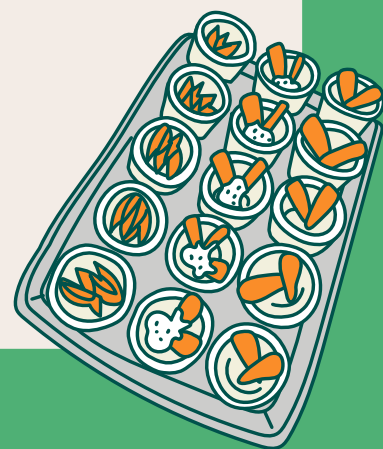


Taste Test Guidebook



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Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Tasting or Taste Test?	6
Important Principle for Leading Taste Tests	7
Key Considerations	7
School Taste Test Field Guide	8
Taste Test Timeline	10
Frequency & Location	13
Frequency	13
Locations and Approaches to Leading Taste Tests	13
Getting Support	15
Establishing a Taste Test Committee	15
Enlisting Volunteers	16
Involving Lunch Monitors and Custodial Staff	16
Involving School Nutrition Staff	17
Discussion Point for Meeting with Nutrition Services Manager	20
Taste Test Planning Meeting Worksheet	22
Involving Administrators	24
Engaging School and Community Members	24
Connecting the Taste Test to the Classroom and Garden	25
Connecting with Teacher	25
Engaging Students	26
Expressing Gratitude	27
Deciding What to Serve for the Taste Test	28
Choosing Recipes	28
Seeking Recipe Input from Families	30
Food Allergies	32
Strategies to Source Food	33
Connecting to the Cafeteria Menu	34
Highlighting Local Produce	34
Taste Test Promotions in School	35
Posters and Flyers	35
Announcements	36

Bulletin Board	37
Voting & Feedback Opportunities	38
Using the Voting Results	38
Incentives for Providing Feedback	39
Ways to Vote	41
Bean Drop Voting	42
Dot Voting & Tally Charts	43
Voting Ballots	44
Collecting Input and Sharing Results: How to Raise Student Voice	45
Tasty Challenge	46
Is the Tasty Challenge Right for Me?	47
Why the Tasty Challenge?	47
How to Plan and Prepare	48
Ideas for What to Serve	49
Voting	50
For Nutrition Services Staff: How to Support a Tasty Challenge	51
Recommended Resources	53
Recipes, Local Food, and Procurement Resources	53
FoodCorps Lessons with Cooking and Tasting Opportunities	53
Materials Checklist	54
Sample Taste Test Voting Sheets	55
Taste Test Product Handouts	58
Carrots	59
Corn	66
Broccoli	72
Potatoes	78
Sweet Potatoes	84
Kale	90
Apple	96
Sweet Peppers	102

Introduction

FoodCorps partners with schools and communities to nourish kids' health, education, and sense of community. Our program centers on our vision that every child, in every school, experiences the joy and power of food. School is where kids grow and learn—physically, academically, and emotionally. For many kids, it's also the place where they eat most of their daily meals and build food habits that will last a lifetime. We can set kids up for greater success—at school and throughout their lives—by ensuring that schools provide them with nourishing meals, comprehensive food education, and community-rooted experiences with food.

FoodCorps members are positive role models in the school cafeteria or primary mealtime location during lunch. As part of a site partner's annual goals for the partnership, a FoodCorps member may be conducting ongoing taste tests in partnership with cafeteria staff.

Leading a taste test with students is a great way to introduce them to new food for the first time in a quick, pressure-free format. It allows them to experience the smell, texture, and flavor of the food, while offering them an opportunity to provide input on how they feel about the item.

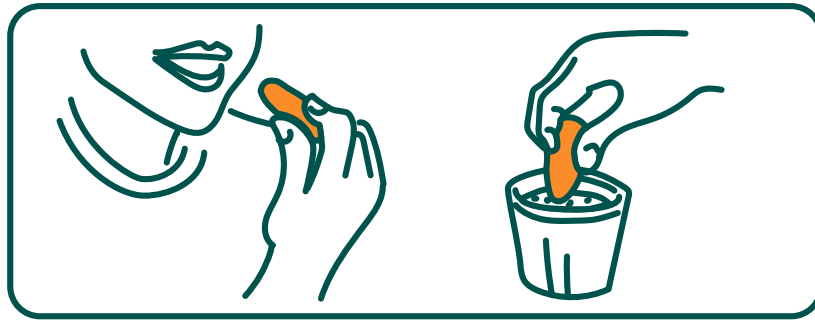
Harnessing student input on taste tests provides a fantastic opportunity to develop and strengthen connections to cafeteria staff, generate enthusiasm for new and nourishing foods throughout the school community, and promote and celebrate a culture of "trying new things." **We encourage all members to lead taste tests during their FoodCorps term.** This guide provides tips and tools for success!

Schoolwide taste tests take time, energy, preparation, and coordination with school and cafeteria staff.

We recommend recruiting volunteers to assist you during the taste test—so plan early! We've also developed tools in this guide to help streamline the overall process. Our hope is that this guide provides inspiration and resources to support you in leading taste tests that are successful and fun!

Finally, you will also notice that the Taste Test Product Handouts section in this guide references FoodCorps lessons that can be taught in conjunction with taste tests. You will find these lessons in your **FoodCorps Lessons Book**.

Tasting or Taste Test?



We'd like to differentiate among leading a "tasting," a "taste test," and a "Tasty Challenge."

We define a **tasting** as any time you provide students the opportunity to try a new food. This could happen in the garden, cafeteria, or classroom. Tastings are often incorporated into hands-on lessons; for instance, if you make applesauce with students, and the lesson ends with a taste of applesauce. This is a fantastic way to engage kids in new flavors and provide the opportunity to try something new for the first time! You'll find many FoodCorps lessons that include tastings—look under the "Making Nourishing Food Choices" and "Preparing Nourishing Food" FoodCorps lesson themes.

Throughout this resource we focus on leading **taste tests** with students. We define taste tests as any time you offer many students (ideally the entire student body!) the opportunity to try a new food and vote for it. Providing students the opportunity to vote on an item promotes student voice and choice and allows you the opportunity to use student input and voting results to engage cafeteria staff and the entire school community in building a culture of schoolwide health. In addition to this classic taste-testing model (tasting one product), there's another model we're calling the Tasty Challenge, which uses an approach of tasting two products side by side and having students vote on which is their favorite.

Learn more about the Tasty Challenge on p. 46!



Important Principles for Leading Taste Tests

- **Reach ALL students.** Your aim should be to give every student the opportunity to participate in the taste test, so an accessible location, such as the cafeteria or hallway, is important.
- **Collaborate with Nutrition Services.** These staff are the people feeding students on a daily basis. Their input and expertise is critical and valuable. (see p. 20)
- **Connect to the cafeteria menu, where possible.** Ideally the taste test features an item that is currently on or being vetted to be on students' plates during meal times. (see p. 34)
- **Make voting key.** Having students vote signals to them that their opinion matters. This is also a way to learn their preferences and apply that knowledge to future taste tests and choices for menu items down the line. (see p. 38)
- **Share voting results.** As important as having students cast a vote is broadcasting the results. Elevating student voice and choice is key! (see p. 45)
- **Acknowledge your limitations and begin!** These are ideal factors, and you may not have the capacity, connections, or resources to have these all in place, YET! Start small. Strive toward these goals, but don't be discouraged from starting a taste test program or feel like your current efforts have failed.

Key considerations

Throughout this guide you'll consider questions such as the following:

Timing: When are you leading the taste test? What time works best for all school community members? Connect with teachers, cafeteria and janitorial staff, and administrators.

Numbers: How many students are you planning to engage? Ideally, the entire student body is participating.

Logistics: Who will prepare the food, run the taste test, and clean up? (see p. 15)

Preparing food: Where will you prep the food for the taste test? (We recommend that this happens in a food-preparation designated area like the cafeteria or home ec room.)

Supplies: Will you need to borrow supplies from the cafeteria, like serving trays? (see p. 54)

Building interest: How will you advertise the taste test to students to generate excitement? (see p. 35)

Getting support: What are the best strategies to engage the community? A letter home to families? A highlight in the school newsletter? (see p. 15)

Sharing results: How will you share results? On a school bulletin board? During morning announcements? (see p. 45)

Sharing the story: How are you documenting the taste test to share success later? (photos, quotes, recipe adaptations, etc.)

Schoolwide Taste Test Field Guide

We've outlined best practices for taste tests in the FoodCorps Taste Test Guide. Complete the sections below to plan for your next taste test, and consider how you are integrating best practices into your plan.

See p. 13
for more
information
on choosing
a location!



Schoolwide taste test date: _____

Location (check all that apply that will reach all students)

- ☐ Cafeteria
- ☐ Hallway
- ☐ Playground
- ☐ Garden
- ☐ Other: _____

Time (check all that apply)

- ☐ Breakfast
- ☐ Lunch
- ☐ Recess
- ☐ Other: _____

Key collaborators & roles (check all that apply)

- ☐ FoodCorps member
- ☐ School nutrition staff (names and roles: _____)
- ☐ School administration (names and roles: _____)
- ☐ Teachers (names and roles: _____)
- ☐ Students (names and roles: _____)
- ☐ Other volunteers (names and roles: _____)
- ☐ Taste Test Committee

See p. 15 for
more about
how to get
taste test
support!



Type of schoolwide taste test (choose one)

- ☐ Tasting one product (classic)
- ☐ Tasting two products (Tasty Challenge)



See p. 46
for more
information
on the Tasty
Challenge!



*See p. 28
for more on
deciding what
to serve for
the taste test!*

Product and preparation (complete product and preparation #1 if doing a classic taste test; complete all prompts if doing a Tasty Challenge)

- ☐ Product: _____
- ☐ Preparation #1: _____
- ☐ Preparation #2 (if doing the Tasty Challenge): _____

*See p. 20
on involving
cafeteria
staff and
p. 34 on
connecting
the taste
test to the
cafeteria
menu!*

Cafeteria or school connection

(check all that apply; at least one is encouraged)

- ☐ Product is or will be served on the meal line or in the salad bar in the coming month.
- ☐ Product is or will be grown in the school garden this year.
- ☐ Product is new, and the school nutrition department is using this as a student taste-testing opportunity.
- ☐ Other: _____

*See p. 35
for more on
taste test
promotions!*

Promotional plan (check all that apply)

- ☐ Morning announcements
- ☐ Posters/flyers
- ☐ Family/parent newsletter
- ☐ Other: _____

*See p. 38
for voting
and feedback
opportunities!*



Voting (choose one)

- ☐ Bean drop
- ☐ A thumb "thermometer"
- ☐ Dot voting, stamping, or tally chart
- ☐ Paper voting ballots
- ☐ Digital voting on a tablet using a Google form
- ☐ Other: _____



*See p. 40
for more
on Munch
Madness!*

Capstone option

(complete if you are planning an end-of-year capstone taste test)

- ☐ Bean drop
- ☐ Munch Madness
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ No capstone

Taste Test Timeline

Product: _____

Date of taste test: _____

CHECKLIST	NOTES
1 MONTH PRIOR	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Check your Taste Test Field Guide.<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to product you are testing and recipes. Ensure you are coordinating with school menu.<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm logistics and timing with teacher or cafeteria staff, depending on where the tasting is happening. Ensure there isn't a scheduling conflict (i.e., taste test is not on a holiday, a testing day, or day a field trip or other big event is happening).<input type="checkbox"/> Check in with or recruit parents or community volunteers to help with food prep and serving.<input type="checkbox"/> Consider practicing a small-scale version of the recipe at home, particularly if it's new to you.<input type="checkbox"/> Determine how and where you'll be storing the food product.	

CHECKLIST	NOTES
2-3 WEEKS PRIOR	
<input type="checkbox"/> Make sure recipe ingredients are purchased or procured. <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise the taste test in the school newsletter, bulletin board, flyers, classroom visits, etc.	
1 WEEK PRIOR	
<input type="checkbox"/> Send reminders to principal, cafeteria staff, teachers, and volunteers. <input type="checkbox"/> Check that you have all the supplies you'll need. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine system for student voting.	
DAY BEFORE	
<input type="checkbox"/> Remind principal or office to include taste test shout out in morning announcements. <input type="checkbox"/> Check in with volunteers to coordinate final details. Organize supplies. <input type="checkbox"/> Review recipes. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare recipes and/or ingredients that you can make ahead. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare voting method.	

CHECKLIST	NOTES
DAY OF	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare recipes. <input type="checkbox"/> Set up table. <input type="checkbox"/> Set up voting. <input type="checkbox"/> Hang signage. <input type="checkbox"/> Set out testing cups with clear numbers and names next to each option. <input type="checkbox"/> Take pictures. <input type="checkbox"/> Clean up. 	
DAY AFTER	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Reflect! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What went well? <input type="checkbox"/> What would you want to do differently next time? <input type="checkbox"/> Share results with school. <input type="checkbox"/> Send home taste test product handouts to families. <input type="checkbox"/> Send thanks to volunteers and whomever else helped you pull off the taste test! 	

Frequency & Location

Frequency

Ideally, taste tests will be integrated into the school as a typical way to promote student voice and choice. Students, teachers, cafeteria staff, and families all know and recognize taste tests as a way to show “we try new things” at school, and students’ opinions and preferences matter. Developing a regular taste test schedule is a great way to institutionalize taste tests. Considering what it takes to lead a successful taste test (people, time, and money), aim for setting up a taste test calendar: once a month is a great initial goal. Some people link taste tests to a Harvest of the Month as a means of guiding the tasting. See a variety of examples showing approaches to leading taste tests in the section below.

Locations and approaches to leading taste tests

Below are examples of the different ways to offer taste tests.

In the school cafeteria

- A cart is brought to students with a taste test item to sample. Voting can be done via thumbs, tally on a clipboard, or asking students to vote on a poster as they exit the cafeteria.
- A table is set up with items, and students come to you to taste and vote.
- You carry items around in a bowl and serve directly onto student plates (good if you don’t have a cart or a table available; low resource with no disposable cups).
- Voting can be done in the lunch line (ideal if students can get up from tables during lunch, and vote on the way out or after lunch).
- Students vote on items already included on the lunch menu; you ensure feedback is provided to cafeteria staff.

Other locations

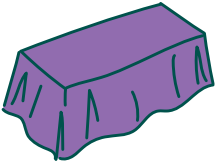

- On the playground during recess
- In the hallway, a table is set up for students to sample and vote
- In the school lobby during dismissal
- In the school garden as a follow-up to a harvest

Schoolwide events

- At a parent–teacher night
- As part of an assembly

Unique approaches

- Linked to Fresh Fruit and Veggie Program
- As part of the Harvest-of-the-Month program

CHECKLIST	NOTES	Cons
<div>Stationary Table</div> <div></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be a private voting experience, so students aren't swayed by others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can cause bottlenecking, particularly if it's done while students are on their way elsewhere
<div>Rolling Cart</div> <div></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be orderly as students stay seated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased chance you might miss someone• Informal nature means some students will be influenced by peers

Getting Support

To successfully pull off a taste test, you'll want support from the school community and from dedicated volunteers.

Establishing a Taste Test Committee

Though it takes time and planning upfront, gathering a Taste Test Committee early in the school year can save you stress down the road. You'll have the assurance that you're making decisions collaboratively with wisdom and input from key stakeholders and that you have a team of committed people you can rely on for support.

Taste Test Committee tips

- Convene key stakeholders: cafeteria manager, parent volunteers, principal, lunch monitors, a couple upper-grade students, class representatives, and others who may be interested in helping shape a taste test program at the school.
- Set regular meetings.
- Assign roles: Can committed parent or community volunteers do further outreach for a pool of volunteers to help on taste test days? Can the cafeteria manager communicate with the school nutrition department to procure items needed for the taste test?
- Establish goals together: What are your desired outcomes for your taste test program?
- Set goals: How will you measure success?
- Coordinate tasks and timelines: See if you can sketch out a road map of the year while you have key stakeholders at the table.
- Plan for a way to gather input from people outside the committee.
- Involve students, if possible!

Enlisting Volunteers

Don't try to do it alone! Having a committed core group of volunteers will be critical for the success of your taste test program.

For each taste test, aim to have at least one, ideally two, volunteers the day of. That way, you have someone running and monitoring voting as well as someone to assist with preparing the products, portioning into taste test cups, and replenishing tastings between lunch waves.

Existing clubs: Does your school have a PTO/PTA, garden committee, or other dedicated group of volunteers you can pull from?

Community group: Is there a local church group, senior center, or Rotary Club with an interest in volunteering that you might reach out to?

High school students: Does a local high school have a culinary elective or vocational tech program that you can partner with?

Parent outreach: Look for opportunities when parents are already at the school to engage them (e.g., pickup and drop-off, back-to-school nights, school food pantry hours).

Involving lunch monitors and custodial staff

You're likely hosting a taste test in a space lunch monitors and custodial staff occupy daily: the cafeteria. Be sure to gain their support by checking in and asking for their valuable input before running taste tests.

Get on the same page as lunch monitors. Will you be bringing taste test cups to students, or will there be a designated table? What will be the process for students to get up and go to the table? Cafeteria monitors will want to know how to manage students accordingly. Without prior communication, there may be a mismatch of expectations.

Likewise, it is especially important to give custodial staff a heads-up and troubleshoot how you can ensure that the taste test doesn't negatively affect their job. Inquire about how you can thoroughly clean the space after the taste test. You may need to borrow a broom and other cleaning supplies. Ask for favors you might need from custodial staff well in advance of the day of the taste test, such as finding an extra table or cart, so they don't have to scramble on the day of on your behalf.

Involving School Nutrition Staff

“ I thought through having a taste test one time a month, looked at a seasonal chart, and talked with cafeteria. Really that should be any person's first step.”

—FoodCorps member

A taste test provides a low-cost way to explore if incorporating a new food item on the menu is marketable to students before offering it on the meal line. This information is potentially helpful to school nutrition staff at the school who are discouraged to see food thrown away. Engage school nutrition staff as early as possible as you plan your taste test. See if you are able to sit down with the cafeteria manager at the beginning of the year to plan out your taste test products and dates for the fall semester or even for the year. (See the Taste Test Field Guide planning document.) It's even better if they're able to be part of a Taste Test Committee. But value their time—they are busy. Clear communication is key, especially if you are running the taste test in the cafeteria during a school meal. Remember that you share the same goal of offering nourishing, delicious food to students.

Tips for collaborating with nutrition staff

- **Gauge level of involvement:** Some cafeteria managers are happy to give you the space to work and prep but would rather not be involved, whereas others might love to be a resource and thought partner along the way.
- **Tap into their wisdom:** Cafeteria managers will know a lot about students' habits and tastes, considering they're feeding them daily! They'll also likely have good ideas for ingredient alternatives and how to work with the school nutrition department's ordering guide.
- **Check in about the lunch menu:** Discuss which day of the week has the lightest prep load for the kitchen, especially if you need their help in food preparation; that way they won't be overburdened.
- **Coordinate taste test items:** Talk to the cafeteria manager about whether there's an item or dish they'd like you to taste test to determine whether they should serve it on the meal line. Or try a Tasty Challenge with an item that's already being served and one you serve in addition. See the Tasty Challenge section on pp. 46–53 for more guidance.

