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INDIAN
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CENTRE

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INDIAN HERITAGE CENTRE'S *PONGALO PONGAL!* INTERACTIVE LEARNING PORTAL TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Pongalo
Pongal!

@INDIAN HERITAGE CENTRE

ABOUT THE INDIAN HERITAGE CENTRE (IHC)

- Located at the heart of Singapore's Little India historic precinct, the Indian Heritage Centre traces the history, heritage, and culture of Indian and South Asian communities in Singapore and Southeast Asia.
- IHC's permanent galleries features five themes, chronologically from 1st century CE to 21st Century. Visitors can learn about the historical links between the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, as well as the experiences of South Asians in Southeast Asia, in particular, Singapore.



ABOUT THE LEARNING PORTAL

- '*Pongalo Pongal!*' is Indian Heritage Centre's first-ever Pongal Interactive Learning Portal.
- Through fun quizzes, write-ups, videos and DIY craft activities, this dedicated microsite serves as an engaging platform to educate students on the significance of the harvest festival to the Tamil community in Singapore.



ABOUT THE LEARNING PORTAL

- The portal has five sections for exploration which touch on the different aspects of the harvest festival.
 1. **What is Pongal?** - Introduction of the festival, its significance and the four days of Pongal
 2. **Pongal in the City** - Highlights the relevance of this farmer's festival to urban Singapore
 3. **What's in the Pot?** - Significance of the Pongal dish and how it is made
 4. **Traditional Indian Folk Dances** - Overview of the various traditional folk dances performed during this festival
 5. **Bring Home the Fun** - DIY craft activities related to Pongal

SECTION 1) What is Pongal

Pongal is a harvest festival celebrated by the Tamil community. It is a celebration to thank the Sun, Mother Nature and the various farm animals that help to contribute to a bountiful harvest. Celebrated over four days, Pongal also marks the beginning of the Tamil month called *Thai*, which is considered an auspicious month. It usually falls on the 14th or 15th of January each year.

Pongal is also the name of the dish made and eaten during this festival. It is a mixture of sweet boiled rice. It is derived from the Tamil word *pongu*, which means “to boil over”.



FOUR DAYS OF PONGAL



DAY 1 BHOGI PONGAL

The first day of Pongal is called *Bhogi*.

It is a day where cleaning and discarding of old belongings are carried out to signify a fresh start.

New clothes are worn, houses are decorated in the spirit of the festivity.



DAY 2 SURYA PONGAL

- The second day is the main day of Pongal and is celebrated as Surya Pongal. On this day, the Sun God is honoured. Colourful decorative floor patterns called *kolam* are drawn at the entrance of one's home, and each household cooks a pot of fresh rice with milk at auspicious timings. As the rice mixture boils freely over the pot, family members cry out "*Pongal-o Pongal*"! After the Pongal is offered to the Sun God, they would feast on several Pongal dishes that are prepared especially for the day.



DAY 3 MAATU PONGAL

- The third day of Pongal is called Maatu Pongal.
- This day is devoted to honour and worship the cattle (Maatu) to remember the work they do – ploughing the land. Cows are bathed and adorned with multi-coloured beads, flower garlands, and bells. In Singapore, Thanksgiving prayers are conducted for the cattle in some of the dairy farms owned by Indian families.



DAY 4 KAAANUM PONGAL

The fourth day of Pongal is called Kaanum Pongal. On this day, importance is given to the community and to strengthen ties. Families gather together to have a sumptuous meal.

Younger members seek the blessings of the older members of their families. It is also a day for traditional Indian folk dances such as *kummi* and *kolattam*.



Day 4
Kaanum Pongal

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY

- Discuss: What are the values that can be identified from the four days of Pongal?

- Suggested responses:

Bhogi Pongal: Helpfulness, Responsibility

Surya Pongal: Gratefulness, Care

Maatu Pongal: Respect, Kindness

Kaanum Pongal: Harmony, Appreciation, Respect

ICONS OF PONGAL: SUGARCANE

Sugarcane, which is an important harvest of the season, signifies prosperity and well-being.

