

Eat Utah!

By Linda Butler

Are you hungering for your kids to gain some geographic knowledge of their home state? Making and eating a pizza-map of Utah can be satisfying in many ways!

Utah is an easy shape to create because of the way its boundaries were created back in the 1800s. Rather than following natural features such as waterways, valleys, or mountain ranges, the borders were made for the most part, by arbitrary latitude and longitude lines. Many of the rectangular-shaped midwestern and western states were created this way.

The geographic history of Utah is quite interesting. When the early “Mormon Pioneers” traveled west, they actually left the United States and sought safety in Mexico. What is now Utah was a part of Mexico in 1847. Brigham Young envisioned a huge state of Deseret, which took in land from Colorado to California! In 1848, with the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (at the end of the Mexican-American War) much of the land that is now California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah became a territory of the United States in 1848.



The gold line shows the state of Deseret as envisioned by Brigham Young. The pink area is the size of the original Utah Territory in 1851. Much of it went to neighboring states, leaving the remaining portion to become the state of Utah as we now know it.

The original Utah Territory was over twice the size of our present state of Utah, which included nearly all of Nevada and much of Colorado. Pieces of the western part of the Utah Territory were cut off and ceded to Nevada Territory in the 1860s because of the discovery of silver. In 1854 the territory of Nevada became the state of Nevada. Utah shrunk as neighboring territories took land when they entered statehood in the United states. Part of the eastern Utah territory went to Colorado when it became a state in 1876. Utah lost a large chunk in the Northeast corner to Wyoming when it became a state in 1890. Utah was the last territory in the mountain west to gain statehood, January 4, 1896, and contained only the land that was left.

Has this whetted your appetite for geography? To make and eat Utah, you'll need your favorite pizza dough and a variety of toppings.

We like this dough that is simple, tasty, and can take a bit of rolling and prodding from small hands:

2c flour

2 tsp baking powder

1 tsp salt

2/3 c milk

1/4c vegetable oil

Measure above ingredients into bowl in the order listed. Stir until mixture leaves sides of bowl, then press it into a ball. Knead dough about 10-12 times until it is smooth. This works well in a 10 ½ x 13” baking sheet. If you use a large quarter sheet pan you may want to 1 ½ the recipe.

Lightly oil your baking sheet. Roll out the dough to about the size of your baking sheet. Place and press the dough to the corners. Make a bit of a raised edge along the little cutout part to help contain the toppings. Bake your completed pizza at 425 degrees for 20 min, or when crust is lightly browned.

Enjoy talking together about the various features of Utah as you place your toppings. We call the tomato sauce “dirt” because dirt is everywhere in Utah. We used two types of cheese—cheddar for the areas that have grasses and low vegetation, and shredded Parmesan or mozzarella for the sand flats. We designated main mountain ranges with pineapple chunks, bodies of water were thin slices of ham torn into approximate shapes. We placed bell peppers on forest service land. Sliced olives can be used to designate cities and/or places your family has visited. If you haven’t traveled much in Utah, you could designate places you would like to visit! Important: Let the pizza cool at least 5 minutes before adding the plastic buildings! We used a Monopoly hotel for the Capitol in Salt Lake City, and the house for our Pleasant Grove home.



We used a topographic map to help us with placement of our landforms and features. There are several types of maps available that you may find helpful.

Political maps are widely used reference maps. They are commonly seen on schoolroom walls. They show the geographic boundaries between countries, states, and counties. They show roads, cities, and major water features such as oceans, rivers, and lakes.

Topographic maps provide great detail to the physical features by using contour lines to show changes in elevation. Many show a relatively small area in great detail. They often show hiking trails and dirt roads.

Road maps emphasize travel routes, highways, and other roads that connect cities and towns. These can be quite detailed and show city streets as well as roadside attractions and stores.

If your children are fascinated by maps, take a look at weather maps that are used in weather forecasting—many are animated and show the movement of weather fronts and storms. There are even navigation maps that show the depth and features at the bottom of the ocean.

Perhaps you'll enlarge upon your edible-map skills and find a way to create edible maps of your yard, other states, the ocean, maybe even cookie constellations!

Children's books on maps that can be found at the Pleasant Grove Library include, "Maps and Mapping" by Deborah Chancellor, "City Atlas: Travel the world with 30 City Maps" by Georgia Cherry, "Looking at Maps and Globes" by Carmen Bredson, and "Solving the Puzzle Under the Sea: Marie Tharp Maps the Ocean Floor" by Robert Burleigh.

And for adults who enjoy maps, "The Map Thief—the gripping story of an esteemed rare-map dealer who made millions stealing priceless maps" by Michael Blanding is a true crime story.