Included in this Taste Test Guide are Product Handouts on pp. 59–107 that include a version to share with school nutrition staff. You can use these as a jumping-off point when planning a tasting around that particular fruit or vegetable. Sharing these handouts is a great way to engage school nutrition staff, and highlight that their input and involvement in the taste test is critical for success. On p. 20, you'll find discussion points for meeting with nutrition staff about a taste test. But before meeting to discuss a specific taste test, remember the goal of establishing a positive relationship. Consider the following tips:

Tips for collaborating with nutrition staff

- Spend time in the kitchen to build relationships.
- Collaboratively set expectations for working in the cafeteria.
- Be consistent and reliable with how you show up to help.
- Listen to challenges, ask questions, and identify opportunities to support their efforts.
- Give assistance, not demands.
- Be humble, not the expert.
- Acknowledge barriers and successes.
- Connect and relate personally.
- Eat the food served in the cafeteria.
- Be appreciative!

As you are building your relationships, consider asking cafeteria staff these questions:

- How can we stay in touch? (Email? What is the best time to call?)
- What are your important kitchen logistics?
- What foods do you want to serve?
- How do you plan your menu?
- How are contracts and decisions made?
- Are there opportunities for a FoodCorps member to have a daily presence in the cafeteria?
If so, how would this be helpful?

Quotes from FoodCorps members who have connected with cafeteria staff to plan and implement taste tests

"They love to taste the food and often ask for the recipe."

"Cafeteria staff prepare the food; I serve the food to the students and run the voting, etc."

"The partnership that I have with cafeteria staff for taste tests has been built over many years that I was lucky enough to inherit."

"They sometimes give me food for taste tests; they give me the OK to do a taste test, and give me suggestions."

"Cafeteria staff give suggestions of how to modify taste test flavor."

"Cafeteria staff cook produce from the garden."

"They order, prepare, and cup the salads into sample sizes."

"Building a good relationship with the cafeteria staff, even the area manager, will be instrumental if doing cafeteria taste tests. They can help provide supplies and an area to prepare and store, and most importantly, efficiently clean after."

"You need to understand your cafeteria staff; create the human relationship first and foremost. Can't just approach them with a big long list of things you need their help with."

"We are constantly communicating with cafeteria staff, making sure orders came in on time and assessing needs on both sides. We are forever indebted to them for letting us use their space, cookware, and ingredients! Cafeteria staff always offer good advice and insight for the taste tests and typically enjoy trying what we make. We really get a glimpse into food services and the work behind the scenes of the cafeteria through conducting taste tests."



Discussion Points for Meeting with Nutrition Services Manager



As you know by now, fostering a positive relationship with the Nutrition Services staff at your school is key in pulling off a successful taste test or any engagement efforts in the cafeteria.

Use the following script and questions to initiate a conversation about your larger taste test plan. These questions assume you've already introduced yourself and spoken informally with the manager before this meeting. Be sure to express appreciation for their hard work and expertise. The Taste Test Planning Meeting Worksheet (p. 22) can serve as a guide when planning for a specific taste test.

If you're considering doing a Tasty Challenge, bring the Supporting a Tasty Challenge handout (p. 47), which goes over these considerations in more depth and gives an overview of this type of taste test.

Script for conversation

Thanks for taking time to meet today! As your FoodCorps member, I'm excited to work with you to introduce new foods to kids through taste tests. FoodCorps believes the following are important aspects to successful taste tests

- Offering to all students
- Voting
- Including foods that will be offered on the menu

Partnering with you during this process is key for success; your input and guidance will help shape taste tests that engage kids and reflect what they eat every day at school. The cafeteria is your realm, and you do so much to feed our students, so I want to be as respectful as I can of your space, time, and resources. I'd like to discuss the following questions with you to help build our plan for leading taste tests with students.

Ideas and troubleshooting

- Are there any recipes/food items that you've been wanting to try out?
- (If you want to run a Tasty Challenge) Do you have ideas for alternate preparations to pair together?
- Are there any seasonally appropriate fruits or vegetables you want to taste test?
Or something in surplus?
- Are there any concerns or challenges that you anticipate?

Scheduling

The dates for preparing and running a taste test need to work for you.

- What are the good weeks of the school year, days of the week, or dates to run a taste test or Tasty Challenge (considering your normal prep load)?
- How often during the school year can you see successfully pulling off a taste test?
- Are there any other theme days or "Harvest-of-the-Month" days that can dovetail with a taste test or Tasty Challenge?

Ordering

With my limited budget and resources, anything that can be ordered through Nutrition Services will be crucial in helping the taste test get off the ground. This is particularly true for a Tasty Challenge because we'll be serving double the amount of tastings.

- Can you share how ordering in your district generally works?
- What pantry items are easily available for taste tests?
- Are there any items you know are difficult to procure that should be avoided during a taste test?

Supplies and space

- Is your preference to help prepare the food for the taste test?
- Are you able to provide a station for me to prepare food the day prior?
- Will there be space where I can refrigerate items?
- What are the protocols for sanitizing and cleanup that I should be aware of?
- I might need tasting cups or boats, forks, a hairnet and gloves, and a small cart.
Are these items available?

Day of

I could use your help thinking through the flow of students on the day of the taste test.

- How many lunch periods a day are there? Approximately how many students per lunch period?
How long is each lunch period?
- I'll either need a table set up in the cafeteria or a cart to bring tastings to seated students.
What is your preference? Why?
- Is there any bottlenecking or other challenges you foresee with either scenario?
- How much will you or another staff member be able to help during a taste test or Tasty Challenge?
- What's the best way for me to move about and use the space to not interrupt lunch service?

Results

My hope is that the voting results can be put to use, ultimately informing decisions for the salad bar or cafeteria menu.

- How much flexibility do you have for implementing changes?
- How could you see using the results of a taste test or Tasty Challenge?
- To what extent do you want to be involved?
- My goal would be to offer taste tests X times in the year. Does that seem reasonable?
- Are there ideal days of the week or parts of the month that work best for you?

Thank you for all you do!



Taste Test Planning Meeting Worksheet



This worksheet is to be used in conversation with the Nutrition Services manager when planning for a specific taste test. Refer to the Taste Test Timeline (p. 10) and Materials Checklist (p. 54) to help you plan and stay organized. Use this in tandem with Discussion Points for Meeting With Nutrition Services Manager (p. 20).

- ☐ Suggest a date for the first taste test, or have them suggest a date:
 - ☐ How does your prep load look that week? Is there a better day?

- ☐ My idea so far for the taste test item is
[If using recipes from the Taste Test Guide, you might introduce the Cafeteria handout for this product here.]
 - ☐ What are your thoughts? Do you anticipate any challenges with this item or preparation?
 - ☐ Do you have suggestions for altering the recipe? Do you have any recipes you like for this item?

- ☐ Food I'll need help ordering
 - ☐
 - ☐
 - ☐
 - ☐
 - ☐
 - ☐

☐ Supplies or cooking space I'll need

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

☐ Is it OK to hang signs? Where?

☐ Dates and times for when I'll be preparing food (if in cafeteria)

☐ Dates and times for when I'll be setting up for taste test

☐ Space I'll need to set up

Thank you for all you do!

Involving Administrators

“The great relationship that I have with the principal at my school was built on how I give taste tests at the staff meetings.”

—FoodCorps member

Aim to have your principal and other administrators be informal ambassadors for taste tests.

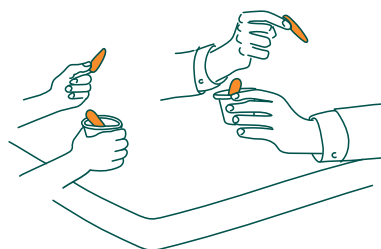
- Be sure to coordinate taste test dates with the principal. They'll let you know of testing dates, field trips, or other scheduled events that may conflict with your desired dates.
- Invite the principal and other administrators to be present in the cafeteria during taste tests. They can encourage students to try the taste test and model by trying it themselves!
- If they can't come to you, bring leftover taste test samples to the office. It's a thoughtful way to appreciate them, and build awareness of your taste test program.

Engaging school and community members

The more the school and the broader community are involved in the taste test, the more success you will see.

The following are some tips for engaging these folks:

- Encourage staff and parents to participate in trying a new food during a taste test and to model to students that it's cool to try new things!
- Promote taste tests during back-to-school night, PTO/PTA meetings, or other after-school events where parents are in attendance. Have a sign-up sheet for volunteering and sample tasters to pique interest.
- Ask volunteers to sign up to help prepare the food for the taste test or help run the taste test table.
- Regularly communicate with parents about upcoming taste tests, and highlight what foods students are tasting.
- Invite farmers to interact with students and share what it's like to grow a product featured in the taste test.



Connecting the Taste Test to the Classroom and Garden

The more students have an opportunity to learn about a new food in a hands-on way, the more likely they will be to try it. Explore opportunities to connect your taste test to classroom time.

For example, if you're taste-testing squash, can you...

- lead a squash-focused lesson with students?
- plant squash in the school garden?
- help facilitate squash-focused research projects?
- guide students in cooking the squash themselves to prepare for the taste test?

The more students have an opportunity to learn about a new food in a hands-on way, the more likely they will be to try it. Explore opportunities to connect your taste test to classroom time.



Connecting with teacher

“Taste tests are simple and don’t take very long, so that could be a great way to build a relationship with a class and a teacher.”

—FoodCorps member

- Can you partner with a particular classroom (whose teacher is excited and supportive of food education and nourishing school food) to have students be Taste Test Ambassadors (see Engage Students below)?
- Perhaps before attempting a cafeteria-scale taste test you do a trial run in a classroom.
- Hang flyers in the teacher’s lounge announcing taste tests and making specific requests for support (e.g., help finding parent volunteers or being a Taste Test Ambassador classroom).
- If the taste test is being offered in the cafeteria, is there a way to engage teachers in preparing for and running the taste test?
- In addition to the ideas about classroom connections mentioned above, can you engage teachers on a personal level?
- Ask teachers to participate and vote, along with the students. Encourage them to share stories about the first time they tried a new food! What did they like or not like about it?

Engaging Students

Explore a variety of ways to promote student excitement about the taste test. Allow them to be as involved in the process as possible—from planting and harvesting produce that is featured in the recipe to creating taste test promotion posters to running the taste test itself. The following are a few additional ideas:

- **Taste Test Club or Taste Test Ambassadors:**

Develop a club to engage students in leading taste tests. They can help prep the food, lead the taste test and voting process, and summarize the votes! Students can brainstorm ways to share the voting results, including making schoolwide announcements and sharing results on a hallway bulletin board.

- **Role modeling:** Younger students look up to older students. Explore if older students can serve younger students the items being tested. Create opportunities for younger students to see older students trying new foods—this is one of the most influential things you can do to create a positive taste-testing culture throughout the school.

- Have students develop names for recipes that are being tested.



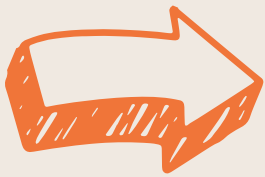
Expressing Gratitude



Be sure to express gratitude and appreciation for the hard work your key collaborators played in the success of your taste test.

Some tips:

- Write a handwritten thank-you note, whenever possible.
- Mention specific ways that your collaborators were helpful.
- Include student quotes.
- Have students send direct messages themselves.
- Mention your desire for future collaborations.



A sample thank you letter to a cafeteria manager



THANK YOU!

Dear Ms. Gray,

Thank you for your hard work in making our broccoli taste test a success. We wouldn't have been able to pull it off without your help ordering foods, preparing the cheesy broccoli, and graciously allowing us to use your kitchen space. The students obviously loved your dish. They told me, "The cheese is definitely the best!"

I really appreciate your support in creating fun taste tests for our students, and I look forward to working together in the future.

Thanks again!
Sandra

Deciding What to Serve for the Taste Test

Choosing recipes

This guide includes recipes for eight products commonly served in cafeterias nationwide. Each product includes three recipe options to be used for a Tasty Challenge or to be taste tested independently. These recipes are just ideas and can help you think of recipes that celebrate your students' local food histories and traditions. Below are other considerations for selecting recipes.

Recipe considerations

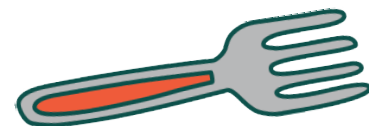
- **Seasonal:** Is your recipe appropriate for the time of year?
- **Connection to cafeteria:** Could the recipe be incorporated into the cafeteria menu, and is it accessible for school nutrition staff?
- **Local:** Are you able to source ingredients from local farmers or your school garden?
- **Availability and affordability:** Keep accessibility and availability in mind when considering ingredients in recipes. Are they ingredients that families can access close to home at most stores? Can you provide more common substitutions for expensive or hard-to-find ingredients?
- **Feasibility:** While a recipe might seem fun and exciting, is it something you can feasibly manage given your monetary, equipment, or time constraints?
- **"Bridge" foods:** Bridge foods are foods that help a person move from old foods to new foods (i.e., There's a familiar element to a new dish. For example, cheesy broccoli was a very popular

Questions to consider

1. Who will you engage in making this decision? Are students, cafeteria staff, community members, teachers, or other school staff involved in deciding the item or recipe?
2. How much will it cost?
3. Is it connected to the cafeteria menu? (Ideally yes; see more below.)
4. Is the item linked to a specific season or local holiday for students in the school community?

taste test at a partner site, thanks to cheddar cheese!).

- **Informed source:** Is your recipe inspired by or adapted from sites or programs that have done pre-vetting with kids, school nutrition directors, and large serving sizes?
- **Community-rooted foods:** Have you considered the histories and food traditions of your students? What are the tastes and cooking practices of their families?



Converting recipe yields

- Many recipes you encounter in cookbooks or on the internet will consider a serving size well above a “tasting” or what would fit in a 2 oz. serving cup. To avoid food waste but also have enough for each student, you’ll have to do some calculations.
- The recipes included in this guide use a serving size of ¼ cup for approximately 50 servings. To accommodate your school size and taste test needs, you might be doubling or even quadrupling the recipe.
- It’s best practice to taste the food that you’re preparing for the taste test as you go (with tester spoons that you use once!), ensuring the seasoning or dressing is adequate and balanced. This is especially important if this is your first time making the recipe!
- Be sure to record substitutions, adaptations, and scaling up notes as you’re creating the dish; that way, if it’s successful, it’s reproducible.

RECIPE CONVERSION CHART

1. Divide the desired new yield by the existing recipe yield:

$$\frac{\text{New yield}}{\text{Old yield}} = \text{conversion factor}$$

2. Multiply each ingredient quantity by the conversion factor:

$$\text{old quantity} \times \text{conversion factor} = \text{new quantity}$$

EXAMPLE:

You have a recipe for 10 portions of broccoli casserole with cheese sauce, requiring 3 pounds of broccoli and 2.5 cups cheese sauce. You want to convert to 15 portions.

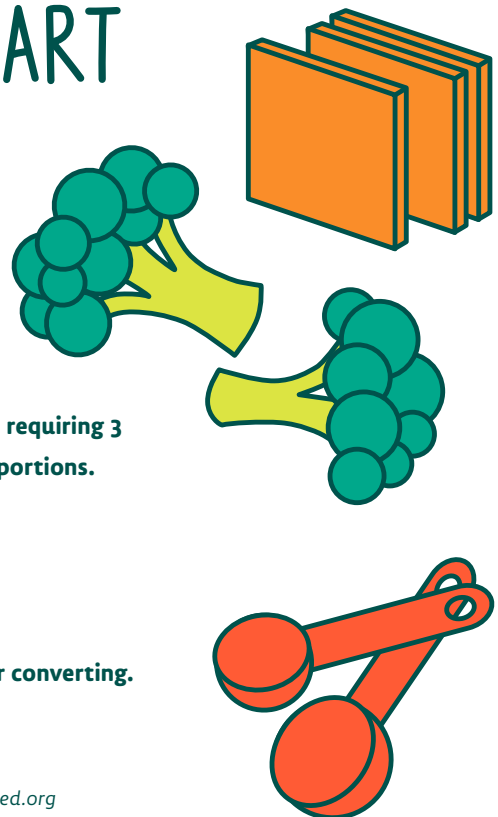
$$\frac{\text{New yield} = 15}{\text{Old yield} = 10} = 1.5 \text{ conversion factor}$$

So, Broccoli: 3 lbs. x 1.5 = 4.5 lbs.

Sauce: 2.5 cups x 1.5 = 3.75 cups

NOTE: spices, salt, and pepper do not necessarily follow the same rule for converting. Use common sense when multiplying the amount of these.

Adapted with permission from VT FEED Guide To Tasting Local Foods In Schools www.vtfeed.org




Seeking Recipe Input from Families

The product handouts included in this guide include a Home handout to be sent home with students to share with families and caregivers. Although these are meant to serve as a bridge to share what foods students are trying at school, and give families ideas to add to their cooking routine, the communication should go both ways—consider ways you can invite families to share their recipes and methods for products you plan to taste test.

The following are some suggestions for inquiring with students and families about their favorite recipes and cooking tips:

- Invite caregivers in to teach recipes and methods used at home during classroom hands-on lessons. Afterwards, work with caregivers to develop a schoolwide-size recipe for taste testing in the cafeteria.
- When working in the garden with community volunteers, inquire about preparations for the vegetables you're tending together.
- Be sure your Taste Test Committee has a representative selection of caregivers, and brainstorm recipes during meetings.
- Send home recipe requests with students for upcoming products.

RECIPE: _____ _____		
INGREDIENTS: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	STEPS: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	

FOODCORPS LESSONS THAT INCLUDE INVITING RELATIVES AND GUESTS

- Learning from Our Elders
- Tortilla Time!
- Stone Soup
- Who Feeds Us?
- Planting the Three Sisters



Food Allergies

Most common food allergies in children*

- Cow milk
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Soy
- Wheat
- Nuts from trees (such as walnuts, pistachios, pecans, cashews)
- Fish (such as tuna, salmon, cod)
- Shellfish (such as shrimp, lobster)

**According to the American Academy of Pediatrics*

- Check in with lunch monitors, the school nurse, and/or classroom teachers at the start of the year to identify any students with life-threatening food allergies.
- When choosing recipes, avoid inclusion of common allergens such as peanuts and tree nuts.
- If you're testing a product one way (as opposed to a Tasty Challenge), perhaps choose a dairy-free recipe, so it'll be accessible to more students.
- Practice safe food handling, and be sure not to cross-contaminate utensils and cutting boards during preparation.
- Have questions? Ask your cafeteria staff for any questions concerning student allergies and related school policies and procedures.



Strategies to Source Food

The following are locations and strategies that members have reported using to source items for taste tests:

- Local grocery stores
- School cafeteria purchasing (working with cafeteria staff)
- School district purchasing
- Connecting with local farmers
- National Fresh Fruit and Veggie Program (FFVP)
- Food donations (grocers, wholesale, markets)
- Farmer's markets
- School or community gardens
- Nutrition centers
- Food bank or food pantry



Connecting to the Cafeteria Menu

The more cafeteria staff are engaged in your efforts and are valued in the process, the more likely you will be to bridge the gap between your taste test and school meal menu items.

The following are some strategies to consider:

Seeking input

- Vet the item you are offering and the recipe you use with cafeteria staff. Ideally, the item will reflect something that can be incorporated into an upcoming schoolwide meal.
- Ask the cafeteria staff if there is a new item or recipe for which they would like to do a trial run via a schoolwide taste test.

Coordinating efforts

- Ask cafeteria staff if they are willing to promote the taste test with students or participate in some way.

- Have a Tasty Challenge! Pair something that's already on the cafeteria line with a new recipe using that product. If steamed carrots are typically served, try pairing it with carrot soup.

Taking small steps

- If your school has a salad bar, try putting a taste test item there, and track the popularity of the food with the help of nutrition services.

