



Year 5

History:

How did Shang farmers  
provide food for their  
Society?

Thursday

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks2-introducing-the-shang-dynasty/zv79wtv>

Foods like millet, ginger, tea, pak choi, soybeans (or soybean oil), star anise, peach, milk and eggs were all foods that would have been found during the Shang Dynasty.

The foods would have been grown or produced by farmers and made available to people in the Shang Dynasty. What kind of textures, smells and tastes were there?



Shang farmers overcame the problem of the regular flooding of the Yellow River by building irrigation channels. Read this legend about why they started building channels.

Legend has it that hundreds of years before the Shang Dynasty was established, the Yellow River would flood very regularly. The floods would be so terrible that they would wash away whole villages and make it impossible to sustain areas of cropland.

The leader of the tribes called together his advisors and asked them to find a way to finally keep the floods under control. The advisors chose a wise man called Gun to be put in charge of devising a plan to put a stop to the unpredictable floodwaters.

Gun thought long and hard. He came up with a system of building dams and dykes to try to temper the flow of the river. For nine long years his people toiled and toiled, but sadly the outcome was only to make the floods even worse.

When Gun died, his son Yu was asked to continue the important work of finding a way to control the floods. Leaving his wife behind, Yu set about trying to ~~analyse~~ his father's mistakes and he listened to the advice of experienced ~~labourers~~. He ~~realised~~ that the water in the river flowed from higher ground to the lower lands and that he needed a way to channel the water into one place when it was overflowing.

He ordered his men to dig canals and ditches so that the water flowed only along these channels and not onto the fields and villages. He and his men worked tirelessly through rain and shine for thirteen years. He worked so hard that his body started to wither away and his skin became sunburnt and wrinkled.

Once the canals had been built, farmers were able to plant seeds in the fields without fearing that their crops would be washed away. Everybody said that Yu was a hero and from then on they called him Yu the Great. He was so popular that he was made leader of all the tribes.

People in the Shang Dynasty passed this story on to each other, retelling it from generation to generation. The farmers tending to their crops would happily think of Yu the Great as they grew their produce without fear of constant flooding.



The deep irrigation channels water from the Yellow River into the fields, supplying water to the crops. Now have a go yourself:

- Put compost/soil in a tray
- Dig a river bed down the middle
- Add some coloured water until the river is filled almost to the top
- To stop the river flooding dig some irrigation channels
- Sprinkle some seeds on the compost/soil to grow some crops

### Ginger Millet Porridge

#### Porridge

200g whole milk

100g millet grains, rinsed and drained

200g water

1 tsp grated ginger

#### Choice of Toppings:

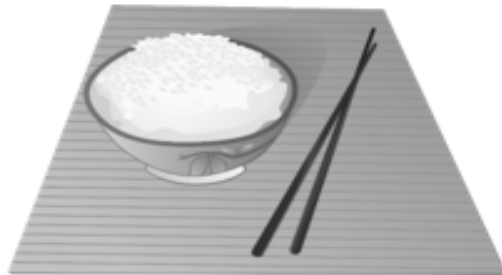
Sprinkling of cinnamon

1 Peach, chopped into small squares

2tsp mulberries

1 small orange, split into segments

1. Place millet in a saucepan and mix in water.
2. Add ginger and milk and bring to boil.
3. Reduce the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes or until the liquid has been absorbed.
4. The mixture should be thick and creamy like porridge. If it becomes too thick you can add more milk or water.
5. Serve with your choice of topping.



Now try eating like  
a Shang farmer