

## Perceptual Food Regions

### Introduction:

Picture your favorite food. When you think about it, do you ever think about where it comes from? Not from a grocery store like the one depicted in Food City by artist Richard Estes, but the culture or the geographic area your favorite dish was born in. Maybe your favorite dish is a savory noodle dish from Asia, or maybe it's a dessert with its roots in Paris. Whether its wrapped in a tortilla, served on a bun, or piled onto a plate every dish can trace its way back to a certain culture. Geography may make you think of memorizing maps, but Cultural Geography likes to study how cultures vary spatially, and food is an important element of culture!

### Background (Regions in Cultural Geography):

Before diving into the activity, it might be helpful to understand the three types of regions in Cultural Geography:

- **Formal Culture Regions:** The first type of cultural region, Formal cultural regions, are inhabited by people who *share one or more cultural trait*. These traits can be things like language, religion, or ways of life. (economy or type of society, like an agrarian society) These regions *often don't have extremely well defined or "neat" borders*. The inhabitants of these regions are often very *homogenous*, meaning the most, if not all, of the people in the region share the trait that defines it.
- **Functional Culture Regions:** The Functional culture region is a region that *functions as a political, social, or economic unit*. A city is a great example, it has *clearly defined borders* and functions as a unit. These regions, unlike the formal regions *don't have to have a homogeneous population*. Just like in a city not every person may speak the same language or practice the same religion.
- **Perceptual "Vernacular" Culture Regions:** The third and final type of cultural geographic region is the Perceptual, or Vernacular, Culture region. *These are regions that are perceived to exist by the people that live there*. They often have *nicknames*. Think of places in the United States like: the Midwest, the Rustbelt, New England, or the South. There are no clear, concrete, borders to separate it, it is where the inhabitants imagine it to be.

Activity:

This activity is centered on the concept of Perceptual regions. These regions are perceived to exist by people. Many different cultural and physical features can factor into people's mental image of the regions. "The Valley" (The San Fernando Valley in California), can be considered a perceptual region. It is based on the physical feature of the San Fernando Valley, but it is also based on the cultural traits of "valley girls". Food can also be used to create perceptual regions. For example, think of Tex-Mex food, or creole food. Where would you find these cuisines? Your activity will be to divide the United States into at least five perceptual regions, the catch is each region needs to be based around food!

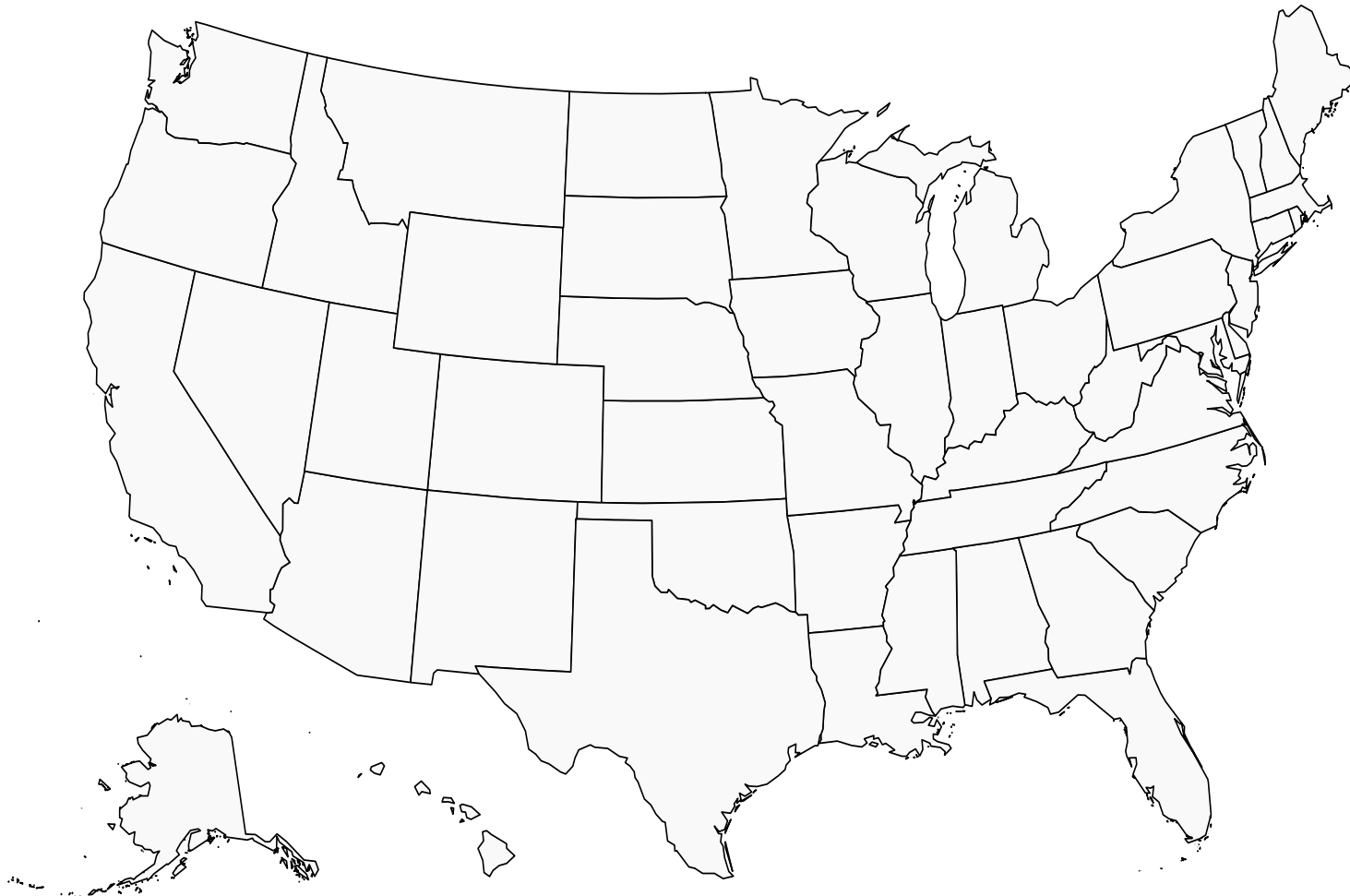
Directions:

On the next page you will find a blank map of the United States, on the map use a pen or pencil to draw borders around the five regions you've identified, and number them. (You may choose to have more than five regions on your map, this is more than okay!) Once you've divided your perceptual regions you'll want to turn your attention to the table. In this table you'll need to name each region, provide the justification (this is the food related cultural trait that makes your region distinct from the others), and provide a small menu of 3 food items that you would be able to find in that region! (If you have more than five regions, you may use the back of the page)

## Perceptual Food Regions of the United States: Description Table

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### Perceptual Food Regions of the United States: Description Table

| Region Number | Name of the Region | Justification<br>(Explain what food makes this region distinct) | Menu Items (3X) |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
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