Sharing results

- Ensure that you will share the taste test results with cafeteria staff to inform their planning and follow-up.

For more guidance on collaborating with the Nutrition Services staff, see the handout Discussion Points for Meeting With Nutrition Services Manager, on p. 20.

Highlighting local produce

Whenever possible, incorporate a product that is available locally into your taste test. Even if you can't source the item for the actual taste test, there is still value in highlighting something that reflects local agriculture and community cuisine. Explore regional specialty crops and foods and the people who grow and prepare these items. Consider the following:

- What is available seasonally?
- How can you highlight these throughout the school year?
- Are there times when there is a surplus of items (like zucchini)?
- Can you engage farmers to sell "seconds" or imperfect crops that might not go for market value but could easily be incorporated into a taste test?

If you can source a local product, create a sign or map showing where it is grown in the state or region!

Taste Test Promotions in the School

Posters and flyers

One way to drum up excitement for an upcoming taste test is by posting fun, colorful posters or flyers around school a week in advance. You can have students make them (a great way to creatively engage a class or student group you are currently working with), or you can create them yourself (see the Sample Templates section for ideas). Either way, be sure to include the following details on your posters/flyers:

- Day, time, and location of the taste test
- Food product(s) you will be offering to all students (ideally an illustration or graphic and the name)
- Encouraging language (e.g., "Hope to see you there!" or "Join us!")

Place posters/flyers in high-traffic areas in the school where students will see them. Post them at student eye level, so everyone can see the taste test details.

Announcements

In this section are some examples of how to get the word out about your taste test. You'll want to make sure to let students and the school community know it's happening beforehand, through loudspeaker announcements on the day before and day of, mention in the school newsletter, a bulletin board flyer, or poster posted the week before. Then you'll want to use these same outlets to announce the results. Even if you aren't immediately able to make use of the results (i.e., serve the dish on the lunch line), this step demonstrates to students that they've been heard and that you care about their input).

Sample school community and family newsletter announcement

This week, on Try it! Tuesday, our FoodCorps member will be partnering with the cafeteria to run a taste test of a potential new dish to be served at lunch. We encourage students and adults to try new things! So feel free to come on down to the cafeteria to try it yourself at lunchtime. Students will have a chance to provide feedback, and if enough love it, we'll add it to the lunch rotation.

Sample morning announcements for classic taste test

Day of

We're having a special taste test in the cafeteria today! Be sure to look for [FoodCorps member's name], and let us know what you think!

Results

Thank you for participating in yesterday's taste test of roasted red pepper spread! _____ out of the _____ students who tried it said they loved it!

Sample morning announcements for Tasty Challenge

Day of

Are you up for the Tasty Challenge? Today at lunch we will be trying _____ different recipes of today's special ingredient, _____. Be sure to look for it at lunch, and vote on your favorite.

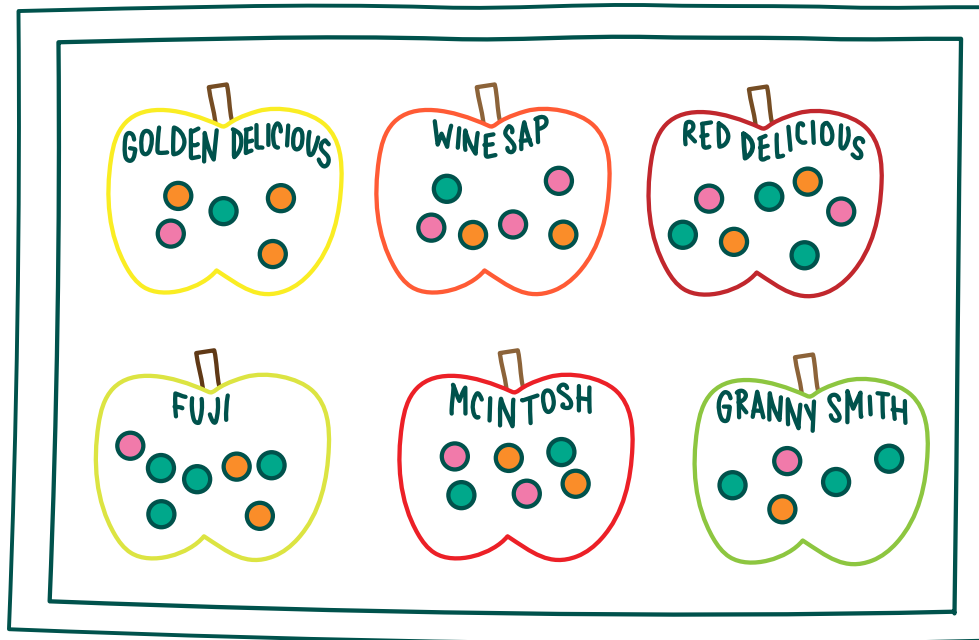
Results

*Thank you for participating in yesterday's Carrot Tasty Challenge!
The results are in! [name of school or mascot] students have spoken! Drumroll please . . .*

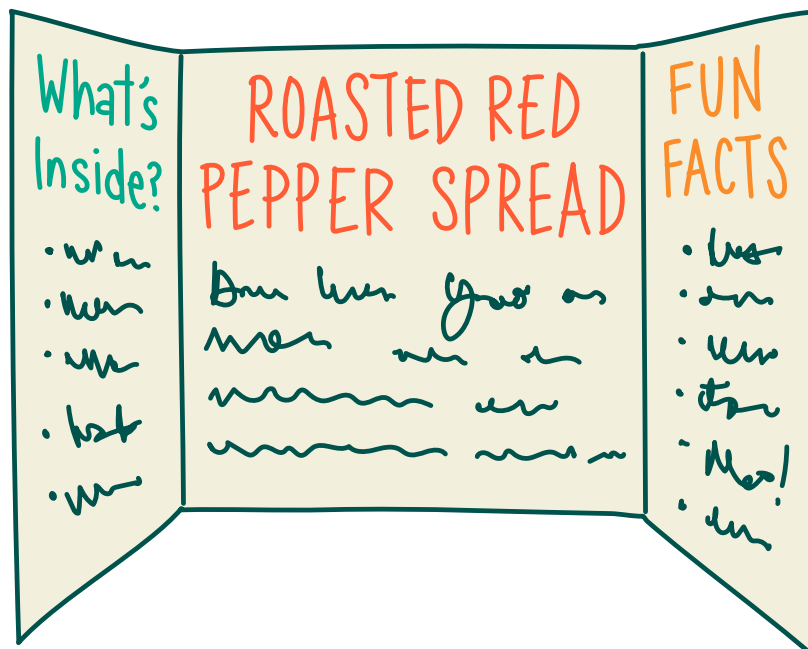
*In second place: Carrot Salad with _____ votes, and in first place, the winner:
Raw carrots and Tzatziki sauce with _____ votes!*

Bulletin Board

If you used a tally or sticker chart, you already have a display of the results to share with the school! Post this on a bulletin board in the cafeteria or other highly trafficked area. If you collected votes or feedback elsewhere, synthesize them into in a fun, visual display to share with students. You might recruit a class or group of students to help with this display—another reason Taste Test Student Ambassadors are a helpful resource!



Credit: Emily Chau, AtlantiCare Healthy Schools, Texas Avenue School (Atlantic City, NJ)



Voting & Feedback Opportunities

Giving students the opportunity to provide feedback communicates to them that you care about their input and preferences.

There are two main purposes for voting, both of which raise student voice:

- To gather feedback and opinions (e.g., liked it/loved it/tried it)
- To gather preference between two items (e.g., Tasty Challenge)

There are also many ways to vote and reasons to select one method over another:

- **To make voting simple and fun:** bean drop, thumb “thermometer,” stickers, etc.
- **To gather, compare, or share information:** dot voting, voting ballots, digital voting, etc.



Even while doing simple tastings as part of a lesson in the classroom, it is a good idea to solicit feedback from students, or provide an opportunity to vote by having students hold up a thumbs up, down, or sideways to validate student preference.

Using the voting results

It is essential to use the results from the vote to build support around your taste-testing efforts and to engage the school community. This could look like sharing the results with the cafeteria staff, with parents in a community newsletter, or with students on a bulletin board in the hallway. The results from the student vote are ideally informing your planning for what to serve for future taste tests.

Incentives for Providing Feedback

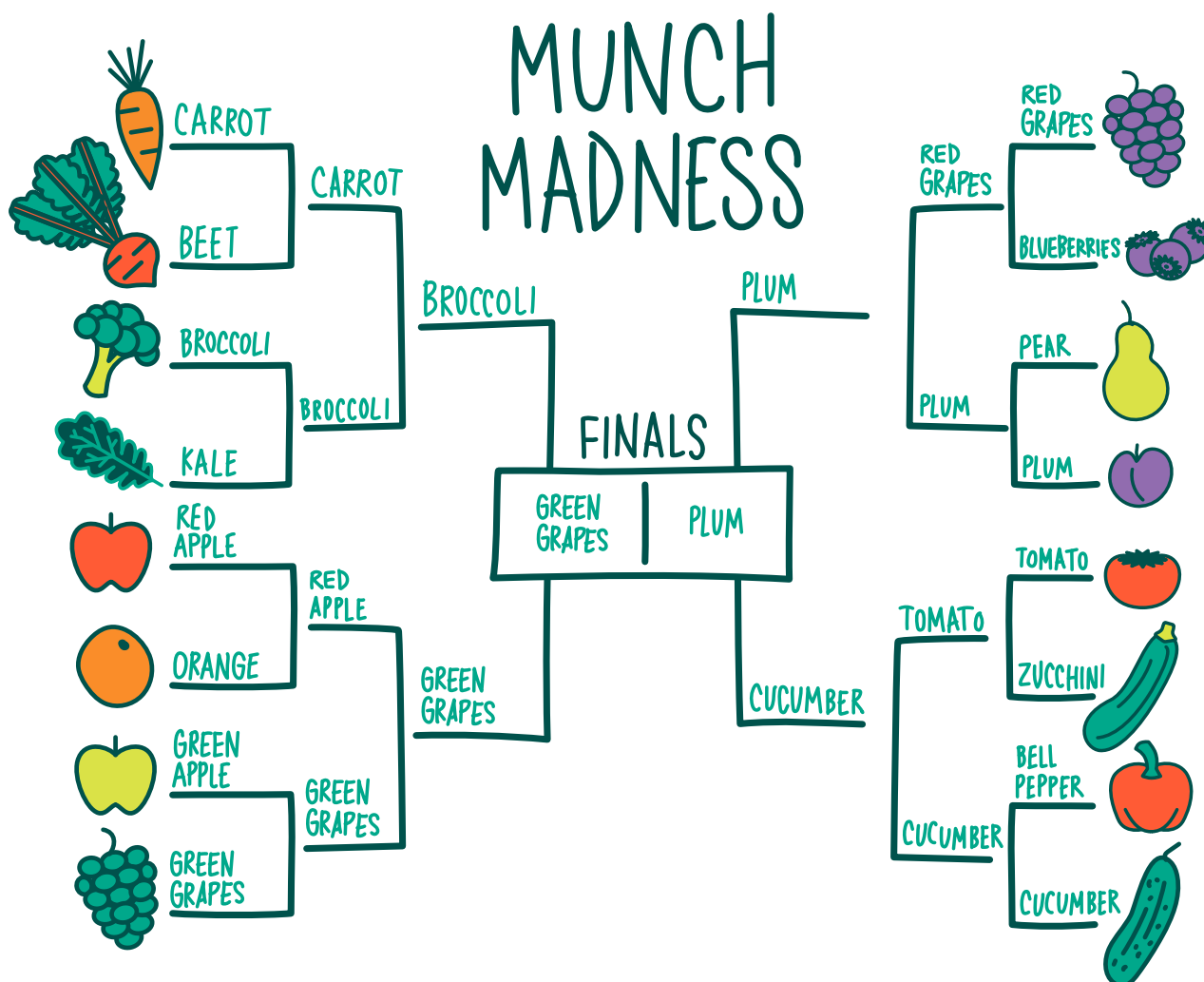
Ideally, we're building intrinsic motivation for students to try taste tests (i.e., students want to try new things because it feels good and is part of their value system). The Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) model, used in many US schools, believes that rewarding positive and desired behaviors with verbal praise and other incentives can help build intrinsic motivation. "I Tried It" stickers or a stamp on their hand can serve as an incentive, and high fives and verbal praise for trying and being adventurous can go a long way.

We also believe that getting to vote and state a preference can be the incentive in and of itself, especially when it's fun! Students will appreciate giving their input in novel ways such as in a homemade voting booth, the bean drop, or getting to use a stamp. Many students at our partner sites report that apart from trying something new, their favorite aspect of a taste test is getting to vote, so don't underestimate the incentivizing value of seriously asking for their preferences.



Incentives

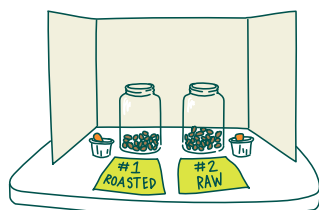
- **Verbal praise**
- **Stamps and stickers**
- **Voting in novel ways (see Ways to Vote below)**
- **Guessing a mystery flavor**—Consider pumping up students before a taste test by telling them there will be a mystery or secret ingredient that they'll have to guess.
- **Blind tasting**—Again, an element of intrigue can entice students to participate. Perhaps you ask students to close their eyes while you hand them red grapes versus green, first asking them which they prefer and then having them guess which was which.
- **Stamp book**—Students get a stamp book and receive a stamp in their book for each taste test they participate in.
- **Change on the line**—Getting to see one of their favorite taste test products or dishes served at lunch is a powerful incentive to participate.
- **Munch Madness**—Throughout the school year, various products and dishes are pit against each other until there's the ultimate winner!



Credit: Erin Wenk, Crim Fitness Foundation, Eisenhower Elementary (Flint, MI)

Ways to Vote

Ways for students to vote include the following: bean drop; a thumb "thermometer"; voting ballots; dot voting, stamping, or tally chart; voting stickers and buckets (in which students drop the backing of their stickers to vote); and digital voting on a tablet using a Google Form.

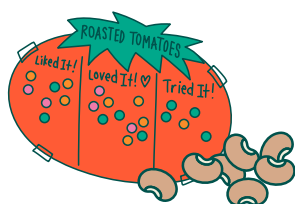


Bean drop

THUMB THERMOMETER



A thumb "thermometer"



**Dot voting, stamping,
or tally chart**

TASTE TEST		
Product:	_____	
Date:	_____	
Grade:	_____	
(circle one)		
Loved It!	Liked It!	Tried It!
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Voting ballots

The great sticker debate!



Dot voting and "tally charts" are currently the most popular method that FoodCorps members are using for taste test voting. Using stickers promotes student responsibility in the voting process. Some members also offer a "tried it" sticker as a reward to students. That said, members have also reported that sometimes school staff have concerns about giving students stickers. Some considerations:

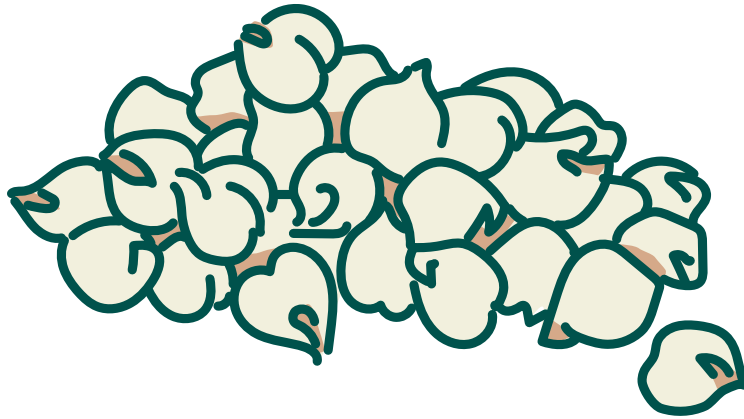
Sticker pros

- Engaging for all students
- Easy voting method for younger students
- Quick visual results
- Promotes voting autonomy and independence

Sticker cons

- Concerns from staff about stickers ending up in the wrong place
- Possible cleanup for misplaced stickers
- Increased student management necessary to prevent rogue stickers!

Bean Drop Voting



Materials

- Tasting table or cart
- Large bean seeds (such as fava beans) or other small voting object
- Large mason jars or other clear container
- Construction paper
- Painter's tape or sticky labels (to label jars)
- Permanent marker

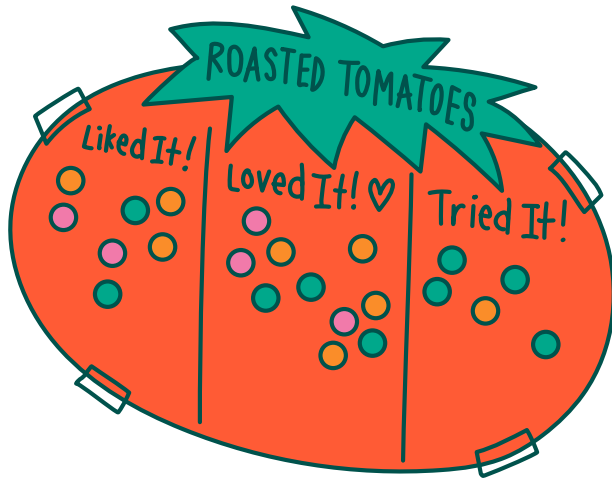
Setup

- Write the name of each tasting in big bold letters on its own piece of construction paper that can serve as a place mat for each tasting.
- Create a label for each jar with the name of the tasting.
- Set up the table, placing each tasting on top of the labeled paper directly in front of a corresponding jar.
- Optional: Create opaque sleeves for each jar out of construction paper to hide the contents if you're concerned students will be influenced by seeing what others have voted for.

Process

1. Hand a bean (or other voting object) to each student once they're at the table.
2. Instruct students to put a bean in the jar of their favorite tasting.
3. Once all students have voted, count the beans!

Dot Voting & Tally Charts



GROW · GLOW · GO · Quesadillas		
Tried It 😊	Liked It 😊	Loved It 😊
Jayden	Jessenia	Isiah Delshon
Deron	Marion	Arianna
Emily	Jeffrey	Frank ReMy
	Ryan	Taylor Dawn
		Annie Charles
		Jordan

Credit: Emily Chau, AtlantiCare Healthy Schools,
Texas Avenue School (Atlantic City, NJ)

Materials

- Poster board or chart paper
- Tasting table or cart
- Dot stickers, colorful markers, or rubber stamp and stamp pads
- Painter's tape (for affixing poster to wall)



Setup

- Create columns on your chart paper. If you're doing a Tasty Challenge with multiple dishes, write the name of each dish as the column header. If you're sampling one dish, you can use Liked it, Loved it, Tried it, or thumbs up or down.
- Display sample(s) on the table (if you're doing a Tasty Challenge, you'll need students to clearly differentiate between the items).

Process

1. Give a sticker to each student who tries the tasting.
2. Instruct students to place their sticker, draw a star, or stamp under one column to show their vote.

Voting Ballots

<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>	<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>	<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>
<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>	<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>	<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>

Paper

You can hand out paper slips as ballots for each student, and have them submit them to a voting box on their way out of the cafeteria, for example.

Digital

If you teach at a “1-to-1 school” (i.e., a school where all students are provided with their own technology) or have access to technology, you might consider setting up a Google survey on a tablet to get feedback from students.

Collecting Input and Sharing Results: How to Raise Student Voice

Aside from encouraging students to try new things through a taste test, it is important to share the feedback that students have offered from the process. This is a key opportunity to highlight that students are sharing their opinions and have a voice about their food preferences! This is also the moment for you to reflect on the results, share the results schoolwide, and consider how you might make adaptations to future taste tests.

