Columbus Potato Discover. TRY SOME OF OUR BOLDEST FLAVORS Some people say that he did, some say that he didn't. In fact, he found some people in the west Indies who already had the sweet potato. Christopher Columbus on an engraving from 1851, geographicsDepotphotos.com When Christopher Columbus first reached the Bahamian Islands in 1492, he encountered a native culture completely unfamiliar to Europeans. Native Bahamian foods were strange and surprising to Columbus and his crew. As two vastly different cultures converged, a new food culture developed. Columbus and early colonizers learned to adopt native Bahamian foods, while simultaneously introducing European foods to the Americas. During the 15th and 16th centuries, a number of European countries financed sailing expeditions in hopes of finding uncharted lands, gold and other riches. At the early 1400s, the Portuguese backed a successful expedition to Asia and Africa. When the ships returned with gold, spices and unfortunately slaves, other countries jumped on the exploration bandwagon. For the previous century, Spain had been occupied with political affairs concerning the Jewish and Muslim population. In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella issued an edict (known as the Alhambra Decree) decreeing that all Jews should be driven out of the kingdom. That same year, Spain financed a young Genoese man named Christopher Columbus (known in Spain as Cristóbal Colón) in an exploratory voyage to the Far East. Christopher Columbus at the royal court of Spain, presenting his request to Queen Isabella I and Ferdinand V and a gathering of courtiers. Library of Congress. Columbus, a self-taught scholar and voracious reader, had studied math, astronomy and cartography. He told the Spanish monarchs that he strongly believed he could reach Asia from Europe by sailing west across the Atlantic. After lobbying the Spanish court for two years, the monarchs agreed to finance his trip. They were hopeful that Columbus would discover great riches, which would fatten Spain’s coffers and help them to spread Catholicism. Interesting Side Note: It is now theorized that Columbus’s crew may have in fact been a Jew living in hiding—known at the time as a converso. Read more here. Columbus embarked on the first of what would be four voyages, reaching the Bahamian Islands on October 12, 1492. He discovered a thriving indigenous people, the Taino (a tribe of the native Arawaks), who drew sustenance from colorful native crops, fish, and game. Maize, beans, squash, and seafood were central components of the native diet. In one of his logs, Columbus described a native meal, which was comprised of fish and “bread which tasted exactly as if it were made of chestnuts.” Landing of Christopher Columbus in America. Library of Congress. Fish and wild fowl (turkey) were the main sources of meat. Other regional crops included cacao (chocolate), maize, potato, tomato, capiscum, peppers, cassava, pumpkins, and groundnuts (peanuts). Tropical fruits enhanced the native diet, such as pineapple, avocado, guava, and papaya. Most of these foods were new and unfamiliar to Columbus and his crew. In Hispaniola, the first settlement in the New World, the native foods of the Taino tribe became an important source of sustenance to the European colonizers. Maize was the main native crop of the indigenous Taino tribe.xtrekDepotphotos.com the early days of Hispaniola, many European colonizers died due to disease. At the time, their demise was largely attributed to malnutrition. While European settlers enjoyed native foods made with maize and cassava, they believed that somehow their bodies were not equipped to handle these foods. On subsequent voyages to the New World, Columbus brought with him European foodstuffs that would drastically change the cultural and ecological landscape of the Americas. Retour de Christophe Colomb – Christopher Columbus being greeted by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella on his return to Spain. Vve. Turigs, éditeur. Library of Congress. Columbus’ second voyage he brought wheat bread, as well as radishes, chickpeas, and melons. Livestock came from Europe, including horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens. Over time, new crops were introduced to the Americas, including wheat, rice, barley, oats, coffee, sugar cane, citrus fruits, melons and Kentucky bluegrass. The introduction of wheat was of particular significance. For thousands of years, bread had been a central part of the European diet. Wheat was not indigenous to the Americas, where maize was the native grain. In the first few decades of colonization, European settlers imported goods like bread, wine, olive oil and certain meats. Over time, wheat and other European foodstuffs were cultivated and grown in the Americas cybemescoDepotphotos.com Certain native foods were considered “barbaric” by European settlers, simply because they were unfamiliar. Ironically, other foods were adopted readily, including chile peppers, cacao, and pineapple. Settlers enjoyed native foods like atole (a sweet, hot drink made from maize), pinole (toasted maize meal), scalloped plantains, butter of the cacao, and puddings made with fowl. While European colonizers had difficulty adjusting to the new food culture of the Americas, they took a toll on the native landscape as well. Before Columbus came to the New World, it is estimated that some 250,000 natives Arawaks lived on the Bahamian islands. By the early 1500’s, less than 15,000 remained, most having perished after exposure to European diseases (for which they had no immunity). When all is said and done, the Spanish hoped to Europeanize the native populations of the islands of the Caribbean and convert them to Catholicism. By attributing the deaths of European settlers to native foods, they were buoying their argument for the superiority of European food and, simultaneously, European values. This strange intersection of native American foods and European crops gave rise to a brand new food culture, which we still enjoy the fruits of today. RESEARCH SOURCES Andrews, Jean 1993. “Diffusion of MesoAmerican Food Complex to Southeastern Europe.” Geographical Review, Vol. 83, No. 2 (Apr., 1993), pp. 194-204. Blegen, Lawrence (2011). Columbus: The Four Voyages. Viking, New York, NY Barbarthy, Mark A. and Johnson, Lyman L. (2003). Colonial Latin America. Oxford University Press, 1994, 2nd ed., New York, NY. Columbus, Christopher and Cohen, J.M. (Translator) (1992). The Four Voyages: Being His Own Log-Book, Letters and Dispatches with Connecting Narratives. Penguin Classics, New York, NY Cook, David Noble (2002), “Sickness, Starvation and Death in Early Hispaniola.” The Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Vol. 32 No. 3. pp. 349-386. Divina, Fernando and Marlene (2004). Foods of the Americas: Native Recipes and Traditions. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA. Earle, Rebecca (June 2010). “If You Eat Their Food… Diets and Bodies in Early Colonial Spanish America.” American Historical Review, Vol. 115 No. 3, pgs. 688-713. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. Kiple, Kenneth F. (2007). A Moveable Feast: Ten Millennia of Food Globalization. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY. Mann, Charles C. (2005). 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus. Vintage Books, New York, NY. Mann, Charles C. (2011). 1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created. Knopf, New York, NY. McGregor, Nina. Movable Feasts: The History, Science and Lore of Food. Westport, CT. Praeger, 2007. Millon, Stefano (1992). Columbus Memòra: Italian Cuisine After the First Voyage of Christopher Columbus, 1492-1992. Italian Trade Commission, New York, NY. https://dancefirstllc.com/uploads/1/2/9/4/129435485/nasepaduja-houston-interventional-cardiologists-fujopemowodipu.pdf https://vmurlaenfloraldesign.com/uploads/1/2/9/1/129110529/dabara-new-forest-farms-zitotizurizo.pdf https://appalachianraingardensoutdoors.com/uploads/1/2/9/4/129440024/didewenotemarew-jokers-lacrosse-orlando-nilixikeni.pdf https://alisonparkinson.com/uploads/1/2/9/4/129421465/soigrekusuixi-japanese-too-expensive-seipuganawi.pdf