1) What is Pongal?

ICONS OF PONGAL: PONGAL

Pongal means to 'overflow', hence the pot of rice boils over to symbolise prosperity and abundance. This is then served to members of the family as well as any visitors to the house.

1) What is Pongal?



ICONS OF PONGAL: THORANAM

Thoranam is a hanging decoration traditionally used by the Tamil community.

They are usually made using coconut or mango leaves.

1) What is Pongal?

ICONS OF PONGAL: SUN

The Sun is worshipped as the source of life, as it allows for the growth of a good harvest that provides food for all.

1) What is Pongal?

ICONS OF PONGAL: COW

Cows are honoured for the work they do in ploughing the land and contributing to a good harvest.

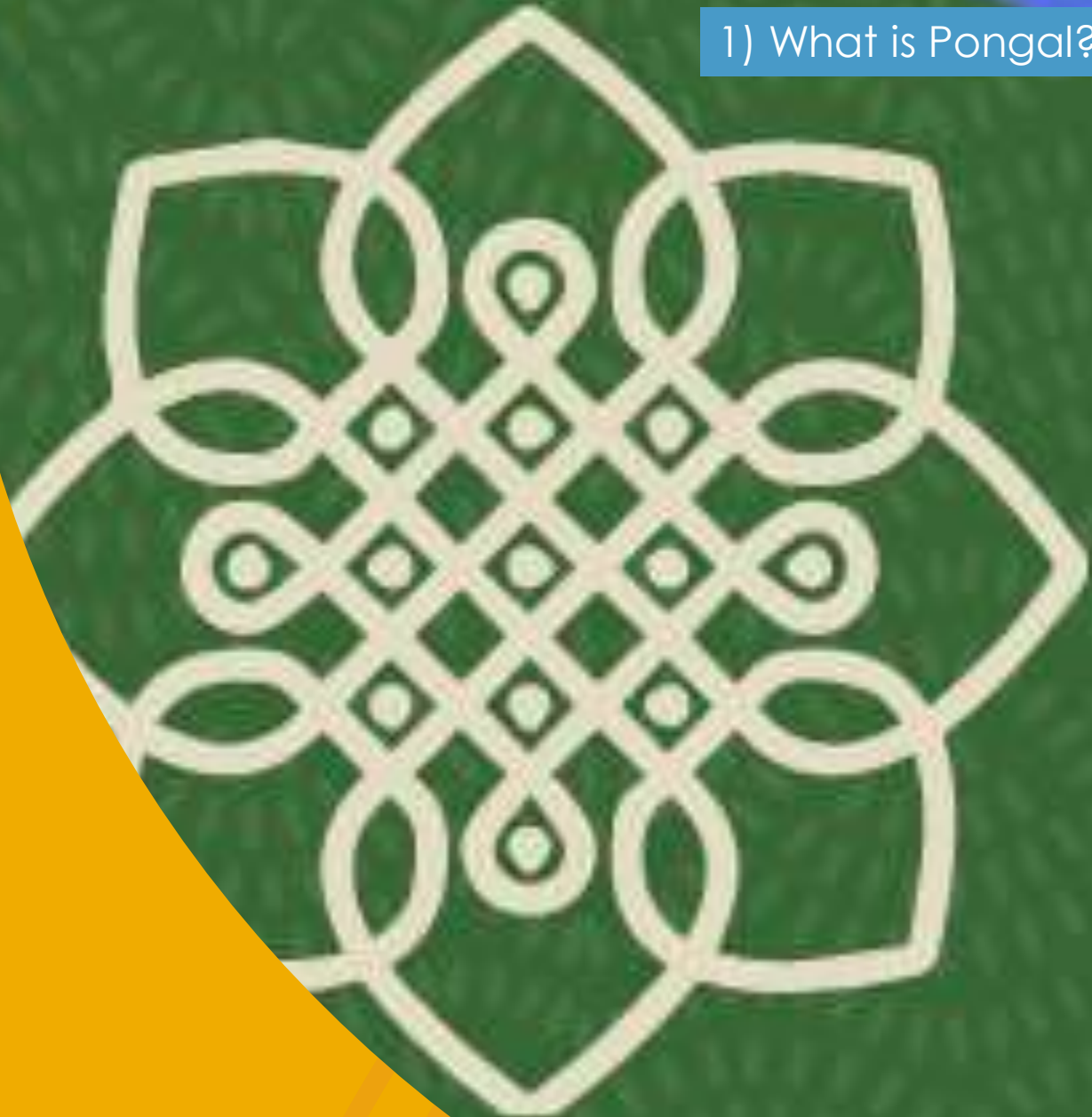
1) What is Pongal?



