

HERITAGE DINNER

In order to help kids get in touch with their own backgrounds and to facilitate communication of this to the other members of the group, try this variation of the old potluck dinner.

Each person is instructed to bring to the event a dish that represents his or her ancestry. Nearly every American has roots in some other nationality, and this could be preceded by a little research into family trees, etc. If a person has many nationalities in his or her background, then one could be chosen. If a person doesn't know of any representative food for his or her ancestry, then more research may be needed.

In addition to the meal, the kids should bring with them a "family treasure" or some relic, photo, or other item of interest that has been passed down through several generations, and be prepared to tell its story. The item need not be valuable except in terms of the story behind it. Another possibility would be to have kids bring baby pictures of themselves that could be posted and have a contest to see who can guess the identity of each picture.

A further extension of this idea would be to have each kid bring or tell about an item that he or she hopes will be passed on to future generations and remembered. You might have each person think of herself as her own grandchild and then talk about "My grandmother..." What kind of a heritage do you hope to leave for your future family? Good discussion and sharing can follow.

Collect some card tables and turn someone's basement into a French sidewalk cafe. Serve a special chef's salad topped with (what else) French dressing. Turn someone else's living room into an open-air Jewish bread market. Many different breads, rolls, and bagels can be found in the local bakery. Then for your next house, divide the upstairs and downstairs. Upstairs someone can be serving chop suey or another oriental dish, while downstairs the specialty is wieners and sauerkraut.

When you return to the church, you may have waiting a Hawaiian luau scene with crushed Hawaiian pineapple cake for dessert. Skits and devotions can be mingled in each stop, or saved for last. This is a terrific idea for a missions emphasis.