If the majority of students didn't like a recipe, consider why. Remember that most students may need to try new things several times before they like it. You may also find that even if students report that they "liked" something during a taste test, that doesn't guarantee they will like it if it is served on the lunch menu. And recipes that were taste tested may need to be tried more than once before they are standardized and incorporated into the lunch menu. Have patience, and remember that taste testing is an important method to engage students, school staff, and the broader community in trying nourishing food items. This small step will have large results over time.

To inform about

- what is being planted in the school garden
- what is being served in the cafeteria
- upcoming taste-test recipes
- the Harvest-of-the-Month program
- what is served in the salad bar



Taste test results are shared schoolwide to

- get students excited about the idea of trying new foods
- inform school-food vendors about student preferences
- inform the district nutrition office about local food, recipes, and student enthusiasm
- promote traditional foods among staff and students

Also consider opportunities to gain feedback from students about the taste test, beyond the votes on the food. Consider asking for feedback via a schoolwide suggestion box or digital survey that teachers and students can complete. Invite casual discussions with students when in the cafeteria or hallways after a tasting when the experience is fresh. When asked, students have countless brilliant ideas of what they'd like to try. For example, during a discussion after a taste test, one student said, "Can we try cabbage? I haven't had it. My mom doesn't like it so she just doesn't buy it." And another chimed in, "I've never tried eggplant!"



Tasty Challenge

The **Tasty Challenge** is a taste test where all students in the school get an opportunity to taste a food prepared two different ways (e.g., roasted carrots and raw carrots) and then vote on their favorite. This approach has several benefits:

- **It gives students the opportunity to experience multiple tastings at once.** Providing tastings of fruits and vegetables can increase preferences and consumption, and through the Tasty Challenge students can try double the tastings they otherwise would in a classic taste test.
- **It demonstrates for students that the same food can taste different depending on how it's prepared and that their preferences for different preparations may vary.** It can be easy for a student to say they don't like kale if it's prepared one way that's not to their preference. By giving students the opportunity to try a product prepared multiple ways, they can learn how a food will taste different depending on how it's prepared—and that it's okay to like a food prepared one way more than another!
- **It draws on behavioral science research, which finds that by expressing a preference for one item over another ("I like this one best!")—rather than just stating whether they liked one item—people are more apt to enjoy that item overall.** In other words, by saying, "I like this one best," students will cognitively reinforce that they actually like that product.
- **All students in the school get the tasting opportunity—and the chance to vote for their favorite.** Giving all students the opportunity to provide feedback communicates to them that you care about their input and preferences.
- **It's really fun and engaging!**

Why you should try a food prepared two or more ways, according to students:

- ◇ "When someone says, 'Oh I don't like carrots,' but then they try the roasted carrots and then they're like 'Ahh I like that.'"
- ◇ "Because our taste buds change every ten days!"
- ◇ "So she [the cafeteria manager] knows what to give us more of!"
- ◇ "It's just good to have choices."



Is the Tasty Challenge Right for Me?

This worksheet is to be used in conversation with the Nutrition Services manager when planning for a specific taste test. Refer to the Taste Test Timeline (p. 10) and Materials Checklist (p. 56) to help you plan and stay organized. Use this in tandem with Discussion Points for Meeting With Nutrition Services Manager (p. 20).

- ☐ I've got regular taste tests down and feel confident about coordinating two different preparations.
- ☐ I have support from my principal for helping get the word out through morning announcements and other channels.
- ☐ I have support from nutrition services for ordering food and use of space.
- ☐ I'm able to enlist help from at least one, ideally two, volunteers the day of the tasty challenge!
- ☐ My students' lunch periods are at least a half hour, or I'm able to extend the period to ensure all students vote.

Why the Tasty Challenge?

FoodCorps Members reported the following:

- If kids already know what regular taste tests are like, the Tasty Challenge gives kids a new spin on a food that they've already had.
- The Tasty Challenge helps kids feel involved, and it makes them feel like their vote really counts.
- Students are highly engaged during Tasty Challenge taste tests. They also talk about and request the Tasty Challenge taste test items on the menu more frequently and for longer durations after the taste test happened. The Tasty Challenge design works well because kids can't say they dislike one or the other, but rather they have to say, "I liked this one a little more."
- You can stress to students, "It's not that you don't like the vegetable, but rather you don't like this particular prep style."
- Two styles work better if a kid has dietary restrictions because hopefully they can at least try one version.



How to Plan and Prepare

Preparing for a Tasty Challenge will take some extra planning and organization, but the increased exposure to tastes and textures is well worth the effort! See p. 22 for tips on planning and preparing for a taste test, which apply to the Tasty Challenge. In addition, you will want to consider the following:

Tips

- **Be strategic:** If Tasty Challenges are going to be your go-to way of taste testing, awesome, but if you'll mostly be doing classic taste tests, consider when a Tasty Challenge would be most influential. Perhaps this is a culminating event at the end of the semester or before a big holiday. Whatever you decide, make sure it's intentional—once students participate in a tasty challenge, they'll be asking when the next one is!
- **Let the cafeteria menu guide you:** Review the lunch calendar, and select products based on the menu or recipes cafeteria staff already have. This will also help you coordinate with cafeteria staff and proactively pick dates that minimize your interruption of their normal flow (i.e., picking a date when the kitchen ovens aren't being used).
- **Balance preparations:** Consider your overall preparatory load. If you're excited about one labor intensive recipe (e.g., one that requires you to shuck a bunch of corn), balance your other selection(s) with minimal preparation.
- **Be flexible. Consider substitutions:** If using the school nutrition department's ordering sheet to obtain ingredients, you might have a hard time finding certain items. Consider how you might substitute certain ingredients (e.g., yogurt for sour cream, onions for shallots, one vinegar for another or lemon juice, cilantro for parsley, or oregano for rosemary). Of course, you should do this with caution, considering the impact of the swap and tasting along the way.
- **Get the word out:** Hang signs several days before, and make announcements the day before and the day of, inviting students to take the Tasty Challenge!
- **Stay organized:** Use the Taste Test Timeline and Materials Checklists on pp. 44–45 to facilitate planning.
- **Don't go it alone:** To pull off a Tasty Challenge, you'll need support. Make sure you've recruited one or two volunteers to help on the day of.
- **Create sample sets:** When portioning servings, collate your different samples on a large tray, so they're easy to grab and give to a student.



Ideas for What to Serve

The Tasty Challenge is an exciting way to increase students' knowledge of and taste for different fruits and vegetables, but it does require a fair amount of preparation and planning. A main concept of the tasty challenge is trying products prepared in different ways, but what it comes down to is exposing students to fruits and vegetables they've perhaps previously been hesitant to try.

Below are some ideas to simplify the process:

- **Sample different varieties of one product:**

Your Tasty Challenge could be as simple as washing and slicing different varieties of apples, tomatoes, or peppers.

- **Sauce or seasoning as variable:** The product has the same preparation, but you're testing different complementary flavors. For example, sweet potato wedges with cinnamon versus chili powder. This is a great one to do in coordination with the cafeteria manager, if they're testing out new dressings for the salad bar, for example.

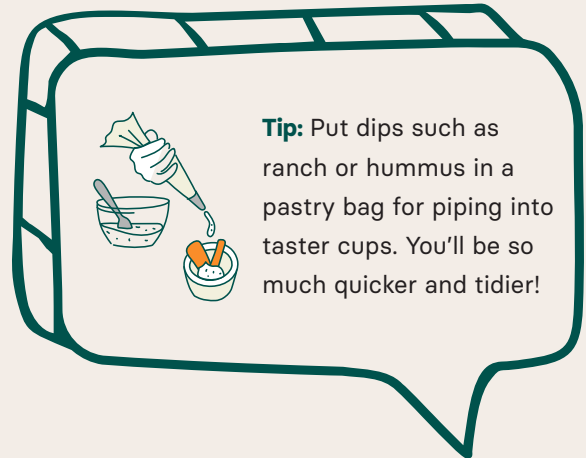
- **Veggie vs. veggie:** What if you already know there's a dip or dressing that students go crazy for? Expose them to new fruits or veggies by sampling different products with the same topping. For example, carrots versus cucumber both served with homemade ranch dip.

- **Raw vs. roasted:** The tasty challenge can be an opportunity for students to see how much flavors can change when cooking fruits and veggies! Try sliced apples versus applesauce; raw bell pepper versus roasted.

- **Don't forget soup!** With a few elements in place (crock pot, electrical outlet, extension cord), soups are a great component to a Tasty Challenge because they can be made and refrigerated a couple days ahead if need be, freeing up time for other preparations the day of. Set up your crock pot on your tasting table to keep the soup warm and serve from there.

- **No heat? Salad vs. dip:** If a heating source

presents a hurdle for you, try focusing on texture and flavor for your Tasty Challenge. For example, broccoli salad versus raw broccoli with hummus.



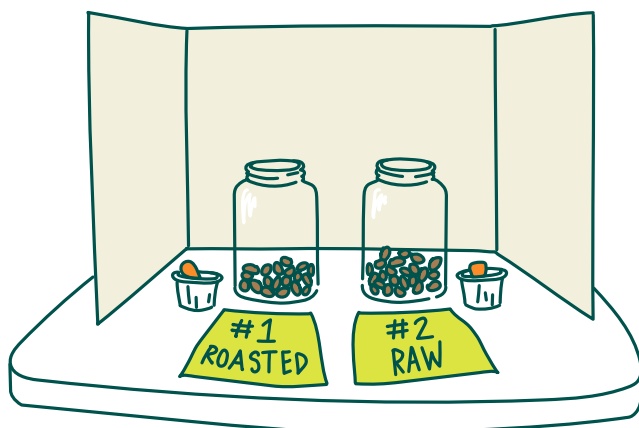
- **Paired with something "on the line":** This takes coordination and communication with your cafeteria manager, but you might try aligning your Tasty Challenge with the cafeteria menu. For example, if you know they'll serve steamed cauliflower one day, you might make a marinated cauliflower salad to taste test, directing students to take the cauliflower off the line if they'd like to participate in the Tasty Challenge. Of course, your cafeteria manager will have to see if this is feasible because you'll be encouraging more students than might typically take the dish. You'll also have to factor in how to include and account for students who've brought food from home but would like to participate in the taste test.



Voting

See pp. 38–44 for how to set up voting. With a Tasty Challenge, be sure to . . .

- **Play up the contest element.** Unlike a classic taste test in which students will be voting for whether they like something, students in a Tasty Challenge are voting between two preparations! The stakes are higher; which dish will reign supreme?
- **Label each option clearly and simply, using multiple modalities**—set out a sample of the taster directly on the table so students have a visual cue for what they’re voting for. If using descriptors, keep it short and simple such as Salad, Raw, Cooked, and say these aloud as well as having them written.
- **Be prepared for students to say they can’t decide**—they like them all! Voting has to move efficiently, so you’ll have to insist they choose one!



TASTY CHALLENGE! Circle your favorite: #1 _____ VS. #2 _____ Comments: _____ _____ _____	TASTY CHALLENGE! Circle your favorite: #1 _____ VS. #2 _____ Comments: _____ _____ _____	TASTY CHALLENGE! Circle your favorite: #1 _____ VS. #2 _____ Comments: _____ _____ _____
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For Nutrition Services Staff: How to Support a Tasty Challenge

A FoodCorps Tasty Challenge is a highly engaging taste test in which a fruit or vegetable is prepared in two different ways to have students vote for which is their favorite. The goal is to reach every student—which we know can be a tall order. The idea is to have students choose between two preparations of a food they're perhaps hesitant to try because by expressing a preference for one, they're more likely to enjoy that food overall. Instead of saying, "I don't like carrots," they can say, "I prefer roasted carrots over the raw carrots and dip."

The Tasty Challenge could be mashed potatoes versus potato salad or even steamed corn served on the line, versus a new recipe such as a corn salad—or really any idea for celebrating delicious fruits and vegetables that you have in mind! The following are just some examples of the ways to have a Tasty Challenge and some of the recipes included in the FoodCorps Taste Test Guide (see pp. 58–107).

Sample Tasty Challenge pairings

Style	Preparation 1	Preparation 2
Raw vs. roasted	Grated Carrot Salad	Roasted Carrots
Testing varieties of one product	Granny Smith apple slices	Honeycrisp apple slices
Veggie vs. veggie	Roasted Potato Wedges	Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges
Texture variation	Broccoli Salad	Raw broccoli (with hummus)
Testing a dip, sauce, or seasoning	Red Pepper Bean Dip	Sweet Potato Hummus
Testing a soup	Puréed Carrot and Ginger Soup	Shredded Carrot Salad

FoodCorps members, who have run a Tasty Challenge, report the following:

- If kids already know what regular taste tests are like, the Tasty Challenge gives kids a new spin on a food they've already had.
- The Tasty Challenge helps kids feel more involved, and it makes them feel like their vote really counts.
- They also talk about and request the Tasty Challenge taste test items on the menu more frequently and for longer durations after the taste test happened.



The following are ways your FoodCorps member will need your expertise, insight, and support:

Ideas and troubleshooting

Your knowledge of the cafeteria menu and students' food preferences and eating habits will be invaluable. *Consider . . .*

- any recipes/food items you've been wanting to try out and any alternate preparation to pair it with;
- that the FoodCorps member can prepare an item to be paired with something "on the line" that's already a menu regular; and
- any initial concerns, challenges, or barriers you anticipate.

Scheduling

The dates for preparing and running the Tasty Challenge need to work for you. *Consider . . .*

- good weeks of the school year or days of the week to run a Tasty Challenge (considering your normal prep load), and
- how often during the school year you can see successfully pulling off this kind of taste test.

Ordering

With the FoodCorps members' limited budget and resources, anything that can be ordered through Nutrition Services will be crucial in helping the Tasty Challenge get off the ground. *Consider . . .*

- easily available pantry items for taste tests, and
- anything you know is difficult to procure and should be avoided during a taste test.

Supplies and space

The FoodCorps member will need space and equipment to prepare, store, and refrigerate items. *Consider . . .*

- protocols for sanitizing and cleanup that the FoodCorps member should be aware of; and
- that the FoodCorps member might need tasting cups or bowls, forks, a hairnet and gloves, and a small cart.

Day of

The FoodCorps member could use your help thinking through the flow of students on the day of. *Consider . . .*

- that they'll either need a table set up in the cafeteria or a cart to bring tastings to seated students,
- how much you or another staff member will be able to help during the Tasty Challenge, and
- how they can best move around and use the space to not interrupt lunch service.

Results

The hope is that the voting results can be put to use, ultimately informing decisions for the salad bar or cafeteria menu. *Consider . . .*

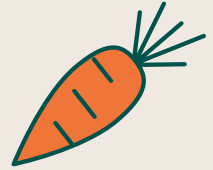
- how much flexibility you have for implementing changes, and
- how you could see using the results of the Tasty Challenge.

Thank you for all you do!
We truly wouldn't be able to do this work without you!

Recommended Resources

Recipes, local food, and procurement resources

- USDA Standardized Recipes
- USDA Recipes for Schools: Institute of Child Nutrition
- New School Cuisine Cookbook, Vermont Farm to School Network
- Garden Gastronomy, a bilingual cookbook by City Blossoms
- "The Lunch Box," recipes from the Chef Ann Foundation
- Guide to Taste Testing Local Foods In Schools, Vermont FEED
- The USDA Community Food Systems' website, "Procuring Local Foods": This is a one-stop resource shop. This website includes the USDA "Guide for Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs Finding, Buying and Serving Local Foods," an extensive procurement-focused webinar series, fact sheets, policy memos, and regulations.



FoodCorps lessons with cooking and tasting opportunities

FoodCorps lessons provide an opportunity to engage with students in the cafeteria through cooking and tasting activities. Remember to connect with cafeteria staff for approval and logistics related to leading these lessons in the cafeteria or during meal times! The following is a list of FoodCorps lessons that involve simple cooking and recipes that could be used for a taste test:

- All in for Applesauce
- From Beautiful Beans to Delicious Dip!
- Green Sauce around the World
- Rainbow Smoothie
- Root Fruit Slaw
- Salad Dressing Challenge
- Sunny Honey Seed Snacks
- What's in My Salsa?
- Whole Grain Crackers

See FoodCorps lessons listed under the themes "Making Nourishing Food Choices" and "Preparing Nourishing Food" for more ideas.

Materials Checklist

For cooking

- ☐ Sharp knife
- ☐ Paring knife
- ☐ Long-handled spoon
- ☐ Peeler
- ☐ Grater
- ☐ Tongs
- ☐ Cutting boards
- ☐ Large colander
- ☐ Salad spinner
- ☐ Multiple large mixing bowls
- ☐ Induction burner
- ☐ Extension cord

For serving

- ☐ Serving trays
- ☐ Tasting cups or boats
- ☐ Napkins
- ☐ Forks or spoons, if needed
- ☐ Gloves
- ☐ Hair ties and hairnets
- ☐ Compost bucket

For signage and tabling

- ☐ Tasting table
- ☐ Prep table
- ☐ Small garbage can/compost bucket for tasting cups
- ☐ Signs
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ 3 small signs to mark each option (1 for each taste)
- ☐ iPad with kid-friendly frame



















For cleanup

- ☐ Cleaning spray
- ☐ Rags
- ☐ Dish soap
- ☐ Sponge

Helpful to have

- ☐ Bus tubs
- ☐ Rolling cart



















Sample Taste Test Voting Sheets

<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>	<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>	<p>TASTE TEST</p> <p>Product: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Grade: _____</p> <p>(circle one)</p> <p>Loved It! Liked It! Tried It!</p> <p>  </p>
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Sample Taste Test Voting Sheets

<p>TASTY CHALLENGE!</p> <p>Circle your favorite:</p> <p>#1 _____ VS. #2 _____</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>TASTY CHALLENGE!</p> <p>Circle your favorite:</p> <p>#1 _____ VS. #2 _____</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>TASTY CHALLENGE!</p> <p>Circle your favorite:</p> <p>#1 _____ VS. #2 _____</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Sample Taste Test Voting Sheets

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Taste Test Product Handouts

The following section includes handouts designed for the following eight products: carrots, corn, broccoli, potatoes, sweet potatoes, kale, apples, and sweet peppers. These products were chosen to represent fruits and vegetables available in multiple regions, in various seasons, that could be grown in a school garden or are fairly affordable if purchased from local farmers. School food staff provided input to confirm that these products are also commonly served as a part of school lunch, increasing the likelihood that taste test results can be informed by and linked to the cafeteria menu.

Educator handouts

The main handout (Educator) is designed for you, the educator! **This includes . . .**

- **Fun facts, nutritional benefits, varieties, and the history** of the fruit or veggie that you may wish to include on an informational poster or activity you design around your taste test (such as trivia) to build anticipation.
- **Children's books** you might read with students and mini activities you might do in conjunction with a taste test. These activities would be especially appropriate to share with a class of students who might serve as Taste Test Ambassadors (see the sections Connect the Taste Test to the Classroom and Garden, Connect with Teachers, and Engage Students for more ideas).
- **FoodCorps lessons** that connect to the product. Consider aligning the teaching of these lessons with the time you're testing that particular product.
- **Three sample recipes** that you might consider for a taste test or Tasty Challenge. These are merely suggestions, so feel free to use these as a jumping off point, and adapt them to what feels most appropriate and engaging with your school.

Cafeteria and home handouts

These handouts are meant to be a bridge from the work you're doing to the cafeteria staff and students' home environments.

