

Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

WEEK 5

Hmong History and Culture and Hmong Jello

Welcome to Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. This year the theme is ‘Building Leadership: Embrace the Cultural Values and Inclusion.’ For week five, I have provided a brief introduction to Hmong history, people and culture and a recipe for a colorful and tasty treat: Hmong Jello.

The Hmong (pronounced “mong”) are a mountain-dwelling subgroup of the Miao of southwest China. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Hmong migrated southeast to Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. During the second half of the 20th century, the Hmong began migrating west due in large part to their involvement in the Second Indochina War (1954-1975). The Hmong are one of the fastest growing ethnic origin populations in the U.S., with the majority of the population found in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

The Hmong language, which is known as Miao in China, is a dialect continuum of the West Hmongic branch of the Miao languages. This is sometimes known as the Chuanqiandian Cluster which is spoken by the Hmong people of Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, northern Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. The dominant organizing force among Hmong society is the clan. There are about eighteen Hmong clans that are known in Laos and Thailand. Clan membership is inherited upon birth or occasionally through adoption. Children are members of their father’s clan and women become members of their husband’s family when married but will retain the clan of their father.

Many Hmong earn their livelihood from agriculture in the United States. A few of the seasonal crops that are grown in the U.S. include chilis, bitter melon, bokchoy, daikon, thai eggplant and lemon grass.



There are a number of programs and resources for Hmong Farmers and Hmong students interested in careers in conservation. A few websites are listed below:

- WSU Extension: Small Farms Team (<http://smallfarms.wsu.edu/immigrant-farmers/hmong-bibliography.html>)
- National Hmong American Farmers (<http://www.nhaf.org/>)
- USDA Blog: Cultivating the Next Generation of Conservationists (<http://blogs.usda.gov/2012/04/09/cultivating-the-next-generation-of-conservationists/#more-39449>)

The Recipe

Hmong Jello

- 1 1/2 cup sugar
- 5 cups hot water
- 1 (13 oz) can coconut milk
- 1 cup unflavored gelatin
- food coloring
- pinch of salt (optional)

Directions

1. Combine sugar, hot water, coconut milk, and gelatin in a bowl. Stir until sugar and gelatin are dissolved. Divide into three parts and add different food coloring to each if desired.
2. Pour one mixture into a large pan and let it set in the refrigerator until firm (about 15 minutes). Do this until there are three layers.
3. Cut into rectangles and serve.

References:

- <http://www.asiadish.com/recipes/hmong-jello/>
<http://www.hmongnet.org/>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hmong_people
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hmong_customs_and_culture
<http://www.nhaf.org/history-and-culture/>