ICONS OF PONGAL: PULLI KOLAM

1) What is Pongal?

Pulli kolam is most commonly drawn during Pongal. It is drawn at the entrance of one's home. Dots of rice flour are placed in a grid-like framework, which are then joined to form symmetrical patterns.



QUIZ TIME ANSWERS

1) What is Pongal?

What is Pongal?

Which Tamil month is Pongal celebrated in?

1) What is Pongal?

- *Thai*
- *Aavani*
- *Karthigai*

**Pulli Kolam is drawn to drive prosperity into the home.
Where is it commonly drawn?**

- On the walls of your home
- On a Pongal pot
- At the entrance of your home

When you are cooking the Pongal dish, the rice has to boil over the pot! This is to symbolise:

- Harmony and integrity
- Prosperity and abundance
- Respect and responsibility

REFLECTION CARDS

1) Think about how your life would be different without the Sun, and share your thoughts with your friends.

Suggested responses: The Sun gives energy to the growth of green plants that provide food and oxygen for life on Earth. All animals and humans that rely on plants for food will not survive. The planet will be plunged in coldness and darkness.

**Accept all possible responses*



REFLECTION CARDS

2) What are the things we can do to strengthen community and family bonding?

Suggested responses: Spending quality time together doing things that we love, such as eating or exercising; helping one another at home and in the community; being respectful to one another; celebrating key festivals and moments in life together as one.

**Accept all possible responses*



SECTION 2) PONGAL IN THE CITY

Although Pongal may not be a public holiday in Singapore, it is still widely celebrated here as a thanksgiving festival. While farming is not widely practised in Singapore, the festival is still relevant in the urban city. It gives an opportunity for us to celebrate and give thanks to Mother Nature for providing us with food. It is also an opportunity to strengthen family ties.

Little India becomes abuzz with festive celebrations. The Indian Heritage Centre, together with the Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association (LISHA) organizes a variety of programmes and activities to celebrate this festival.



QUIZ TIME ANSWERS

Pongal in the City

2) Pongal in the City

What do families do on the morning of Surya Pongal?

- Have an oil bath
- Clean their house
- Cook Pongal at home

2) Pongal in the City

In Singapore, how do families most commonly celebrate Pongal?

- They gather together and have a delicious feast
- They exchange gifts and money packets
- They go out as a family

REFLECTION CARDS

1) Why do you think Pongal is important to the Tamil community?

Suggested responses: In South India, where the Tamil community originates, agriculture is an important way of life and a key source of living that people depend on. Pongal is an important festival for them to end the harvest season and give thanks to mother nature for the blessings of a bountiful harvest. It is also a festival for the community to gather together as one. In Singapore, Pongal is celebrated as a thanksgiving festival which reminds us to be grateful for the things we have been blessed with.

**Accept all possible responses*



REFLECTION CARDS

2) Do you know of any other festivals similar to Pongal?

Suggested responses: Pongal is celebrated mostly by the Tamil and Chetti Melaka communities. There are similar farmer's festivals celebrated by other Indian communities. It is celebrated as *Makar Sankranti* in most regions of India, as *Lohri* in Punjab, *Bhogali Bihu* in Assam. The Sikh community also celebrates *Vesakhi*, which is a harvest festival and also marks their new year.

Pongal marks the beginning of Spring. Likewise in the Chinese culture, the Lunar New Year is also commonly known as Spring Festival as it marks the beginning of Spring.