Share the Cafeteria handout with your cafeteria manager when you're discussing a taste test schedule and deciding what to prepare.

Share the Home handout with families by making photocopies to include on your tasting table, to put in students' home folders, to pass out at a back-to-school night or a PTO/PTA meeting, or other places where caregivers can access the information.

We referenced and adapted recipes from the following organizations' websites (which are acknowledged within the recipe):

- The Lunch Box (thelunchbox.org)
- New School Cuisine (vermontfarmtoschool.org/resources)
- The New York Times Cooking section (nytimes.com/recipe)
- Serious Eats (seriouseats.com)



CARROTS



EDUCATOR

Overview

Carrots are crunchy root vegetables that are grown as annual plants but are actually biennials (the plant goes to seed and dies in its second year). There are over 100 varieties, ranging in shape and color.

History

The carrot originated in the Middle East and Central Asia, particularly in Afghanistan, where the first carrots humans grew were dark purple! There is a theory that we wouldn't have orange carrots if it weren't for the Dutch. William of Orange led the fight for Dutch independence, and it is rumored that up until this time there had only been yellow and white carrots, but Dutch people started cultivating orange carrots to honor their hero.

Fun facts

- Baby carrots aren't a variety of carrot but instead an invention created by a California farmer. Not wanting to waste the imperfect carrots that wouldn't sell, he peeled and whittled them down into smaller pieces to make them more appealing. And the trend caught on!

- If you grow carrots over the summer, you can keep them in place over a cold winter and make good use of the ground as your outdoor freezer! With a little mulch as insulation, carrots will remain good to harvest throughout the winter into spring.

Benefits

Carrots are rich in vitamin A, biotin, vitamin K, and potassium; they have beta carotene, which is the orange or red plant pigment that gives them their color. Our bodies take beta carotene and turn it into vitamin A, an important vitamin for our eyesight!

Reading corner (for classroom lesson)

Tops and Bottoms by Janet Stevens

Too Many Carrots by Katy Hudson

The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss

Classroom connections | FoodCorps lessons

Root-View Cups

Planting a Tops and Bottoms Bed

Tops and Bottoms Popsicles

Quick, Pickle That!

Root Fruit Slaw

Seed Tape

Varieties



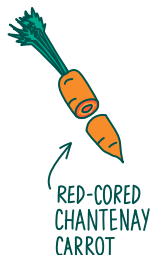
Nantes:
Cylindrical varieties rounded at the bottom, including Napa and White Satin



Danvers:
Classic tapered varieties, including Yellowstone



Ball or mini:
True baby carrots; these are round, including the variety Thumbelina!



Chantenay:
Short and broad varieties, including Red-Cored Chantenay

Imperator:
Most commonly commercially produced; higher sugar content than other types



CARROTS



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Puréed Carrot and Ginger Soup (60 servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
(or olive oil)

1–2 onions, peeled and coarsely
chopped (about 4 cups)

4 garlic cloves, minced

2 (1-inch) pieces fresh ginger,
peeled and finely minced
(about 1 ½ tablespoons)

3 pounds carrots, cut into
½ inch-thick rounds

8–10 cups water or low-sodium
vegetable stock (or combination
of both), more as needed

1 ½ teaspoons salt, more to taste

½ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

Instructions

1. Melt butter in a stockpot over medium heat. Cook onion, garlic, and ginger, stirring until translucent; about 4–6 minutes.
2. Add carrots along with just enough water or stock to cover the vegetables, reserving the rest. Season with salt and pepper, and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer.
3. Purée the soup in a blender, food processor, or food mill, working in batches to not overfill your machine.
4. Return to pot set over low heat, and add enough reserved liquid to thin the soup to your desired consistency.

Variations:

Substitute part of the liquid content with coconut milk, and add spices such as cumin, curry powder, or chili flakes. Garnish with chopped herbs, such as cilantro, or nuts, such as chopped peanuts.





CARROTS



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Roasted Carrots (50 servings, 3 carrot pieces)

Ingredients

3 pounds carrots (about 5 cups cut)
¼ cup olive oil, more as needed
1 teaspoon salt, more to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Cut carrots lengthwise into halves or quarters, depending on size, and cut into 2-inch segments. If carrots are very small, roast them whole. Toss carrots on rimmed baking sheet with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and roast at 450° until tender and golden brown, 25 to 35 minutes, flipping halfway through.

Variations:

Get creative and add spices when tossing carrots with olive oil, such as cumin, paprika, mild chili powder, or a curry blend.

Shredded Carrot Salad (50 servings, ⅓ cup)

Ingredients

2 ½ pounds carrots
(about 12 cups shredded)
½ cup + 2 tablespoons cup lemon
juice
½ teaspoon salt, more to taste
⅛ teaspoon pepper, more to taste
½ cup olive oil

Instructions

1. Grate carrots into fine shreds using a food processor or box grater.
2. Assemble the dressing by whisking lemon juice and salt and pepper and slowly whisking in olive oil.
3. Toss the carrots in the dressing just before serving so they don't become mushy. Taste and adjust seasoning, adding more lemon juice or salt, for example. Only add a little dressing at a time, so you don't overdress. The carrots should appear moist but not wet.

Variations:

Add coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley for flavor and color. Or add garlic, Dijon mustard, or honey to the dressing.



CARROTS



CAFETERIA

Overview

Carrots are crunchy root vegetables that are grown as annual plants but are actually biennials (the plant goes to seed and dies in its second year). There are over 100 varieties, ranging in shape and color.

Benefits

Carrots are rich in vitamin A, biotin, vitamin K, and potassium; they have beta carotene, which is the orange or red plant pigment that gives them their

color. Our bodies take beta carotene and turn it into vitamin A, an important vitamin for our eyesight!

Selection

Carrots should be firm. Choose carrots depending on what you'll do with them. Large carrots are great for shredding, whereas smaller carrots with their tops intact may be perfect for roasting whole.

Varieties



Nantes:
Cylindrical varieties rounded at the bottom, including Napa and White Satin



Danvers:
Classic tapered varieties, including Yellowstone



Ball or mini:
True baby carrots; these are round, including the variety Thumbelina!



Chantenay:
Short and broad varieties, including Red-Cored Chantenay

Imperator:
Most commonly commercially produced; higher sugar content than other types

Storage tips

Twist off green tops and refrigerate in an airtight plastic bag. Don't store carrots near fruits and vegetables that emit ethylene gas, such as potatoes, pears, and apples, because this will age carrots more quickly.

Cooking tips

- Save time by scrubbing carrots' outer skin under cold water rather than peeling them.
- Save carrot tops to make a pesto.

- Pickle carrots with water and vinegar in a 1:2 ratio (e.g., ½ cup water to 1 cup vinegar; a couple tablespoons sugar; and whatever spices you like, such as mustard seed).

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Add shredded carrots to a green salad or slaw for extra color and crunch!
- Add shredded carrots to muffins or quick breads.
- Raw sliced carrots make a quick and easy snack with ranch dip, peanut butter, or tahini and honey.



CARROTS



CAFETERIA
Sample Recipes

Roasted Carrots (50 servings, 3 carrot pieces)

Ingredients

3 pounds carrots
(about 5 cups cut)

¼ cup olive oil,
more as needed

1 teaspoon salt,
more to taste

¼ teaspoon pepper,
more to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Cut carrots lengthwise into halves or quarters, depending on size, and cut into 2-inch segments. If carrots are very small, roast them whole. Toss carrots on rimmed baking sheet with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and roast at 450° until tender and golden brown, 25 to 35 minutes, flipping halfway through.

Variations:

Get creative and add spices when tossing carrots with olive oil, such as cumin, paprika, mild chili powder, or a curry blend.





CARROTS



HOME

Overview

Carrots are crunchy root vegetables that are grown as annual plants but are actually biennials (the plant goes to seed and dies in its second year). There are over 100 varieties, ranging in shape and color.

Benefits

Carrots are rich in vitamin A, biotin, vitamin K, and potassium; they have beta carotene, which is the orange or red plant pigment that gives them their color. Our bodies take beta carotene and turn it into vitamin A, an important vitamin for our eyesight!

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Add shredded carrots to a green salad or slaw for extra color and crunch!
- Add shredded carrots to muffins or quick breads.
- Raw sliced carrots make a quick and easy snack with ranch dip, peanut butter, or tahini and honey!

Storage tips

Twist off green tops and refrigerate in an airtight plastic bag. Don't store carrots near fruits and vegetables that emit ethylene gas, such as potatoes, pears, and apples because this will age carrots more quickly.

Cooking tips

- Save time by scrubbing carrots' outer skin under cold water rather than peeling them.
- Save carrot tops to make a pesto.
- Pickle carrots with water and vinegar in a 1:2 ratio (for example, ½ cup water to 1 cup vinegar, a couple tablespoons sugar, and whatever spices you like, such as mustard seed).





CARROTS



Home
Recipe for Home

Puréed Carrot and Ginger Soup (Serves 4–6)

Ingredients

1 tablespoon unsalted butter or olive oil

1 onion, peeled and coarsely chopped

1–2 garlic cloves, minced

1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely minced

1 ½ pounds carrots, cut into ½ inch thick rounds

3–4 cups water or low-sodium vegetable stock (or combination of both), more as needed

¾ teaspoon salt, more to taste

¼ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

Instructions

1. Melt butter in a stockpot over medium heat. Cook onion, garlic, and ginger, stirring until translucent; about 4–6 minutes.
2. Add carrots along with just enough water or stock to cover the vegetables, reserving the rest. Season with salt and pepper, and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer until carrots are tender, about 20 minutes.
3. Purée the soup in a blender, food processor, or food mill, working in batches to not overfill machine.
4. Return to the pot set over low heat, and add enough reserved liquid to thin the soup to your desired consistency. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Variations:

Substitute part of the liquid content with coconut milk, and add spices such as cumin, curry powder, or chili flakes. Garnish with chopped herbs, such as cilantro, or nuts, such as chopped peanuts.

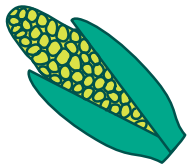
Sharing home recipes

How do you prepare or eat carrots at home?

What are some family recipes that include carrots?

Are there recipes you can share with your FoodCorps member for future taste tests?





CORN



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Overview

Corn is a versatile vegetable. It can be eaten cooked, on the cob, or shelled. As a grain, it can also be processed to make flour for tortillas and breads.

History

Corn was first cultivated in Mexico. The Mayan Aztec and Inca cultures of Central America celebrate corn throughout their mythologies. Corn, or maize, is the only native American cereal grain and was a staple food for many communities throughout North and Central America. Long ago in Europe, the word "corn" was used for any main staple crop, so it could have referred to wheat or oats. When the native people in America introduced the European to maize, they called it corn.

Fun facts

- A corn stalk can grow to over ten feet tall!
- The US produces the largest amount of corn.
- Corn isn't just in our food! Corn is turned into many things from a plastic cup to fuel for a car.
- Archaeologists have found evidence of humans eating popcorn as far back as 5,000 years ago!

Benefits

Corn is a source of carbohydrates and fiber. Look for the deepest yellow corn for the highest nutritional value! The yellow pigment in corn has beta-carotene, which our bodies turn into vitamin A during digestion. In fact, yellow corn is the only cereal grain that has vitamin A.

Reading corner (for classroom lesson)

Corn by Gail Gibbons

The Popcorn Book by Tomie dePaola

The Life and Times of Corn by Charles Micucci

Classroom connections | FoodCorps lessons

Planting the Three Sisters

Tortilla Time

Choose-Your-Own-Flavor Popcorn

Classroom connections | Mini activities

- Shucking corn
- Making popcorn
- Braiding corn husks
- Making tortillas

Varieties



DENT
CORN

Dent or field:

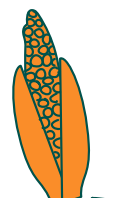
Fed to livestock and turned into commercial products; some varieties of dent corn are also used for foods such as masa dough for tortillas and hominy



FLINT
CORN

Flour:

Has a soft kernel, making it easy to grind into flour used for making breads



POPCORN

Popcorn:

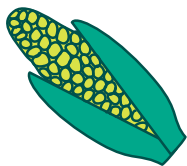
A special type of corn that pops when exposed to heat; includes varieties such as Heirloom Strawberry and Tom Thumb



SWEET
CORN

Sweet:

The fresh corn we eat on the cob; includes varieties such as Mountain Pima and Hopi Sweet



CORN



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Steamed Corn (55 servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

4 pounds frozen corn kernels
1 cup water

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. In a hotel pan or rimmed baking dish, add 1 cup water to frozen corn, and cover pan with foil. Heat in oven for approximately 15–20 minutes, stirring halfway through.

Variations: Add salt to taste. Slice a stick of butter and mix with corn while still hot for richer flavor. Add in finely chopped basil, cilantro, or rosemary for more flavor. Add in other vegetables for color such as red bell pepper or cherry tomatoes.

No-Cream Creamed Corn (60 servings, 2 tablespoons) **Adapted from NYT Cooking**

Ingredients

20 ears of fresh sweet corn, husked
10 tablespoons butter
¾ cup minced shallot or red onion
3 teaspoons salt, more to taste

1. Grate corn using large holes on a box grater set over a large bowl.
2. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add red onion or shallots to pan and cook, stirring occasionally for 5–8 minutes, until soft and translucent.
3. Add grated corn and juices and salt. Cook, stirring until mixture is creamy, about 5–10 minutes.

Variations: Immediately after removing from heat, add finely chopped fresh herbs such as sage, tarragon, chives, thyme, or basil.

Esquites (Mexican Corn Salad) (60 servings, ¼ cup) **Adapted from Serious Eats**

Ingredients

¼ cup canola or avocado oil, more if needed
5 pounds corn kernels
2 cups crumbled Cotija or feta cheese
1 ½ cup crema
(or half sour cream and half mayonnaise)
2 bunches cilantro, chopped
1 cup lime juice (about 4 large limes)
3 teaspoons smoked paprika
2 teaspoons cumin
2 teaspoons chili powder
1 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon salt, more to taste

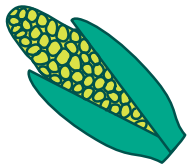
1. Heat a drizzle of oil in a large skillet on medium high. Once oil is hot, place about a quarter of corn in a skillet, working in batches to not overcrowd the skillet. Stir occasionally until corn starts to char, about 5 minutes, and then remove from heat and place in a large bowl. Repeat until all corn is charred.
2. Add remaining ingredients to the bowl, folding them in until they're well incorporated.
3. Keep refrigerated until serving.

Notes:

If you're using frozen corn kernels, you don't need to defrost before charring in the skillet.

Variations:

Add a large red onion diced for more color and flavor if desired.



CORN



CAFETERIA

Overview

Corn is a versatile vegetable. It can be eaten cooked, on the cob, or shelled. As a grain, it can also be processed to make flour for tortillas and breads.

Benefits

Corn is a source of carbohydrates and fiber. Look for the deepest yellow corn for the highest nutritional value! The yellow pigment in corn has beta-carotene,

which our bodies turn into vitamin A during digestion. In fact, yellow corn is the only cereal grain that has vitamin A.

Selection

Corn kernels should be full and juicy—test this by pressing on a kernel with your fingernail. A milky juice should squirt out. Shriveled kernels are an indication that the corn isn't fresh.

Varieties



Dent or field:

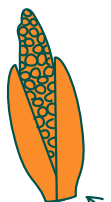
Fed to livestock and turned into commercial products; some varieties of dent corn are also used for foods such as masa dough for tortillas and hominy



FLINT CORN

Flour:

Has a soft kernel, making it easy to grind into flour used for making breads



POPCORN

Popcorn:

A special type of corn that pops when exposed to heat; includes varieties such as Heirloom Strawberry and Tom Thumb



SWEET CORN

Sweet:

The fresh corn we eat on the cob; includes varieties such as Mountain Pima and Hopi Sweet

Storage tips

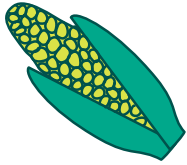
Fresh sweet corn on the cob should be eaten as soon as possible because the longer it's stored, the quicker it loses its sweetness. Store corn still in its husk in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. But it also freezes well after blanching ears for 7–11 minutes, depending on size.

Cooking tips

- Corn on the cob can be boiled, steamed, or heated in the oven with or without its husk.
- When boiling corn on the cob, refrain from adding salt because this hardens the kernels.

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Make cornbread, adding fresh kernels in addition to the cornmeal.
- Add fresh kernels to soups, stews, salsas, succotash, and salads.



CORN



CAFETERIA
Sample Recipes

Esquites (Mexican Corn Salad) (60 servings, ¼ cup)

Adapted from Serious Eats

Ingredients

¼ cup canola or avocado oil,
more if needed

5 pounds corn kernels

2 cups crumbled Cotija
or feta cheese

1 ⅓ cup crema
(or half sour cream
and half mayonnaise)

2 bunches cilantro,
chopped

1 cup lime juice
(about 4 large limes)

3 teaspoons smoked
paprika

2 teaspoons cumin

2 teaspoons chili powder

1 teaspoon pepper

1 teaspoon salt,
more to taste

Instructions

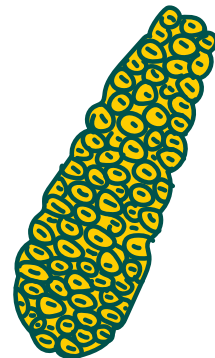
1. Heat a drizzle of oil in a large skillet on medium high. Once oil is hot, place about a quarter of corn in a skillet, working in batches to not overcrowd the skillet. Stir occasionally until corn starts to char, about 5 minutes, and then remove from heat and place in a large bowl. Repeat until all corn is charred.
2. Add remaining ingredients to the bowl, folding them in until they're well incorporated.
3. Keep refrigerated until serving.

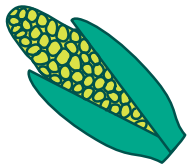
Notes:

If you're using frozen corn kernels, you don't need to defrost before charring in the skillet.

Variations:

Add a large red onion diced for more color and flavor if desired.





CORN



HOME

Overview

Corn is a versatile vegetable. It can be eaten cooked, on the cob, or shelled. As a grain, it can also be processed to make flour for tortillas and breads.

Benefits

Corn is a source of carbohydrates and fiber. Look for the deepest yellow corn for the highest nutritional value! The yellow pigment in corn has beta-carotene, which our bodies turn into vitamin A during digestion. In fact, yellow corn is the only cereal grain that has vitamin A.

Selection

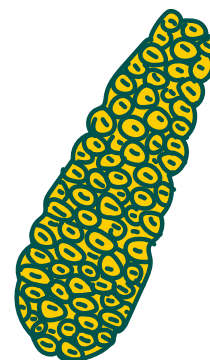
- Have kids help with shucking the corn!
- Make cornbread, adding fresh kernels in addition to the cornmeal.
- Add fresh kernels to soups, stews, salsas, succotash, and salads.
- Popcorn on the stove top or in an air popper is a great snack alternative.

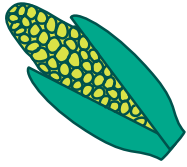
Storage tips

Fresh sweet corn on the cob should be eaten as soon as possible because the longer it's stored, the quicker it loses its sweetness. Store corn still in its husk in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. But it also freezes well after blanching ears for 7–11 minutes, depending on size.

Cooking tips

- Corn on the cob can be boiled, steamed, or heated in the oven with or without its husk.
- When boiling corn on the cob, refrain from adding salt because this hardens the kernels.





