

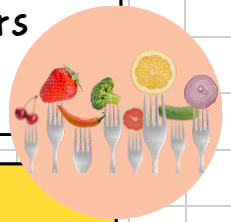
Getting Started with Classroom & Schoolwide tasting



Why taste tests?

"Students are often reluctant to try new foods. Taste tests introduce new menu items in a way that raises awareness about healthy food choices, involves the school community, and builds a culture of trying new foods. Research has shown that children (and adults!) need to try new foods multiple times (up to twelve times!) before integrating them into their diet....Students may not like kale as kindergarteners, but providing regular opportunities for students to try it in various forms (chips, salads, smoothies, etc.) throughout their school years can lead to a whole new generation of kale lovers!"

- Vermont FEED, Farm to School Program



Two School Nutrition Goals:

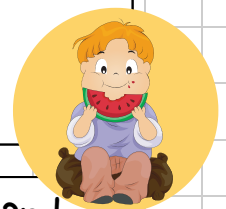
1. **Expose** children to new foods and foods prepared in new and unfamiliar ways.
2. **Student Voice and Choice:** gather student feedback and preferences to inform school menu choices, increase efficiency, and reduce food waste.

tasting? taste test? or tasty Challenge?

Tasting: Any time you provide a child the opportunity to TRY a new food.

WHERE: You might choose to conduct tastings in the cafeteria, classroom, or even in the garden!

Learning: tastings are often integrated into some kind of hands-on lesson.



taste test: Expose children to new foods and foods prepared in new and unfamiliar ways.

Student Voice and Choice: gather student feedback and preferences to inform school menu choices, increase efficiency, and reduce food waste.



tasty Challenge: Allowing children to taste and COMPARE TWO products and then vote for their favorite.

Student Voice and Choice: tasty Challenges are great ways for both introducing new foods, but also for informing school menu choices.

Recommendations



Start Small

Dream big but Start small! Begin with your class, your club, or an event.

For example:

A lesson on growing in the garden or pollination, healthy eating or building strong minds, etc. can be accompanied by a related tasting/taste test/tasty challenge.

If you lead a garden club, environmental club, etc., consider incorporating tastings when possible.

Perhaps a special event such as Back to School Night, Farm to School Week; National School Nutrition Month, Earth Day, or special holiday celebrations that include the community, could serve as a reach from the classroom out into the greater school body and beyond to the community.

Have A Plan For Growth

Consider utilizing resources available to create a regularly occurring classroom tasting schedule or even a greater schoolwide tasting program. Incorporating tastings into a whole school culture of health and cooperating with school staff across departments is the best avenue for sustaining your tasting program.

- Follow the **Jersey Tastes Harvest of the Month Program**
- Follow the NJ Farm to School **Cream of the Crop** growth rubric
- Pair your tasting program with already scheduled monthly school events, celebrations, or spirit weeks...
- Work with a diverse team to create a **calendar** to allow for proper planning and cooperation.
- Implement partnership programs such as the NJ Farm to School **Volunteer Ambassador Program**
(details @ <https://nj.gov/agriculture/farmtoschool/programs/volunteer-ambassador/>)
- Have a **media plan!** Sharing your program allows for a shift in the greater conversation around food! It also makes room for stronger community support!



Mechanics



Who, When, Where, Why, What

WHO: How many students will you will be serving? (A classroom? the whole student body? Community guests?)

Who will prepare the food, run the taste test, and clean up?

Who will be invited to participate? (NOTE: Send an invite to your principal, school nurse /nutrition specialist, and your food service manager and food service director!

WHEN:

timing is important to consider, particularly if you are working with other school staff: communicate and coordinate with your principal, cafeteria staff, wellness team, other teachers, janitorial staff, volunteers, and guests to determine time(s) that best fits your supportive participants.

WHERE:

Where will you conduct the tasting? (Cafeteria, Classroom, School Garden, special event, etc.)

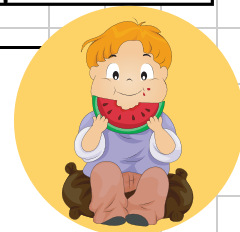
- Your space should fit your group size and serving needs.

Where will the food need to be prepared? (Cafeteria, Home Ec Room)

- This will depend on what you serve, the quantity needed, and the equipment needed to prepare.

Why: the purpose of your tasting, taste test, or tasty challenge. Are you seeking to expose students to new foods, enrich a food lesson, highlight a local food, inform school menu change, or celebrate local food culture?

Depending on your purpose, it is important to gather relevant and measurable feedback from your tasters.



What: Will you be serving a particular fruit, vegetable, beverage, single food item, or new recipe?

- Depending on the number of people you will be serving, proper ingredient procurement, recipe projections, equipment needs, spacing, volunteers, and all other logistics should be planned.
- Consider taste test items and recipes that are also culturally relevant to the student body, greater community, related to the holiday or event, or to incorporate culturally relevant food into a lesson.

****utilize your taste test check list**



Best Practices to Consider



Know Ahead of time

1. Have a **checklist** of tasks, needs, and deadlines. Assign roles. **See EXAMPLE checklist
2. Will you be working with a particular **budget**? If you are growing a program, how will you create and fund a budget?
 - Consider HSA funding, donations, or local funding from organizations such as Rotary, etc.
3. What **supplies** will you need and will you need to borrow anything from your cafeteria such as utensils or serving trays?
4. How will you **enlist volunteer help** from within your school and from the community?
 - Consider avenues of outreach that already exist: PTA/PTO, HSA, Room Parents, sign-ups at school events or with beginning of the year required paperwork.
5. How will you **BUILD INTEREST** and utilize your **media** outlets?
 - Consider school and School Nutrition social media pages; school website, newsletters, classroom and school email announcements, letters home, school food Menus, in-school posters and bulletin boards, school board meeting announcements...your media is as large or as small as your imagination! BUT CELEBRATE YOUR PROGRAMS - let people know about the good happenings of you class and school!
6. **COLLECT AND UTILIZE FEEDBACK DATA - Student Voice & Choice**
 - Is your tasting purely educational? Then what did students learn?
 - Will your tasting inform **possible school menu change**? How will you communicate feedback data to your food service leadership to inform menu planning and procurement choices?
 - Will you **celebrate** student feedback by announcing results on the school bulletin board or in morning announcements?
7. LASTLY, consider tastings and recipes that are **culturally relevant** to your student body and community - does the food you are sharing invite a **sense of belonging and identity**? Will the students both recognize recipes but also enjoy the excitement of new flavors?