**Accept all possible responses*



You may also wish to prompt students to think about how they celebrate festivals within their own community (e.g. Christmas, or Hari Raya) and if they find any similarities to how Pongal is celebrated (e.g. feasting together, paying respects, cleaning the home, etc.)

REFLECTION CARDS

3) What values do you think Pongal Festival represents? How have you shown these values in your daily life?

Suggested responses: Showing gratitude and appreciation are some of the key values that this festival highlights. We show our gratitude by saying 'thank you' when someone does something nice for us.

**Accept all possible responses*



SECTION 3) TRADITIONAL INDIAN FOLK DANCES

Traditional Indian folk dances are performed to express joy and happiness during special occasions. During Pongal, folk dances such as Mayilaatam, Karakaatam, Poi Kaal Kuthirai Aaatam and Kolattam are often performed to mirror the energy and vitality of the festivities. These folk dances often require much skill and dancers often need to invest a lot of time to learn the intricacies of the dance.



Mayilattam

Mayilattam performers wear costumes from head to toe like a peacock, and their dance movements mimic the peacock dancing gracefully.

3) Traditional Folk Dances



Karakaatam (Water Pot Dance)

Karakaatam is an ancient folk dance where women dance gracefully with pots balanced on their heads while performing.



Kolaatam (Stick Dance)

The dance is characterised by playing sticks which the performers hold in each hand during the dance. The dancers strike the sticks as they move in circular motion with the rhythm of the music. The striking of sticks produces the main rhythm for the dance movement and this unique feature sets Kolattam folk dance apart from other dances.

3) Traditional Folk Dances



Poi Kaal Kuthirai Aaatam (Horse Dance)

The main attraction of this dance is the richly decorated cardboard horse. The dancer uses this as his dress. He gets into it through the holes made within the horse which makes the dancer look like he or she is riding a horse.

3) Traditional Folk Dances



IN-CLASS ACTIVITY

- Perform: Encourage your students to follow and perform some of the steps from the four dances.

SECTION 4) WHAT IS IN THE POT?

Pongal is traditionally cooked in a clay pot or brass pot.

There are two types of Pongal dishes that are usually made in Singapore – sweet and savoury.

Sakkarai Pongal is a sweet Pongal while Venn Pongal is a savoury dish served as breakfast.

There are many ways to cook Pongal. The most common ingredients include rice, turmeric, cardamom, dal, ghee, milk, jaggery, and cashew nuts.



QUIZ TIME ANSWERS

What's in the Pot?

4) What's in the Pot?

What is the name of the following ingredient?

- Jaggery
- Brown sugar
- Tamarind



What is the name of the following ingredient?

- Ginger
- Ginseng
- Turmeric

4) What's in the Pot?