CORN



Home
Recipe for Home

No-Cream Creamed Corn (4–6 servings) **Adapted from NYT Cooking**

Ingredients

4 large ears fresh
sweet corn, husked
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons minced
shallot or red onion
½ teaspoons salt,
more to taste

Instructions

1. Grate corn using large holes on a box grater set over a large bowl.
2. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add red onion or shallots to pan and cook, stirring occasionally for 5–8 minutes, until soft and translucent.
3. Add grated corn and juices and salt. Cook, stirring until mixture is creamy, about 5–10 minutes.

Variations:

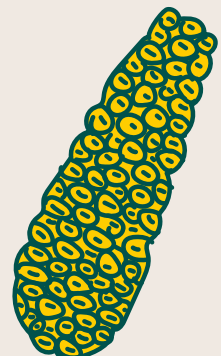
Immediately after removing from heat, add finely chopped fresh herbs such as sage, tarragon, chives, thyme, or basil.

Sharing home recipes

How do you prepare or eat corn at home?

What are some family recipes that include corn?

Are there recipes you can share with your FoodCorps member for future taste tests?





BROCCOLI



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Overview

Broccoli is part of the Brassica plant family that includes cauliflower, kale, cabbage, collards, and turnips!

History

Broccoli hails from Southern Italy and is believed to be cultivated from cabbage by the Romans.

Fun facts

- The word “broccoli” comes from the Latin word *bracchium*, meaning branch or arm—just what they look like!
- Broccoli is the bud part of the plant. If left to mature, it flowers!

Benefits

Broccoli has nearly as much calcium as milk and other dairy products. It also provides a lot of vitamin C.

Reading corner (for classroom lesson)

Monsters Don't Eat Broccoli by Barbara Jean Hicks

The Boy Who Loved Broccoli by Sarah A. Creighton

Classroom connections | FoodCorps lessons

Plant Part Wraps

Veggie Wraps

From Beautiful Beans to Delicious Dip

A Rainbow at the Salad Bar

Sauté!

Classroom connections | Mini activities

- Plant broccoli starts as part of a study of plant parts and/or plant life cycles. Let the broccoli bolt for students to see the flowers and full cycle of the plant.

Varieties



Calabrese:
The variety we imagine when we think of broccoli



Gai-lan or Chinese:
Another cousin of broccoli, gai-lan has thick stems and is mostly leafy with very small florets



Broccoli raab (Rapini):
A cousin of broccoli in the brassica family; more closely related to turnips! Leafy, with small flower clusters; presents a more bitter taste than broccoli



Romanesco:
Has a beautiful chartreuse color and mesmerizing fractal-like pattern; said to have a nutty flavor

Purple sprouting:
Produces small purple florets that grow inside shoots instead of a large unified head

Broccolini:
A Japanese cross between gai-lan and broccoli, with thin stems and small florets



BROCCOLI



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Broccoli Salad (50 servings, ¼ cup) **Adapted from New School Cuisine**

Ingredients

3 pounds Broccoli
(about 4 large heads)
2 cups mayonnaise (reduced fat)
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons honey (or sugar)
2 ¼ cup raisins
½ teaspoon salt, more to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

1. Trim broccoli and cut into small bite-sized pieces.
2. Whisk mayonnaise, vinegar, honey, and salt and pepper in a large bowl.
3. Stir in broccoli and raisins. Taste and adjust seasoning. Keep refrigerated until serving.

Variations:

Add one small red onion cut into small dice. Swap lemon juice for apple cider vinegar. Swap yogurt for mayonnaise.

Roasted Broccoli (50 Servings, 2 florets)

Ingredients

3 pounds broccoli
(about 4 large heads)
¼ cup olive oil
1 teaspoon salt, more to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Trim broccoli into roughly the same sized florets, and toss with olive oil, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Spread out evenly on a baking sheet, making sure florets are not too crowded. Roast for approximately 15–20 minutes, stirring halfway through, until edges are browned.

Variations: Get creative and add spice when tossing with olive oil, such as cumin, or mild chili powder. Or squeeze fresh lemon juice over broccoli once it's out of the oven. To make cheesy broccoli, add shredded cheddar during the last 5 minutes of cooking.

Raw Broccoli with Yogurt Ranch Dip (50 Servings, 1 floret with 2 tbsp dip)

Adapted from Lisa Feldman in NYT Cooking

Ingredients

2 pounds broccoli (about 3 large heads)
"Ranch" Dip
12 cloves garlic
6 cups white beans (cooked or canned,
about 4 [15-ounce] cans)
6 cups Greek or regular yogurt
1 cup olive oil
½–1 cup lemon juice, to taste
2 teaspoons salt, more to taste
½ teaspoon pepper, more to taste
¼ cup chives, minced

1. Break up broccoli into small florets.
2. Assemble the dip using a food processor or blender. Add garlic until minced, then add beans and yogurt.
3. While the machine is running, add lemon juice, salt, and olive oil in a thin stream until smooth. Stir in chives by hand.
4. Serve one small floret with 1 ounce or about 2 tablespoons of dip.

Variations:

Add ¼ cup minced tarragon and dill in addition.



BROCCOLI



CAFETERIA

Overview

Broccoli is part of the Brassica plant family that includes cauliflower, kale, cabbage, collards, and turnips!

Benefits

Broccoli has nearly as much calcium as milk and other dairy products. It also provides a lot of vitamin C.

Selection

Broccoli should be firm and a deep green color with tightly packed buds. Avoid broccoli with wilting or yellowing leaves or buds.

Varieties



Calabrese:
The variety we imagine when we think of broccoli



Gai-lan or Chinese:
Another cousin of broccoli, gai-lan has thick stems and is mostly leafy with very small florets



Broccoli raab (Rapini):
A cousin of broccoli in the brassica family; more closely related to turnips! Leafy, with small flower clusters; presents a more bitter taste than broccoli



Romanesco:
Has a beautiful chartreuse color and mesmerizing fractal-like pattern; said to have a nutty flavor

Purple sprouting:
Produces small purple florets that grow inside shoots instead of a large unified head

Broccolini:
A Japanese cross between gai-lan and broccoli, with thin stems and small florets

Storage tips

Store broccoli in the refrigerator for up to five days. Blanched and frozen broccoli will keep up to a year.

Cooking tips

- Broccoli can be boiled, steamed, sautéed, or roasted.
- The stems take longer to cook than the florets, so they can be cooked separately or cut into smaller pieces.

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Add to pasta dishes such as mac and cheese or pasta salad.
- Serve raw with a dip such as hummus or ranch as a nourishing snack.
- Bake into egg dishes such as quiche or frittata.
- Bake broccoli with cheese!
- The core of the broccoli can be cooked down and added into a pesto sauce.



BROCCOLI



CAFETERIA
Sample Recipes

Broccoli Salad (50 servings, ¼ cup) **Adapted from New School Cuisine**

Ingredients

3 pounds Broccoli
(about 4 large heads)

2 cups mayonnaise
(reduced fat)

¼ cup apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons honey
(or sugar)

2 ¼ cup raisins

½ teaspoon salt,
more to taste

¼ teaspoon pepper,
more to taste

Instructions

1. Trim broccoli and cut into small bite-sized pieces.
2. Whisk mayonnaise, vinegar, honey, and salt and pepper in a large bowl.
3. Stir in broccoli and raisins. Taste and adjust seasoning.
Keep refrigerated until serving.

Variations:

Add one small red onion cut into small dice. Swap lemon juice for apple cider vinegar. Swap yogurt for mayonnaise.





BROCCOLI



HOME

Overview

Broccoli is part of the Brassica plant family that includes cauliflower, kale, cabbage, collards, and turnips!

Benefits

Broccoli has nearly as much calcium as milk and other dairy products. It also provides a lot of vitamin C.

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Add to pasta dishes such as mac and cheese or pasta salad.
- Serve raw with a dip such as hummus or ranch as a nourishing snack.
- Bake into egg dishes such as quiche or frittata.
- Bake broccoli with cheese!
- The core of the broccoli can be cooked down and added into a pesto sauce.

Storage tips

Store broccoli in the refrigerator for up to five days. Blanched and frozen broccoli will keep up to a year.

Cooking tips

- Broccoli can be boiled, steamed, stir-fried, or roasted.
- The stems take longer to cook than the florets, so they can be cooked separately or cut into smaller pieces.





BROCCOLI



Home
Recipe for Home

Roasted Broccoli (4–6 servings)

Ingredients

2 pounds broccoli
1/8 cup olive oil
1/2 teaspoon salt,
more to taste
1/8 teaspoon pepper,
more to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Trim broccoli into roughly the same sized florets, and toss with olive oil, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Spread out evenly on a baking sheet, making sure florets are not too crowded. Roast for approximately 15–20 minutes until edges are browned.

Variations:

Get creative and add spices when tossing with olive oil, such as cumin or mild chili powder. Or squeeze fresh lemon juice over broccoli once it's out of the oven. To make cheesy broccoli, add shredded cheddar during the last five minutes of cooking.

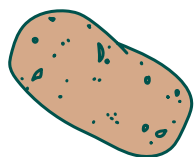
Sharing home recipes

How do you prepare or eat broccoli at home?

What are some family recipes that include broccoli?

Are there recipes you can share with your FoodCorps member for future taste tests?





POTATOES



EDUCATOR

Overview

Potatoes are a versatile staple food all over the world. This starchy vegetable serves as an important source of carbohydrates, similar to rice, pasta, and bread.

Potatoes are part of the same family as tomatoes and eggplants, though the part of the potato plant we eat grows underground.

History

Cultures in the Andes Mountains in Bolivia and Peru have been cultivating potatoes for over 4,000 years. The potato was introduced to Europe by Spanish explorers. In the eighteenth century, the French government was seeking a replacement for the food staple bread and turned to potatoes. Similarly, Ireland, experiencing food shortages, relied on growing potatoes for sustenance.

Fun facts

- Though it grows underground, the part of the potato that we eat is a thickened part of the stem known as a tuber, not the root.
- According to the USDA, over half the potatoes sold in the US are turned into french fries.
- Many people consider St. Patrick's Day the

official day to plant potatoes in your garden.

- Why do potatoes make good detectives?
Because they keep their eyes peeled!

Benefits

Potatoes have more potassium than a banana and are a great source of fiber.

Reading corner (for classroom lesson)

No Small Potatoes: Junius G. Groves and His Kingdom In Kansas by Tonya Bolden

Two Old Potatoes and Me by John Coy

The Enormous Potato by Aubrey Davis

Classroom connections | FoodCorps lessons

Stone Soup

Go, Grow, Glow

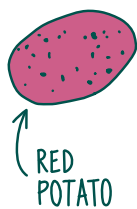
Plant Part Scavenger Hunt

Planting a Tops and Bottoms Bed

Classroom connections | Mini activities

- Slice potatoes in half, carve potatoes to make potato stamps for printmaking.
- Plant potatoes in early spring; hill them by mounding soil around their stems once they've grown tall.

Varieties



Red Bliss:

A red-skinned waxy variety with a creamy white flesh



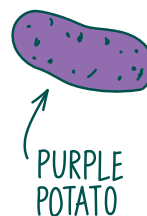
Russet:

Also known as Idaho potatoes; a high-starch variety commonly used for mashed and baked potato dishes



Yukon Gold:

An all-around potato, this variety has a medium amount of starch



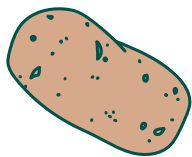
Adirondack Blue:

This variety has blue/violet flesh and skin!



Fingerling:

A long, skinny, waxy variety great for potato salad



POTATOES



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Roasted Potato Wedges (50 Servings, 2 wedges)

Ingredients

3 pounds sweet potatoes
(roughly 5 medium sweet potatoes)
¼ cup olive oil, more if needed
½ teaspoon salt, to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper, to taste

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Cut potatoes into quarters or eighths, depending on size. You'll have most consistent results by cutting potatoes the same size or from the same-sized potatoes to start. Toss potatoes on a rimmed baking sheet with olive oil, salt, pepper, and any other herbs you're using. Roast at 450°, stirring occasionally, until browned on edges, and you can pierce with a fork, about 20–25 minutes.

Variations: Add chopped fresh herbs, such as rosemary or thyme, or spices such as paprika or garlic powder.

Potato Salad (50 Servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

4 ½ pounds waxy potatoes
(red potatoes, fingerlings, or Yukon Golds)
1 ½ cups celery, chopped (4 stalks celery)
½ cup onion, chopped
1 ½ cups mayonnaise
4 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon yellow mustard
1 teaspoon salt, more to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

1. Add whole potatoes to a stockpot of cold water and bring to a boil. Boil potatoes until you can pierce a knife through, about 12–15 minutes, depending on size. Keep a close eye, and be sure not to over boil. Strain and let cool, then dice into roughly 2-inch cubes.
2. Assemble the dressing, whisking mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper.
3. Toss the potatoes, celery, and onions in the dressing. Taste and adjust seasoning, adding more vinegar or salt, for example.

Variations: Add fresh herbs such as dill, chives, parsley, or basil. Add curry blend. Substitute olive oil for the mayonnaise for a vegan dressing. Substitute Greek yogurt for half the mayonnaise for a tangier dressing and more protein.

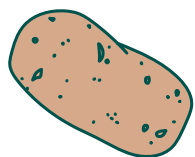
Mashed Potatoes (50 servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

5 pounds Yukon potatoes, unpeeled
(about 14 medium potatoes)
1 cup unsalted butter
1 ½ cups milk
2 teaspoons salt, more to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

1. Quarter potatoes and add to a stockpot of cold water, bringing to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until potatoes are tender, about 10–15 minutes depending on size, then strain.
2. While potatoes are cooking, heat butter, milk, salt and pepper in a small saucepan over low heat; be careful not to bring it to a boil.
3. Use a potato masher, or handheld mixer, adding liquid in batches until potatoes are a smooth consistency. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Note: Mashed potatoes will take considerable time to reheat. Reheat in an oven no higher than 325°.



POTATOES



CAFETERIA

Overview

Potatoes are a versatile staple food all over the world. This starchy vegetable serves as an important source of carbohydrates, similar to rice, pasta, and bread.

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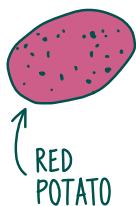
Benefits

Potatoes have more potassium than a banana and are a great source of fiber.

Selection

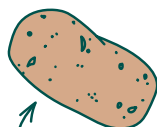
Potatoes should be firm and be free of green patches or sprouting.

Varieties



Red Bliss:

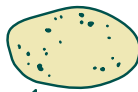
A red-skinned waxy variety with a creamy white flesh



IDAHO
POTATO

Russet:

Also known as Idaho potatoes; a high-starch variety commonly used for mashed and baked potato dishes



YUKON
GOLD
POTATO

Yukon Gold:

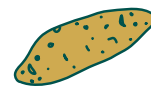
An all-around potato, this variety has a medium amount of starch



PURPLE
POTATO

Adirondack Blue:

This variety has blue/violet flesh and skin!



FINGERLING
POTATO

Fingerling:

A long, skinny, waxy variety great for potato salad

Storage tips

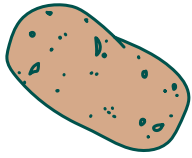
Store in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place. Storing potatoes in paper is preferable to plastic, so they can breathe. If plastic is used, however, it's best if the bag has holes. If you can, wait until right before cooking to clean potatoes because washing will remove potatoes' natural protective layer. Don't store potatoes next to apples because apples release ethylene gas that will spoil them.

Cooking tips

- When boiling potatoes, be sure to use cold water to start.
- Be sure to pierce the skin of potatoes with a fork before baking to allow steam to escape.
- Parboil diced potatoes, then drain well and roast or sauté to achieve diner-style home fries.

Kid-friendly eating tips

- As an alternative to french fries, serve oven-roasted potatoes with ketchup.
- Try adding other vegetables to your mashed potatoes such as celery root, parsnips, or sweet potatoes.
- Have a baked potato bar! Bake Idaho potatoes, and have various toppings kids can add to their own customized baked potatoes, such as chives, hot sauce, cheese, salsa, sour cream, etc.
- Try smashed potatoes! Roast whole potatoes, then "smash" them with a masher or bottom of a glass. Once they're smashed, toss them in olive oil, salt, pepper, and any seasonings you'd like, and roast them again until edges are golden brown.



POTATOES



CAFETERIA
Sample Recipes

Mashed Potatoes (50 servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

5 pounds Yukon potatoes,
unpeeled (about 14 medium
potatoes)

1 cup unsalted butter

1 ½ cups milk

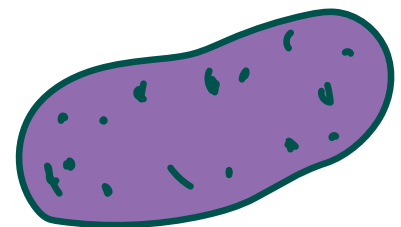
2 teaspoons salt, more to taste

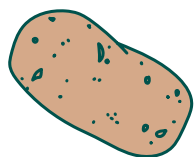
¼ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

1. Quarter potatoes and add to a stockpot of cold water, bringing to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until potatoes are tender, about 10-15 minutes depending on size, then strain.
2. While potatoes are cooking, heat butter, milk, salt and pepper in a small saucepan over low heat; be careful not to bring it to a boil.
3. Use a potato masher, or handheld mixer, adding liquid in batches until potatoes are a smooth consistency. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Note:

Mashed potatoes will take considerable time to reheat. Reheat in an oven no higher than 325°.





POTATOES |



HOME

Overview

Potatoes are a versatile staple food all over the world. This starchy vegetable serves as an important source of carbohydrates, similar to rice, pasta, and bread. Potatoes are part of the same family as tomatoes and eggplants, though the part of the potato plant we eat grows underground.

Benefits

Potatoes have more potassium than a banana and are a great source of fiber.

Kid-friendly eating tips

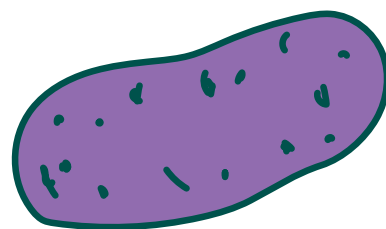
- As an alternative to french fries, serve oven-roasted potatoes with ketchup.
- Try adding other vegetables to your mashed potatoes such as celery root, parsnips, or sweet potatoes.
- Have a baked potato bar! Bake Idaho potatoes, and have various toppings kids can add to their own customized baked potatoes, such as chives, hot sauce, cheese, salsa, sour cream, etc.
- Try smashed potatoes! Roast whole potatoes, then “smash” them with a masher or bottom of a glass. Once they’re smashed, toss them in olive oil, salt, pepper, and any seasonings you’d like, and roast them again until edges are golden brown.

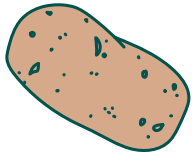
Storage tips

Store in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place. Storing potatoes in paper is preferable to plastic, so they can breathe. If plastic is used, however, it’s best if the bag has holes. If you can, wait until right before cooking to clean potatoes because washing will remove potatoes’ natural protective layer. Don’t store potatoes next to apples because apples release ethylene gas that will spoil them.

Cooking tips

- When boiling potatoes, be sure to use cold water to start.
- Be sure to pierce the skin of potatoes with a fork before baking to allow steam to escape.
- Parboil diced potatoes, then drain well and roast or sauté to achieve diner-style home fries.





