflected in the rust-coloured swede and vibrant beet. Bye 'eck though, chips 'n' gravy? Guisborough may be firmly part of Tees Valley, but listen up! At least half its heart is in Yorkshire - God's own county.

There are eight stories, unique to Guisborough, embedded in this description.

3. Test and practice your dish as necessary and write down a definitive recipe. The recipe should include all the key details of ingredients, method and service that will ensure it is faithfully recreated in future.

How to write a recipe

Recipes should:

- Be written in command sentences.
- Include the number of portions and serving size.
- Have ingredients listed first and in the same order that they appear in the method.
- Have measurements that are clear and consistent.

Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes

level	CfE label	explanation
2	SOC 2-14a	To extend my mental map and sense of place, I can interpret information from different types of maps and am beginning to locate key features within Scotland, UK, Europe or the wider world.
2	LIT 2-29a	I can persuade, argue, explore issues or express an opinion using relevant supporting detail and/or evidence.
2	HWB 2-34a	Through exploration and discussion, I can understand that food practices and preferences are influenced by factors such as food sources, finance, culture and religion.
2	HWB 2-35a	When preparing and cooking a variety of foods, I am becoming aware of the journeys which foods make from source to consumer, their seasonality, their local availability and their sustainability.
3	SOC 3-14a	I can use a range of maps and geographical information systems to gather, interpret and present conclusions and can locate a range of features within Scotland, UK, Europe and the wider world.
3	MNU 3-08a	I can show how quantities that are related can be increased or decreased proportionally and apply this to solve problems in everyday contexts.
3	HWB 3-30a	By taking part in practical food activities and taking account of current healthy eating advice, I can prepare healthy foods to meet identified needs.
3	LIT 3-06a	I can independently select ideas and relevant information for different purposes, organise essential information or ideas and any supporting detail in a logical order, and use suitable vocabulary to communicate effectively with my audience.
4	LIT 4-29a	"I can persuade, argue, evaluate, explore issues or express and justify opinions within a convincing line of thought, using relevant supporting detail and/or evidence." "
4	MNU 4-08a	Using proportion, I can calculate the change in one quantity caused by a change in a related quantity and solve real-life problems.
4	LIT 4-06a	I can independently select ideas and relevant information for different purposes, organise essential information or ideas and any supporting detail in a logical order, and use suitable vocabulary to communicate effectively with my audience.
4	HWB 4-34a	Having explored a range of issues which may affect food choice, I can discuss how this could impact on the individual's health.
hwb all	HWB 0-13a / HWB 1-13a / HWB 2-13a / HWB 3-13a / HWB 4-13a	Through contributing my views, time and talents, I play a part in bringing about positive change in my school and wider community.

This resource was created by Food Innovator, Simon Preston who previously devised a project called The Town Is the Menu. Read more about Simon's work [here](#) and listen to a Radio 4 series on The Town is the Menu [here](#). You can also read an article about Simon's work in [The Guardian](#).

Eve Keepax, Education Officer with [Keep Scotland Beautiful](#) worked with Simon to create this The School is the Menu resource.

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