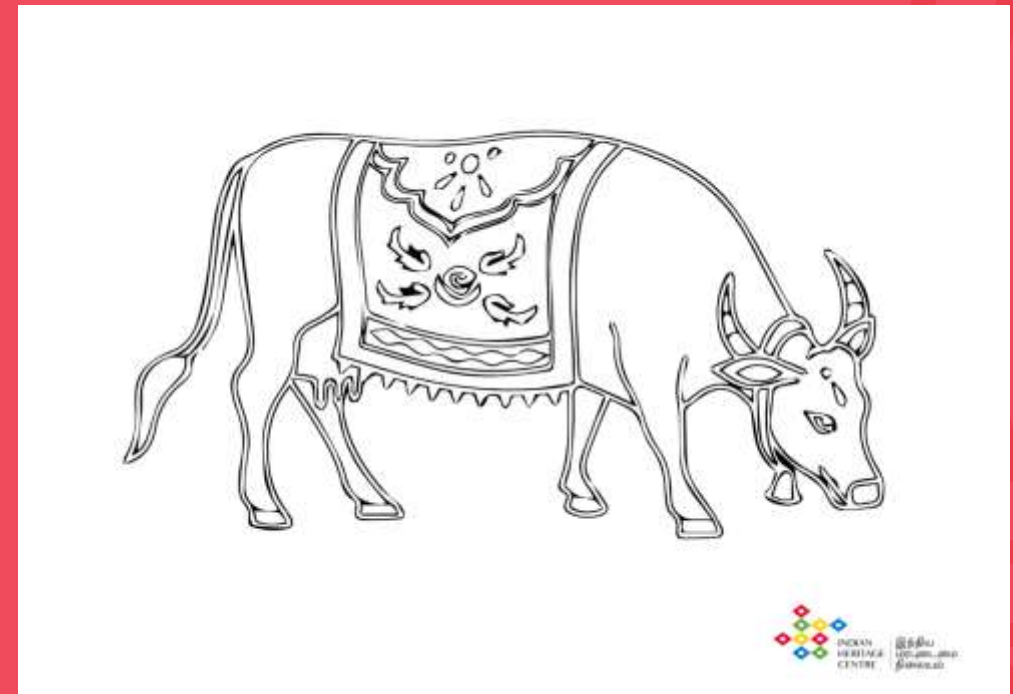
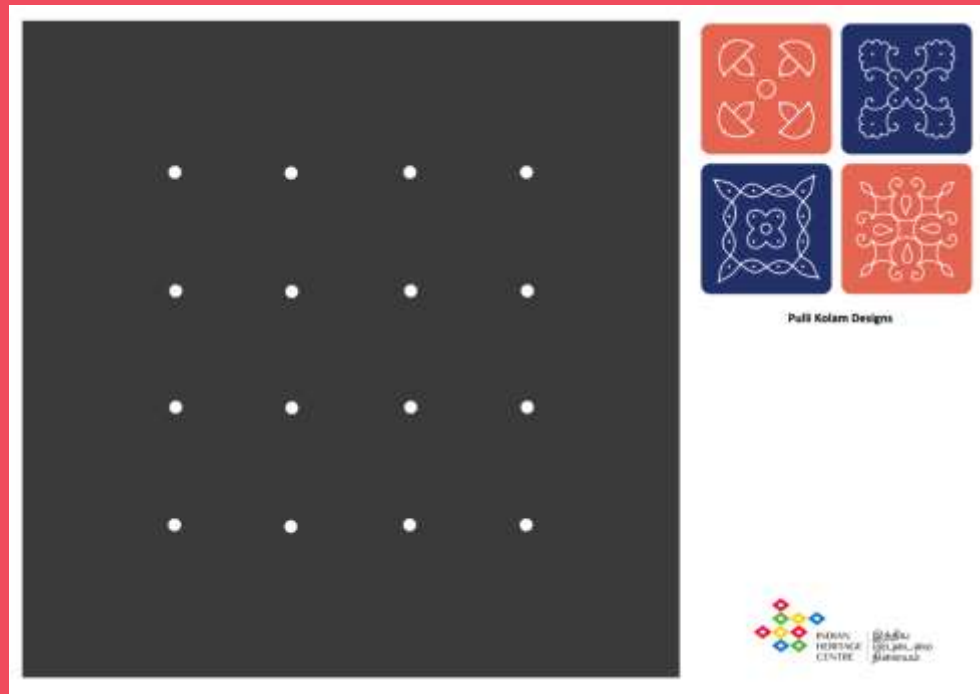
What is the name of the following ingredient?

- Cardamom
- Cinnamon
- Cumin



SECTION 5) BRING HOME THE FUN!

You can print out the Pulli Kolam design sheets and Pongal colouring sheets for your students.



SHARE

- *Encourage your students to share their designs with the class.*
- *You can combine all the Pulli Kolam designs of the students together and take a class Pulli Kolam design photo!*
- *Encourage your students to send the colouring sheets as greeting cards with “Happy Pongal!” and send it to their family/friends.*



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Pongalo Pongal An Interactive Learning Portal Feedback Form

 **5 mins** estimated time to complete

**WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED EXPLORING THE
PORTAL!**

SEND US YOUR THOUGHTS

Do click on this [link](#) to complete a short
feedback form.

Thank you.

For enquiries, please email
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