

FOOD EXPERIENCE ACTIVITIES

Food experiences at school and in the classroom provide children with opportunities to try nutritious foods in a positive environment. Children are more likely to try healthy foods when they see adults and other children enjoying these foods. The more often children are offered a new food, the more likely they are to try and enjoy the food.

When offering foods in the classroom, proper hand-washing is very important.

Tips for Success

- ✓ The goal of a food experiences is to introduce students to new foods. Offer small tastes, not large portions.
- ✓ Children are very proud and happy to be involved in food preparation. Touching, feeling and smelling the food before tasting it helps overcome caution.
- ✓ New foods may be more acceptable when offered with a familiar food.
- ✓ Allow and instruct students to refuse trying a food by saying “no thank-you” and discourage negative comments.
- ✓ Offer foods with a napkin and instruct to politely spit food into the napkin if they do not want to swallow it. Even having it in the mouth is a food experience. Have water available to drink.
- ✓ Have a discussion about the food experience. Ask the children to describe the food (i.e. the taste, texture and appearance). The attached “Food Tasting Chart” (page 12) can be used. Because food acceptability changes over time, avoid asking whether they liked the food or not.
- ✓ Have students keep track of new foods they have tried at school. When students share this with their families it encourages them to try these foods at home.

About Children’s Food Acceptance

- Children may need to be *exposed* to a new food eight or more times before they will *taste* the food. (Dietitians of Canada, 2007)
- Children who have a very keen sense of taste or smell may find strong tastes or smells not initially appealing.
- The “mouth feel” and acceptance of a mouth feel of a food can vary among people.
- The colour, shape and presentation of a food can influence whether a child wants to try a food or not.
- Past experiences and whether they were negative or positive can affect food acceptance.
- It is normal for some children to be more cautious than others to try foods.

Information on this topic for parents can be found at the Ellyn Satter Institute Website: “How Children Learn to Eat New Food” www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/childrens-eating-and-growth/#how-children-learn-to-eat-new-food.

Safety

- Some children need to avoid some foods due to medical, cultural, religious or familial reasons. Send a note to parents/caregivers to inform them that you will be doing food experiences and ask them to respond with any food restrictions.
- During the shopping, handling, storing and preparation of foods, food safety needs to be considered. For general information and for information about specific foods, go to the Government of Canada Website on Food Safety: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-safety.html and www.canfightbac.org/en/

FOOD TASTING CHART

Food Tasting Chart

Name:

Name or picture of food	How does it look? (shape, colour, size)	How does it feel when you touch it?	How does it taste (ie sweet, salty, sour, bitter)?