Food as Art:  
California Roll as a fusion of American and Asian styles

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The lesson plan of Food as Art is an example of how to integrate visual art with other academic subjects, especially food science. There are so many international foods that have traveled to the US from all over the world and fuse with American aesthetics to become neo-American food. Sushi, Japanese food, is one example of a popular and healthy food that is visually attractive. There are many different styles of sushi in Japan, such as nigiri- (hand-formed sushi), osi- (pressed sushi), chirashi- (scattered sushi) and maki-zushi (rolled sushi). Maki-zushi seems to be especially popular in the US due to the freedom of the diverse ingredients that can be included in it. As a result, many new styles of maki-zushi have arisen with local products from all over the US. The California roll with avocado and crab meat is a good example.

This is a unique lesson for students to learn the cultural diversity of food, the value of visual aesthetics related to food, and the importance of healthy food with local products. (Please see the objectives of this lesson plan in detail below.)

This lesson is also promoted as part of the collaborative cultural event Far East Fusion with other departments and the local community as a sushi-demo contest (See the attached poster).
Lesson Plan: **Food as Art: California Roll as a fusion of American and Asian styles**

**Grade Level:** 11th and 12th grades


1. **Domain 1: (Artistic Perception: elements of art and principles of design)**
   Students will learn the use of food and the concept of nutrition artistically by the choices of color, ingredients and orientation on the plate.

2. **Domain 2: (Creative Expression: materials and process of art-making)**
   Students will learn to prepare food with an artistic eye based on their own cultural aesthetic.

3. **Domain 3: (Historical and Cultural components)**
   Students will learn how different cultures use different ingredients due to regional resources, their benefits, symbolism, and traditional uses. Students will also learn how other cultural food fuses with American tastes and is reinvented in a new style, such as the California roll based on traditional Japanese roll-sushi.

4. **Domain 4: (Aesthetic Valuing)**
   Students will learn the status, culture, and economical value of each particular food choice.

5. **Domain 5: (Connections, Relationships, and Application)**
   Students will learn to prepare California roll-sushi and display with Japanese aesthetics based on the four seasons. Students will also learn to apply principles of design and aesthetics in relation to nutrition (fast vs. slow food).

**Materials:**

1. Knives
2. Steamed rice
3. Cutting boards
4. Plates
5. Sushi Rollers
6. Tea and Tea cups
7. Avocado
8. Cucumber
9. Wasabi
10. Pickled ginger
11. Artificial crab
12. Samples of food from China and West Africa
13. Soy Sauce

**Vocabulary:**

1. Aesthetics
2. Culture
3. Kitchen Safety
4. Sushi
5. Sashimi
6. California Roll

Procedures:

1. Introduction with power point.
2. Wash Hands
3. Prepare work stations:
   - Mix the above ingredients to make sushi vinegar (or just buy ready-made sushi vinegar from *Winco* or other places.)
   - Cook rice (with a rice cooker, if you have one)
4. Demo sushi making process (*See the following visual procedure)
5. Start project.
6. BE SAFE!!!!

A brief historical background of the California Roll:
During the 1970s, a smart unknown California chef, realizing that many Americans did not like the thought of eating raw fish, created the now famous California Roll, made with crab, avocado, and cucumbers. Since then, American sushi chefs have created many variations with unique names such as Spider Roll, Philadelphia Roll, and Rainbow roll.

How to make a California Roll (Sushi)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Procedures</th>
<th>Descriptions (Step by Step)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From left to right: Bamboo sushi-roll mat (Makisu), Sushi vinegar, Rice vinegar,</td>
<td><strong>Ingredients:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Sushi vinegar (following ingredients can be mixed or you can use a ready-made sushi vinegar)  
6 tablespoons rice vinegar  
2 tablespoons sugar  
2 teaspoons salt  

2) Sushi rice:  
3 cups uncooked Japanese rice  
3 cups water  

3) Sushi Nori:  
5 sheets of sushi nori (seaweed in big squares)*
roasted-seaweed (Nori)

Other ingredients:

1 avocado

¼ lb Cooked snow crab meat or imitation crab sticks** mixed with mayonnaise (ideally “Japanese Kewpie mayonnaise”)

Wasabi (Japanese horseradish)
Soy Sauce
Pickled Ginger

Display materials:

Decorative materials to represent aesthetic of season
Plate or box to display sushi

1. Place a sheet of nori on the bamboo mat, shiny side down.

2. Using rice paddle (“shamoji” = scoop), put two or three tablespoons of sushi rice in the center of the nori and spread evenly over the seaweed. At that time, leave at least 1 inch on top and about ¼ inch on both sides since sushi rice will spread with rolling. (If you completely cover the seaweed with sushi rice, the rice will go beyond the edge of nori after rolling.)

3. Use the scoop (or even the palm of your wet hand) at the side of the rice to form a firm edge, and again leave at least one-inch margin at the top of the nori. Put and layer avocado first and then (imitation) crab meat with mayonnaise across the center of the sushi rice. Also spread a streak of wasabi across the middle, if desired.
4. Put a little water on the top edge of nori to seal before rolling the sushi-rice. To roll, fold the bamboo mat so the filling is enclosed in the center of the nori.

5. Press the mat around the roll for about thirty seconds to shape it, then moisten the top margin of the seaweed and seal the roll as tightly as possible.

6. Remove the mat from around the roll, press in the loose ends and place it on a cutting board, seam side down. Slice the roll into one-inch rounds, using a wet, sharp knife. Do not saw, but cut firmly, straight down.

7. Display the California roll to represent a selected season in conjunction with Japanese aesthetics as a fusion with American tastes. (Left is an example of students’ works and sushi-demo contest of a cultural event of Far East Fusion, 2008)

References:
Masami’s personal experiences,
http://whatscookingamerica.net/Appetizers/CaliforniaRoll.htm