POTATOES



Home
Recipe for Home

Potato Salad (Serves 4–6 people)

Ingredients

1 ½ pounds waxy potatoes
(red potatoes, fingerlings,
or Yukon Golds)
½ cup celery, chopped
¼ cup onion, chopped
½ cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon apple cider
vinegar
¼ tablespoon yellow
mustard
½ teaspoon salt,
more to taste
⅛ teaspoon pepper,
more to taste

Instructions

1. Add whole potatoes to a stockpot of cold water and bring to a boil. Boil potatoes until you can pierce a knife through, about 12–15 minutes depending on size. Strain and let cool, then dice into roughly 2-inch cubes.
2. Assemble the dressing, whisking mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper.
3. Toss the potatoes, chopped celery, and onions in the dressing. Taste and adjust your seasoning, adding more vinegar or salt, for example.

Variations:

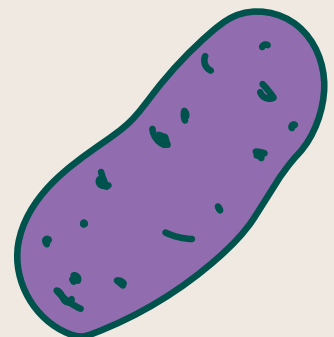
Add fresh herbs such as dill, chives, parsley, or basil. Add curry blend. Substitute olive oil for the mayonnaise for a vegan dressing. Substitute Greek yogurt for half the mayonnaise for a tangier dressing and more protein.

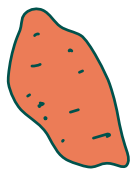
Sharing home recipes

How do you prepare or eat potatoes at home?

What are some family recipes that include potatoes?

Are there recipes you can share with your FoodCorps member for future taste tests?





SWEET POTATOES



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Overview

Though you wouldn't know it by its name, the sweet potato, a tuber that grows below ground, is a completely different plant family than the potato. It's a staple in many Latin American and Asian countries and is a highly nutrient-dense food.

History

The sweet potato originated somewhere between Mexico and northern South America. Archaeologists, who unearthed the remains of a sweet potato dating back over 10,000 years ago, have concluded that sweet potatoes have been eaten since prehistoric times.

Fun facts

- Many people in the US mistakenly call sweet potatoes "yams," but they are an entirely different vegetable.
- Sweet potatoes are North Carolina's official state vegetable.
- Though we usually just eat the tuber, you can actually eat the whole plant.
- The above-ground part of the sweet potato has long, creeping stems.
- The sweet potato plant is related to the flowering plant morning glory and grows similar flowers.
- George Washington, the first US president, was a sweet potato farmer before he was a general.

Benefits

Sweet potatoes are considered one of the most nutrient-dense foods—they have even more nutrients than spinach! The deeper the color, the higher amount of vitamin A there is in a sweet potato.

Reading corner (for classroom lesson)

Sweet Potato Pie by Kathleen D. Lindsay

Little Sweet Potato by Amy Beth Bloom

Classroom connections | FoodCorps lessons

Stone Soup

Planting a Tops and Bottoms Bed

Go, Grow, Glow

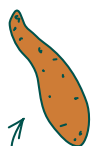
Eat a Rainbow

Classroom connections | Mini activities

Make baked homemade sweet potato chips.

- Preheat the oven to 250°. Wash and dry a couple sweet potatoes and, using a sharp knife, slice them as thinly as possible. If you have a mandolin, that would be perfect for this.
- Toss slices in a couple tablespoons of olive oil to lightly coat and sprinkle with salt.
- Lay the slices in a single layer on a baking sheet. Cook for about two hours, flipping the chips halfway through and rotating the baking sheet for even cooking.
- Remove from the oven once they're crisp and golden brown. And don't worry if some parts are still a bit soft—they'll likely crisp up while cooling.

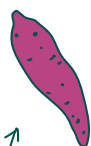
Varieties



JEWEL
SWEET
POTATO

Jewel:

Found in many grocery stores; has deep orange flesh



GARNET
SWEET
POTATO

Garnet:

Named for its reddish skin; tastes similar to pumpkin when baked



COVINGTON
SWEET
POTATO

Covington:

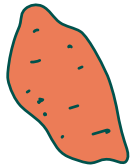
A popular variety to grow and eat in Southern parts of the US



BEAUREGARD
SWEET
POTATO

Beauregard:

The most widely grown commercial variety; highly versatile



SWEET POTATOES



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges (50 servings, 2 wedges)

Ingredients

3 pounds sweet potatoes
(roughly 5 medium sweet potatoes)
¼ cup olive oil, more if needed
½ teaspoon salt, to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper, to taste

Variations: Warming spices such as cinnamon and nutmeg go well with sweet potato.

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Scrub sweet potatoes well, but keep skin intact. If potatoes are long, cut in half widthwise. Cut lengthwise into eighths, or smaller depending on thickness. Make sure the wedges are uniform in size to ensure even cooking. Toss wedges on a lined rimmed baking sheet with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and arrange in a single layer. Roast at 450° until tender and golden brown, for about 20 minutes, rotating the pans and flipping the wedges halfway through cooking.

Sweet Potato Hummus (50 Servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

4 ½ pounds sweet potato
5 (15-ounce) cans chickpeas,
drained and rinsed (reserving 1 cup
bean liquid)
¾ cup orange juice
(or ¼ cup lemon juice)
⅓ cup tahini
1 ½ tablespoons ground cumin
1 ½ tablespoons ground ginger
1 ½ tablespoons garlic powder
½ tablespoon salt, more to taste

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Cut sweet potatoes in half, placing cut side down. Bake until tender, about 45 minutes. Let cool and peel, then place in a large mixing bowl.
3. Purée chickpeas with cooking liquid in batches in a food processor until a smooth consistency.
4. Add chickpeas to sweet potatoes and add remaining ingredients. Use a handheld mixer or immersion blender (or stand mixer, if you have access to one) to combine ingredients. Mix until smooth and adjust seasoning to taste.
5. To serve, put hummus in a piping bag, with a medium-sized tip.

Serving suggestions: Serve with raw carrots, celery, or crackers.

Sweet Potato Hummus (50 Servings, ¼ cup)

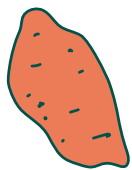
Ingredients

⅓ cup olive oil
1 large onion, peeled and coarsely
chopped (about 4 cups)
2 ½ teaspoons salt, more to taste
5 medium sweet potatoes, peeled
and diced (about 8 cups)
1 bay leaf
6 cups water
2 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
(optional)

1. Heat olive oil in a stockpot over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent—about 10 minutes.
2. Add diced sweet potatoes and sauté, stirring for 5–7 minutes. Add the water, stock, and bay leaf, and bring to a boil, then reduce temperature to a steady simmer and cook for about 30 minutes, until sweet potato is completely softened.
3. Remove the bay leaf. Add the rest of the salt, pepper, and butter, if using. Purée the soup in a blender, food processor, or food mill, working in batches to not overfill your machine.
4. Taste the soup and adjust seasoning, adding more salt, pepper, or butter.

Variations:

For added richness, add a tablespoon or two of butter at the end. Consider swapping out some of the onion for leeks, if you have them available.



SWEET POTATOES



CAFETERIA

Overview

Though you wouldn't know it by its name, the sweet potato, a tuber that grows below ground, is a completely different plant family than the potato. It's a staple in many Latin American and Asian countries and is a highly nutrient dense food.

Benefits

Sweet potatoes are considered one of the most nutrient-dense foods, even more than spinach! The deeper the color, the higher amount of vitamin A the sweet potato has.

Selection

Choose sweet potatoes that feel firm and are free of spots or cracks. Avoid sweet potatoes that have been refrigerated.

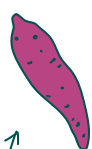
Varieties



JEWEL
SWEET
POTATO

Jewel:

Found in many grocery stores; has deep orange flesh



GARNET
SWEET
POTATO

Garnet:

Named for its reddish skin; tastes similar to pumpkin when baked



COVINGTON
SWEET
POTATO

Covington:

A popular variety to grow and eat in Southern parts of the US



BEAUREGARD
SWEET
POTATO

Beauregard:

The most widely grown commercial variety; highly versatile

Storage tips

Store in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place. They are more fragile than potatoes. Don't store raw sweet potatoes in the fridge, but once cooked, they can keep up to a week refrigerated.

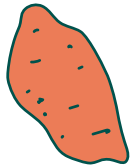
Cooking tips

- Only wash sweet potatoes just before use.
- To bake whole in the oven, prick the sweet potato several times with a fork, and bake for 45–60 minutes, until soft.

- Sweet potato can be swapped for winter squash in many recipes.

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Puréed cooked sweet potato can be used in muffins, quick breads, or pancake batter as you would with banana or pumpkin.
- Roast diced sweet potato and add to veggie enchiladas, burritos, or even nachos!
- Sweet potatoes can be grated to make potato pancakes or hash browns.



SWEET POTATOES



CAFETERIA
Sample Recipes

Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges (50 servings, 2 wedges)

Ingredients

3 pounds sweet potatoes
(roughly 5 medium sweet
potatoes)

¼ cup olive oil,
more if needed

½ teaspoon salt, to taste

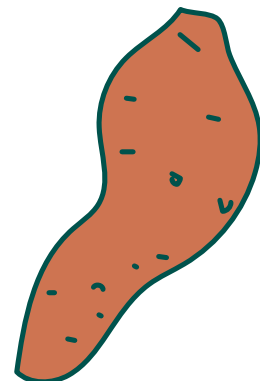
¼ teaspoon pepper,
to taste

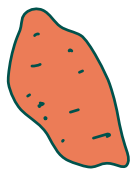
Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Scrub sweet potatoes well, but keep skin intact. If potatoes are long, cut in half widthwise. Cut lengthwise into eighths, or smaller depending on thickness. Make sure the wedges are uniform in size to ensure even cooking. Toss wedges on a lined rimmed baking sheet with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and arrange in a single layer. Roast at 450° until tender and golden brown, for about 20 minutes, rotating the pans and flipping the wedges halfway through cooking.

Variations:

Warming spices, such as cinnamon and nutmeg, go well with sweet potato.





SWEET POTATOES



HOME

Overview

Though you wouldn't know it by its name, the sweet potato, a tuber that grows below ground, is a completely different plant family than the potato. It's a staple in many Latin American and Asian countries and is a highly nutrient dense food.

Benefits

Sweet potatoes are considered one of the most nutrient-dense foods, even more than spinach! The deeper the color, the higher amount of vitamin A the sweet potato has.

Kid-friendly eating tips

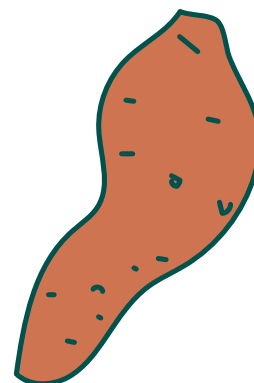
- Puréed cooked sweet potato can be used in muffins, quick breads, or pancake batter as you would with banana or pumpkin.
- Roast diced sweet potato and add to veggie enchiladas, burritos, or even nachos!
- Sweet potatoes can be grated to make potato pancakes or hash browns.

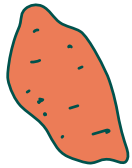
Storage tips

Store in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place. They are more fragile than potatoes. Don't store raw sweet potatoes in the fridge, but once cooked, they can keep up to a week refrigerated.

Cooking tips

- Only wash sweet potatoes just before use.
- To bake whole in the oven, prick the sweet potato several times with a fork, and bake for 45–60 minutes, until soft.
- Sweet potato can be swapped for winter squash in many recipes.





SWEET POTATOES



Home
Recipe for Home

Sweet Potato Soup (Serves 4–6 people)

Ingredients

1/3 cup olive oil
1 onion, peeled and coarsely chopped
2 1/2 teaspoons salt, more to taste
5 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
1 bay leaf
6 cups water
2 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons unsalted butter (optional)

Instructions

1. Heat olive oil in a stockpot over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent—about 10 minutes.
2. Add diced sweet potatoes and sauté, stirring for 5–7 minutes. Add the water, stock, and bay leaf, and bring to a boil, then reduce temperature to a steady simmer and cook for about 30 minutes, until sweet potato is completely softened.
3. Remove the bay leaf. Add the rest of the salt, pepper, and butter, if using. Purée the soup in a blender, food processor, or food mill, working in batches to not overfill your machine.
4. Taste the soup and adjust seasoning, adding more salt, pepper, or butter.

Variations:

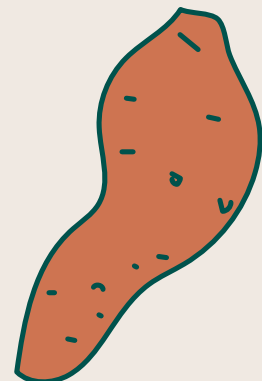
For added richness, add a tablespoon or two of butter at the end. Consider swapping out some of the onion for leeks, if available.

Sharing home recipes

How do you prepare or eat sweet potatoes at home?

What are some family recipes that include sweet potatoes?

Are there recipes you can share with your FoodCorps member for future taste tests?





KALE



EDUCATOR

Overview

Part of the Brassica plant family that includes collards, kohlrabi, broccoli, collards, and cabbage, kale is a dark leafy green that's become increasingly popular and more mainstream in American diets.

History

Kale was first cultivated in the Mediterranean and was considered a staple food during Roman times because of its ability to withstand cold and provide nutrition in winter months.

Fun facts

- A serving of kale has more calcium than a carton of milk.
- Kale gets sweet once it's been through cold winter temperatures.
- Some kale varieties have been cultivated just for ornamental purposes (i.e., to make the garden look nice!).
- In Germany there are annual Grünkohlfahrt tours to celebrate and eat lots of kale!
- In parts of Scotland the term "come to kale" means come to dinner, and to be "off one's kale" means someone is ill.

Benefits

Kale is considered a superfood because its dark leaves pack in a lot of vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin A and C.

Reading corner (for classroom lesson)

Captain Kale and the Super Foods by Amy Roth

Alex McGreen and the Tale of the Mysterious Kale by Rayna R. Andrews

Classroom connections | FoodCorps lessons

Salad Dressing Challenge

Eat a Rainbow

Rainbow Smoothie

Plant Part Wraps

Planting a Tops and Bottoms Bed

Classroom connections | Mini activities

- Make kale chips with students using a toaster oven, or even a solar oven if you have one!
- Make green smoothies using kale as the star ingredient.
- Use kale leaves for the wrap in your plant part wraps!
- Have kids help make a kale salad by putting kale and dressing ingredients in a ziplock bag and massaging and shaking the bag to make the leaves more tender.

Varieties



Lacinato (Dinosaur or Tuscan):
Dark green tender leaves that are long and narrow; a popular variety to use for raw preparations



Curly:
The most common variety; has bright curly leaves that crisp up nicely when sautéed



Red Russian:
Ruffled leaves but with red or purple stems

Siberian:
Ruffled green leaves; is best when cooked



KALE



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Kale Chips (65 servings, 2–3 chips)

Ingredients

2 pounds kale
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup olive oil
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt

Variations:

Add nutritional yeast for a cheesy taste or spice such as cayenne.

1. Preheat oven to 325°.
2. Strip the leaves from the stem and wash and dry well, using a salad spinner or rolling in dish towels. Tear large leaves into 2 to 3-inch bites.
3. Toss kale by hand with olive oil, salt, and any spices you're using in a large bowl, being sure each leaf is evenly coated.
4. Spread kale leaves evenly in a single layer on rimmed baking sheets, being sure not to crowd leaves they don't steam.
5. Bake for 10 minutes then check. If the chips aren't dark green and crisp, continue baking in 2 minute increments. They'll turn brown very quickly. Look at the underside when checking for doneness.
6. Let cool for two minutes and then transfer to a serving dish (or cool pan). If making ahead of time, re-crisp chips in the oven for one minute before serving.

Kale Pesto (50 servings, 2 tablespoons)

Ingredients

3 pounds kale
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups olive oil, more as needed
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup parmesan cheese
6 tablespoons lemon juice
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons chopped garlic (about 2 large cloves)
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons salt

1. Remove thick stems from kale, and tear into 2-inch pieces.
2. Use a food processor with a steel blade. Working in batches, fill the food processor half full with kale, and slowly drizzle in oil with machine running, until smooth. Use more oil, as needed.
3. During the last batch of kale, add cheese, lemon juice, garlic, and salt.
4. Taste and adjust seasonings. Add more oil for a saucier pesto.

Serving suggestions: Serve on a cracker, piece of bread, or piece of penne.

Variations: You can make pesto dairy free by substituting sunflower or pumpkin seeds for the cheese.

Kale Salad (70 Servings, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) **Adapted from The Lunch Box**

Ingredients

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ pounds kale
 $\frac{1}{8}$ pound apples, diced
 $\frac{1}{8}$ cup cranberries
 $\frac{1}{8}$ cup olive oil
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lemon juice
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup apple cider vinegar
2–3 tablespoons honey, to taste
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, more to taste
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

1. Wash, destem, and chop kale into fine strips.
2. Assemble the dressing, whisking lemon juice, vinegar, honey, salt, and pepper, and then slowly whisking in olive.
3. If making the day before, you can dress the kale and store it in the fridge overnight, but leave adding the apples and cranberries until the day of. If making the salad the day of, wearing gloves, massage the dressing into the kale, then add sliced apples and cranberries, if using. To avoid overdressing, add half the dressing to start and add more as needed.

Variations: Add toasted sunflower/pumpkin seeds or cheese for a savory addition.



KALE



CAFETERIA

Overview

Part of the Brassica plant family that includes collards, kohlrabi, broccoli, collards, and cabbage, kale is a dark leafy green that's become increasingly popular and more mainstream in American diets.

Benefits

Kale is considered a superfood because its dark leaves pack in a lot of vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin A and C.

Selection

Look for brightly colored leaves that aren't wilted and have firm stems.

Varieties



Lacinato (Dinosaur or Tuscan):
Dark green tender leaves that are long and narrow; a popular variety to use for raw preparations



Curly:
The most common variety; has bright curly leaves that crisp up nicely when sautéed



Red Russian:
Ruffled leaves but with red or purple stems

Siberian:
Ruffled green leaves; is best when cooked

Storage tips

Store in a refrigerator in a plastic bag for 5–10 days. It's helpful to have a towel in the bag to absorb any moisture.

Cooking tips

- Because it's tough, remove the center rib of kale by gripping the end and pulling downward with your other hand. This strips just the leaf from the stem.
- Massage kale for raw preparations. Drizzle kale with olive oil and a pinch of salt and crunch them between your (clean) hands. This will break down the cells walls, leaving the greens more tender.

Kid-friendly tips

- Raw kale, thinly sliced, can be added to soups, pastas, veggie hashes, and frittatas.



KALE



CAFETERIA
Sample Recipes

Kale Salad (70 Servings, ¼ cup) **Adapted from The Lunch Box**

Ingredients

1 ¼ pounds kale
⅓ pound apples, diced
⅓ cup cranberries
⅓ cup olive oil
¼ cup lemon juice
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
2–3 tablespoons honey,
to taste
¼ teaspoon salt,
more to taste
⅓ teaspoon pepper,
more to taste

Instructions

1. Wash, destem, and chop kale into fine strips.
2. Assemble the dressing, whisking lemon juice, vinegar, honey, salt, pepper, and then slowly whisking in olive oil.
3. If making the day before, you can dress the kale and store it in the fridge overnight, but leave adding the apples and cranberries until the day of. If making the salad the day of, wearing gloves, massage the dressing into the kale, then add sliced apples and cranberries, if using. To avoid overdressing, add half the dressing to start and add more as needed.

