

Life Time Learning Proudly Presents

MADE IN VIRGINIA

There's a lot more to Virginia Cuisine than peanuts, ham and oysters. Let's take a quick tour of our state and see what is grown and/or harvested throughout the state.

COASTAL VIRGINIA AND THE CHESAPEAKE BAY – Seafood, Peanuts & Pork

Stretching between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, the Eastern Shore peninsula, with its wind-swept barrier islands, is home to a variety of succulent sea foods, most notably the Virginia Oyster.

At the northern end of the peninsula the quaint fishing village of Chincoteague – made famous by Marguerite Henrys "*Misty of Chincoteague*" – draws thousands of visitors each July for the Wild Pony Round-up. Lovers of good seafood find visits there worthwhile any time of the year, especially for Chincoteague's tasty oysters and clams. Fishing boats dock daily after bringing in fresh catches from surrounding waters.

Another notable seafood town to the south is Wachapreague, which bills itself as "**The Flounder Capital of the World.**"

Crab is another Eastern Shore and Chesapeake Bay delicacy, with lumps of the sweet meat patted in cakes and browned in butter. Another favorite is soft shell crabs. Chefs lightly batter and fry the blue crabs that have shed their hard outer shells to yield captivating dishes.

Oyster lovers will find Chesapeake Bay oysters served raw, steamed, fried, and grilled. Is your mouth watering yet?

The Hampton Roads region is well known for quality seafood as well. Yet it is equally known for its hams and peanuts. Since the 17th century, when settlers

learned the Indians' art of smoking meats, Virginia country hams began to earn an international reputation! Most famous are the **Smithfield Hams**, which, by law, must be cured within Smithfield's town limits. The area's plentiful peanut fields make this area equally famous for **peanuts**. Handsome, plump Virginia peanuts are the largest of the four peanut types grown in the United States.

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN VIRGINIA – Comfort Foods, Wine and Apples

When travelers seek comfort they often go in search of comfort foods. Brunswick County, located in Southern Virginia, is the documented birthplace of the hearty meat and vegetable-based **Brunswick Stew** that has long warmed brisk autumn and winter days and is served at most festivals in the region. The South's classic foods of fried chicken and black-eyed peas have been familiar staples in the heart of this region. The historic **Michie Tavern**, just outside of Charlottesville, serves this delicious southern fare with lots of cornbread biscuits and slaw.

Perched on a nearby mountain top is Thomas Jefferson's Monticello home. His enlightened approach to food molded the course of Virginia food and wine history. To his garden, Jefferson brought sophisticated vegetables and plants from Europe, including Belgian endive, eggplant, artichokes and salsify. Today, visitors can bridge history with seeds and seedlings of some of the original plants at the Monticello Garden Center on site.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA – Wines and Mushrooms

Specialty food products are as much a part of the landscape here as horses, cantering along fence lines. From ginger-scented, horseshoe-shaped shortbread to award-winning Applewood smoked trout, Northern Virginia feeds a demand for gourmet products and upscale produce, including culinary herbs and shiitake mushrooms.

As with other areas of Virginia, this region is also known for its vineyards and wineries. The state's industry has ripened in recent years and gained the respect of wine critics at home and abroad. It's a dream come true for native son Thomas

Jefferson who first recognized the state's climate as one suitable for premium grapes.

SHENANDOAH VALLEY – Apples, Peaches and Poultry

From the **Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival** in the spring in Winchester, to the harvest festivals in the fall, this fertile valley yields an abundance of fruits and vegetables. Virginia is one of the nation's **top six producers of apples**. Red and Golden Delicious, Rome, Stayman, York, Winesap, Granny Smith, Jonathan and Gala are just some of the varieties found in the hillside groves.

Winchester, the state's top apple packing location at the northern tip of the Shenandoah Valley, is often called "**The Apple Capital of the World.**"

The cool, crisp days of autumn bring chances for visitors to pluck apples fresh off the trees at many pick-your-own orchards. The rich soil of the Shenandoah Valley also nurtures sweet peaches, nectarines and many other crops. Another specialty is the tomato, which is sun-ripened, dried and sold to gourmet food stores around the world.

Poultry is raised in abundance, with broiler chickens being the second largest agricultural product for the state. The recognized **Birthplace of the Commercial Turkey Industry** is Rockingham County, which dubs itself "**The Turkey Capital of the World.**"

THE BLUE RIDGE HIGHLANDS AND HEART OF APPALACHIA – Hearty Mountain Fare

The rustic beauty of the mountain regions – **Blue Ridge Highlands** and **Heart of Appalachia** – attracted settlers who didn't mind rugged living. Some of the hearty mountain fare that fueled pioneer activities included cornbread and beans, venison stew, wild turkeys and pumpkins. Cuisine in this part of the state has grown beyond its rustic roots. Today sheep are raised in the cool mountain climate, as well as beef and dairy cattle.