

# Unwrapped: Food Court

## About *Unwrapped*

*Unwrapped* uncovers behind-the-scenes details about classic American foods and consumer behavior. Students will learn how favorite foods are made, who buys what, and the history of many popular snacks.

## About This Episode

In this episode, students will learn all the intricacies of designing food courts, see “Orange Julius” put a “squeeze” on a favorite drink, and delve into the history of Quincy Market in Boston. Then, they’ll find out how “Hot Dog on a Stick” got started and take a peek behind the scenes at “Panda Express.”

## Vocabulary

Ambiance  
Brainchild  
Consumer  
Culinary  
Entrepreneur  
Marketing  
Moderator  
Palate  
Premiere  
Staple

## Discussion Questions

1. Ask students whether they ever eat at food courts and, if so, which food courts they frequent. What are the advantages of eating at food courts? What are the challenges? What restaurant choices are at the food courts students are familiar with? Based on these answers, which restaurants seem to be at most food courts? Have students draw conclusions about why certain restaurants are at most food courts.
2. According to the episode, a food court should reflect what’s “going on in food.” What do students think this quote means? How do they think that food courts do this?
3. What do students think makes a “good” food court?
4. If they could have a food court in their home with five restaurants, which would they choose and why?
5. Dave Barham started “Hot Dog on a Stick,” an outdoor hot dog stand at Muscle Beach, so he could work where he loved to be. Poll students to see what restaurants they’d open to correspond with the places they most like to hang out!

## Extended Activities

### **International Flavor (Language Arts, Visual Design, Consumer Science)**

What do students think that food court architects consider when planning a new food court? According to food court architect Jim Auld, successful food courts used to be based on just convenience and price. Now, however, there is more of a focus on aesthetic qualities such as openness, flow, and design. And many food courts, such as the ones in California and Boston, are customized to meet the ambiance, history or traditions of their locations. Have students share examples of this type of customization. Then have student groups imagine that they have been asked to design a food court for your school. They must determine the location, shape (flow) and design of the food court as well as five restaurants that would be featured. Their decisions must be based on features, facts and information about the school, students and faculty. Encourage students to glean important information from school administration, food service personnel,

students and staff. Have student teams present their designs to various school stakeholders, including a justification for all decisions.

### **Please Eat Here! (Marketing, Language Arts)**

Challenge students to recall all of the unique strategies that “Hot Dog on a Stick” uses to get consumers to eat there. Examples include unique uniforms, inviting consumers to watch as products are prepared, and guaranteeing fresh lemonade every two hours. List several local restaurants and national chains on the board. Ask student groups to list the marketing strategies used by these restaurants to increase sales. Which of the strategies have influenced students and their families? Which do they think are most effective, and why? Have each student group select a local restaurant as well as a specific demographic such as families, kids, young adults or business people. Challenge each group to design a marketing strategy/promotion for their restaurant that would cost less than \$100 but would increase sales from the demographic they’ve chosen. Have students present their strategy/promotion to the class and, if appropriate, to the restaurant owner or manager.

### **Best in Food (Nutrition, Consumer Science, Language Arts)**

The American Culinary Chefs Best is an independent judging organization dedicated to recognizing and honoring the best products in America. Ask students to list the ways that Chefs Best remains independent and fair in its judging. Do students think that a Chefs Best sticker would influence their buying decisions? What about their parents? Have students recall the process that Chefs Best used to determine the best peanut butter. (The process can be found at <http://www.chefsbest.org/accwinners/indepth.asp#1>) Then challenge student groups to recreate this process using a product of their choice. Another student group or the entire class can act as a panel of judges. They must first identify and purchase several different brands of their product, remove packaging, place it in unidentifiable numbered containers, moderate what is most important to the judges about the product, design a corresponding rating scale and then serve it by itself and as a consumer would eat it. Once judges have rated the products, have each group determine the winner and draw conclusions about what they’ve learned. **Extension:** Have students determine a way to share their results with other students, faculty and parents similar to a Chefs Best sticker.