Variations:

For added richness, add a tablespoon or two of butter at the end. Consider swapping out some of the onion for leeks, if available.





KALE



HOME

Overview

Part of the Brassica plant family that includes collards, kohlrabi, broccoli, collards, and cabbage, kale is a dark leafy green that's become increasingly popular and more mainstream in American diets.

Benefits

Kale is considered a superfood because its dark leaves pack in a lot of vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin A and C.

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Raw kale, thinly sliced, can be added to soups, pastas, veggie hashes, and frittatas.
- Have kids help make a kale salad by putting kale and dressing ingredients in a ziplock bag and massaging and shaking to make leaves more tender.

Storage tips

Store in a refrigerator in a plastic bag for 5–10 days. It's helpful to have a towel in the bag to absorb any moisture.

Cooking tips

- Because it's tough, remove the center rib of kale by gripping the end and pulling downward with your other hand. This strips just the leaf from the stem.
- Massage kale for raw preparations. Drizzle kale with olive oil and a pinch of salt and crunch them between your (clean) hands. This will break down the cells walls, leaving the greens more tender.





KALE



Home
Recipe for Home

Kale Pesto (Serves 4–6)

Ingredients

2 pounds kale
1 ½ cups olive oil,
more as needed
½ cup parmesan cheese
¼ cup lemon juice
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 ½ tablespoons salt,
more to taste

Instructions

1. Remove thick stems from kale, and tear into 2-inch pieces.
2. Use a food processor with a steel blade. Working in batches, fill the food processor half full with kale, and slowly drizzle in oil with machine running, until smooth. Use more oil, as needed.
3. During the last batch, add cheese, lemon juice, garlic, and salt.
4. Taste and adjust seasonings. Add more oil for a saucier pesto.
5. Store in a jar and keep in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Serving suggestion:

Serve on a cracker, piece of bread, or piece of penne pasta.

Variations:

You can make pesto dairy free by substituting sunflower or pumpkin seeds for the cheese.

Sharing home recipes

How do you prepare or eat kale (or other dark leafy greens) at home?

What are some family recipes that include kale?

Are there recipes you can share with your FoodCorps member for future taste tests?





APPLES



EDUCATOR

Overview

Apples are a beloved fruit that grows on trees in temperate climates. People in the US eat more apples than any other fruit!

History

The apple tree is believed to be native to southwestern Asia. Romans spread the apple across Europe, and early colonists brought the apple to North America.

Fun facts

- The apple tree can't be grown in tropical climates because it needs a cold, dormant time during the year to thrive.
- Apples float because 25% of their makeup is air!
- Apples trees are a member of the rose family.
- Over 7,000 varieties of apples are grown throughout the world.

Benefits

Maybe you've heard the expression, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away"? Apples are an excellent source of fiber, and eating raw apples naturally cleans our teeth and massages our gums. Eat your apple with the peel still on to get the most nutritional value.

Reading corner (for classroom lesson)

How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World

by Marjorie J. Priceman

Apples by Gail Gibbons

Apple by Nikki McClure

Classroom connections | FoodCorps lessons

Mindful Tasting

All in for Applesauce

The World Travels of Food

Root Fruit Slaw

Classroom connections | Mini activities

Make Apple Chips!

- Preheat oven to 200°. Wash and thinly slice apples crosswise, about an 1/8 of an inch. Lay apples in one layer on a baking sheet, and bake for one hour or more, depending on thickness, until apples are gold brown and crisp. Store in an airtight container.

Do an Apple Variety Taste Test

- Do an apple variety taste test. Give students slices of four different apple varieties to choose from. Consider having a word bank for students to help differentiate varieties' flavors and textures.

Varieties

GRANNY SMITH APPLE



Granny Smith:

Green-skinned acidic variety; good for pies and eating out of hand

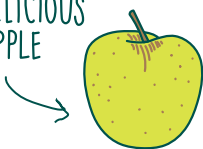
FUJI APPLE



Fuji:

Sweet Japanese variety; great eaten fresh or in applesauce

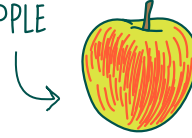
GOLDEN DELICIOUS APPLE



Golden Delicious:

Yellow-skinned US variety; juicy and sweet with semi-firm flesh

HONEYCRISP APPLE



Honeycrisp:

Sweet and aromatic US variety; great for juicing, baking, or eating out of hand

Gala:

One of the most popular grocery-store varieties; sweet with red and yellow striped skin



APPLES



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Applesauce (50 servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

8 pounds apples (a mix of varieties is good for flavor; about 16 apples)

2 cups water

Juice of one lemon

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon or

2 cinnamon sticks, more to taste

Instructions

1. Core and chop apples into large chunks. (You don't need to peel them.)
2. Add all ingredients into a large stockpot and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce to a low simmer, cover the pot, and stir occasionally until apples are very soft, approximately 40–50 minutes.
3. Let cool, remove cinnamon sticks, if using, then purée applesauce with an immersion blender or food mill or in a blender or food processor, working in batches to not overfill your machine.

Sliced Apples with Yogurt Honey Dip (50 servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

3 pounds apples

2 quarts plain yogurt

1 cup honey

1 ½ tablespoons cinnamon
(or more to taste)

Instructions

1. Wash, core, and slice apples into approximately ¾-inch wide wedges or sixteenths, if using large apples.
2. Combine yogurt, honey, and cinnamon in a bowl, and stir to blend.
3. Serve one segment of apple with up to 2 tablespoons of dip.

Variations: This dip would work well with other fruits, such as strawberries or pears.

Apple Slaw (50 Servings, ¼ cup) **Adapted from New School Cuisine**

Ingredients

2 cups mayonnaise

¾ cup rice vinegar

¼–½ cup sugar or honey, to taste

¼ teaspoon salt, more to taste

3 ¾ pounds apples
(about 4 apples), cored

2 ¼ pounds celeriac,
trimmed and peeled

1 ½ pounds carrots

Instructions

1. Assemble the dressing, whisking mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl and set aside.
2. Using a food processor or box grater, shred apples, celeriac, and carrots. Add to a large bowl.
3. Add the dressing to shredded vegetables, starting out with half and adding more as needed. Mix well and chill before serving.
4. Make dressing and keep refrigerated for up to two days in advance. Refrigerate the dressed slaw for up to a day in advance.

Variations: Replace diced celery for celeriac or beets for carrots.



APPLES



CAFETERIA

Overview

Apples are a beloved fruit that grows on trees in temperate climates. People in the US eat more apples than any other fruit!

Benefits

Maybe you've heard the expression, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away"? Apples are an excellent source of fiber, and eating raw apples naturally cleans

our teeth and massages our gums. Eat your apple with the peel still on to get the most nutritional value.

Selection

Choose apples depending on what you'll do with them. Apples eaten sliced or chopped into salad should be firm and free of bruises. However, if you're going to be cooking down apples right away, some imperfections are fine.

Varieties

GRANNY SMITH APPLE



Granny Smith:
Green-skinned acidic variety; good for pies and eating out of hand

FUJI APPLE



Fuji:
Sweet Japanese variety; great eaten fresh or in applesauce

GOLDEN DELICIOUS APPLE



Golden Delicious:
Yellow-skinned US variety; juicy and sweet with semi-firm flesh

HONEYCRISP APPLE



Honeycrisp:
Sweet and aromatic US variety; great for juicing, baking, or eating out of hand

Gala:
One of the most popular grocery-store varieties; sweet with red and yellow striped skin

Storage tips

- Apples will keep for a few weeks in the refrigerator in a perforated plastic bag or crisper drawer.
- For longer term storage, store them in a cool, dark, and humid place.
- Apples freeze well when cooked and puréed.

Cooking tips

- To prevent discoloring after slicing apples, sprinkle them with citrus juice.

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Baked whole apples are a fun healthful dessert.
 - Preheat oven to 350°.
 - Slice apples in half, and remove the core with a small paring knife. Make sure the base of the apple stays intact to hold any filling you add.

- Place apple halves in a greased baking dish.
- Sprinkle with cinnamon or other warming spices and a little brown sugar if you'd like. You can add ingredients to the hole where the core was, such as raisins, nuts, or honey.
- Bake for about 30–45 minutes, until apples are softened but still intact.

- If you have apples that are getting old, make applesauce or apple butter. Chop up the apples, put them in a stockpot, and cover with water. Cook them on low heat for at least an hour, stirring occasionally. This works well in a crock pot or slow cooker. You can use a potato masher to help break down the apples. You'll know the butter is done once it's shiny and shows big slow bubbles. This is great stirred into yogurt or spread on toast.



APPLES



CAFETERIA
Sample Recipes

Apple Slaw (50 Servings, ¼ cup)

Adapted from New School Cuisine

Ingredients

2 cups mayonnaise
¾ cup rice vinegar
¼–½ cup sugar or honey,
to taste
¼ teaspoon salt,
more to taste
3 ¾ pounds apples
(about 4 apples), cored
2 ¼ pounds celeriac,
trimmed and peeled
1 ½ pounds carrots

Instructions

1. Assemble the dressing, whisking mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl and set aside.
2. Using a food processor or box grater, shred apples, celeriac, and carrots. Add to a large bowl.
3. Add the dressing to shredded vegetables, starting out with half and adding more as needed. Mix well and chill before serving.
4. Make dressing and keep refrigerated for up to two days in advance. Refrigerate the dressed slaw for up to a day in advance.

Variations:

Replace diced celery for celeriac or beets for carrots.



APPLES



HOME

Overview

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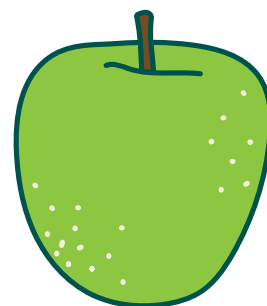
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- Apples can lend sweetness to savory dishes. Serve apples with cheese or meats such as pork.

Storage tips

- Apples will keep for a few weeks in the refrigerator in a perforated plastic bag or crisper drawer.
- For longer term storage, store them in a cool, dark, and humid place.
- Apples freeze well when cooked and pureed.

Cooking tips

- To prevent discoloring after slicing apples, sprinkle them with citrus juice.





APPLES



Home
Recipe for Home

Applesauce (Serves 4–6 people)

Ingredients

5 pounds apples
(a mix of apple varieties
is good for flavor)

1 cup water

Juice of ½ a lemon

¼ teaspoon ground
cinnamon or 1 cinnamon
stick

Instructions

1. Core and chop apples into large chunks. You don't need to peel them.
2. Add all ingredients into a large stockpot and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce to a low simmer, cover the pot, and stir occasionally until apples are very soft, approximately 40–50 minutes.
3. Let cool, remove the cinnamon sticks, if using, then purée the applesauce with an immersion blender or food mill or in a blender or food processor, working in batches to not overfill your machine.

Variations:

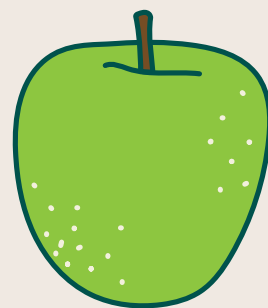
Replace diced celery for celeriac or beets for carrots.

Sharing home recipes

How do you prepare or eat apples at home?

What are some family recipes that include apples?

**Are there recipes you can share with your FoodCorps
member for future taste tests?**





SWEET PEPPERS



EDUCATOR

Overview

Sweet peppers, otherwise known as bell peppers, are in the same plant family as potatoes, tomatoes, and eggplant. Alongside their spicy counterparts the chili pepper, sweet peppers are a staple of much Latin American cuisine.

History

Originally from Latin America, the pepper plant was one of the first plants to be cultivated in South America. The practice of growing sweet peppers in other parts of the world is in large part due to the Spanish and Portuguese.

Fun facts

- Fresh, raw bell peppers are almost completely made up of water! (92%)
- Because a sweet pepper comes from the flowering part of a plant, it's actually a fruit!
- A green bell pepper is actually just an unripened variety of the orange or red sweet peppers. The unripened green pepper, when left to grow on the plant, turns yellow on its way to reaching full maturity. This also explains why the green pepper, harvested from the plant before it's ripe, is the least sweet, and the red and orange peppers are the sweetest.
- In very warm, tropical places, the sweet pepper

can grow as a perennial, meaning the plant grows year round, year after year.

Benefits

Peppers are super high in vitamin C and are good for your immune system and skin.

Reading corner (for classroom lesson)

Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert

Classroom connections | FoodCorps lessons

Sauté

Veggie Wraps

Rolling into Spring

Stone Soup

Rainbow Grain Salad

Eat a Rainbow

Green Sauce around the World

Classroom connections | Mini activities

- Use bell peppers to teach a mini lesson on ripeness and harvesting, discussing the color and flavor (and nutritional value) shift that occurs as the fruit matures from green to red on the plant.
- Or have a variety taste test, trying sweet peppers beyond the bell!
- Plant pepper plants as part of a study on plant parts, helping students see and understand that the pepper fruit we eat grows from the flower.

Varieties



RED & GREEN
BELL PEPPER

Bell peppers:

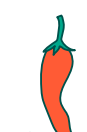
Ranging in color from green to red to purple; the sweet peppers most commonly found in grocery stores



ITALIAN
FRYING
PEPPER

Italian frying pepper:

Long and slender; includes the beloved variety Jimmy Nardello's



PIMENTÓN

Pimentóns:

Best for roasting, which concentrates their sweet flavor



CHERRY
PEPPERS

Cherry Peppers:

Appear as smaller versions of a red bell pepper and taste similarly; there can be a spicy pepper or two in a bunch, so be warned!



SWEET PEPPERS



EDUCATOR
Sample Recipes

Roasted Red Pepper Bean Dip (50 servings, 2 tablespoons)

Ingredients

3 (15-ounce) cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
3 (12-ounce) jars roasted red bell peppers, drained
6 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons lemon juice
3 cloves garlic
1 ½ teaspoons salt, more to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper, more to taste

Instructions

1. Add all ingredients to a food processor or blender and blend until completely smooth. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with raw veggies such as carrots or celery, or smear onto a cracker or small piece of bread.

Sautéed Sweet Peppers and Onion (50 servings, 2 tablespoons)

Ingredients

½ cup olive oil, more as needed
3 pounds bell peppers; red, orange, and yellow, if available (roughly 6 medium peppers)
2 red or sweet onions sliced lengthwise and halved crosswise
1 ½ teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Wash peppers and remove stem, ribs, and seeds. Cut peppers lengthwise into ¼-inch strips and then halve crosswise.
2. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet. Add peppers and onions and season with salt and pepper. You'll likely have to cook in batches to avoid overcrowding. Stir frequently, until peppers are softened, approximately 35 minutes.

Variations: Add herbs such as basil before serving. Consider serving on a tortilla chip or piece of bread or cracker.

Raw Peppers with Hummus (50 Servings, 2 tablespoons of hummus)

Ingredients

3 pounds bell peppers, sliced (roughly 6 medium peppers)

Hummus

3 (15-ounce) cans chickpeas
½ cup olive oil
6 tablespoons lemon juice
¼ cup tahini
3–5 cloves garlic
1 ½ teaspoons salt, more to taste
¾ cup bean liquid

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 250°. Put peeled garlic cloves and oil in a small baking dish. Roast garlic in oil in the oven for 1 hour, then cool and save oil. Note: You can also skip this step and use fresh garlic instead, but because roasting mellows the flavor, you'll want to use fewer cloves. Start with three and add more, to taste.
2. Combine all ingredients, including reserved garlic oil, and blend using a food processor, blender, or immersion blender. Blend until smooth, adding more bean liquid if needed. Taste and adjust flavor by adding more lemon juice or salt, then place in a container until ready for use.
3. To serve, put hummus in a piping bag, with a medium-sized tip.



SWEET PEPPERS



CAFETERIA

Overview

Sweet peppers, otherwise known as bell peppers, are in the same plant family as potatoes, tomatoes, and eggplant. Alongside their spicy counterparts the chili pepper, sweet peppers are a staple of much Latin American cuisine.

Benefits

Peppers are super high in vitamin C and are good for your immune system and skin.

Selection

When choosing peppers, look for clear, shiny intact skin. They should feel firm and heavy. Avoid peppers whose skin appears shriveled.

Storage tips

Sweet peppers can be stored in a perforated bag or crisper drawer in the refrigerator for up to a week. Wash only just before using.

Varieties



RED & GREEN
BELL PEPPER

Bell peppers:

Ranging in color from green to red to purple; the sweet peppers most commonly found in grocery stores



ITALIAN
FRYING
PEPPER

Italian frying pepper:

Long and slender; includes the beloved variety Jimmy Nardello's



PIMENTÓN

Pimentóns:

Best for roasting, which concentrates their sweet flavor



CHERRY
PEPPERS

Cherry Peppers:

Appear as smaller versions of a red bell pepper and taste similarly; there can be a spicy pepper or two in a bunch, so be warned!

Cooking tips

Roasted peppers can be added to sandwiches, salads, and other dishes. And roasting concentrates their sweet flavor and color!

- Preheat the oven to 500°, and line a baking sheet or dish with foil.
- Halve or quarter bell peppers, discarding seeds and stem. Place the peppers on the foil and roast in the oven, until the skin turns black.
- Remove from the oven and place a towel over the peppers (or place them in a lidded container). Once they're cooled, the skin should peel off easily, and they're ready to use!

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Raw sliced sweet peppers can serve as a snack.
- Add raw slices to a salad for color and crunch.
- Make enchiladas, tacos, or fajitas that feature sweet peppers.
- Add to soups, stews, and omelets.



SWEET PEPPERS



CAFETERIA
Sample Recipes

Sautéed Sweet Peppers and Onion (50 servings, ¼ cup)

Ingredients

3 pounds bell peppers;
red, orange, and yellow,
if available

3–4 red or sweet onions,
diced

½ cup olive oil

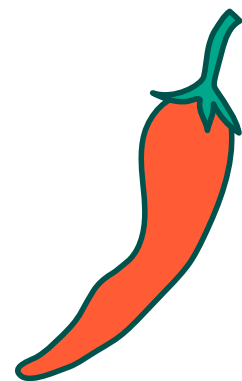
Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Wash peppers and remove stem, ribs, and seeds. Cut peppers lengthwise into strips and then halve crosswise.
2. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet. Add peppers and onions and season with salt and pepper. You'll likely have to cook in batches to avoid overcrowding. Stir occasionally, until peppers are softened, approximately 10 minutes.

Variations:

You can make pesto dairy free by substituting sunflower or pumpkin seeds for the cheese.





SWEET PEPPERS



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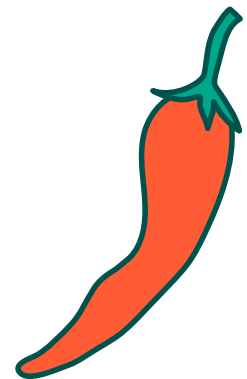
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SWEET PEPPERS



Home
Recipe for Home

Roasted Red Pepper Bean Dip (Serves 4–6 people)

Ingredients

1 (12 ounce) can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed

1 (ounce) jar roasted red peppers, drained

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 clove garlic

½ teaspoon salt,
more to taste

⅓ teaspoon pepper,
more to taste

Instructions

1. Add all ingredients to a food processor or blender and blend until completely smooth. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with assorted raw veggies such as carrots and celery, or use as a spread on sandwiches.

Sharing home recipes

How do you prepare or eat sweet peppers at home?

What are some family recipes that include sweet peppers?

Are there recipes you can share with your FoodCorps member for future taste tests?

