

FARM TO PRESCHOOL TASTE TEST GUIDE

WHAT IS A TASTE TEST?

A taste test is an activity that introduces children to foods and beverages they may not have tried before. Taste tests encourage children to eat healthy food options offered both at home and the center. Children who try healthier food options are more likely to continue these choices for a lifetime of healthy eating. A taste test provides an opportunity to reinforce healthy eating messages in a fun, interactive way. Taste testing can be used to explore the senses and help teach children that eating smart isn't just healthy, but also tasty.

There are several ways to conduct a taste test. Ideally, children are given several chances to try many different foods during the year to help develop healthy eating habits and make better food choices. A taste test can be conducted during snack time, mealtime, or as a stand-alone activity in the classroom. Taste tests can also be conducted in conjunction with another event at the center, such as a Family Night celebration.

The tasting can be done using a single food or can include multiple foods or food groups. During taste tests, books about particular foods the children are tasting can be read during circle time or other classroom activities.

Let families know in advance you'll be hosting a taste test so the center can be made aware of any allergies or sensitivities their child may have. After the taste test, help each child complete an Eat Smart...It's a Matter of Taste I Tried It Card. Send this card home to let families know the foods their child tried at the center.

Incorporating different themes can make the overall taste test experience more fun for the children. The following are some taste test theme ideas:

Taste the Alphabet

Helps preschoolers learn about all the varieties of foods and snacks from A to Z.

Taste the Rainbow

Helps preschoolers learn about the colors of foods

Pizza Party

Healthy pizza can be made with whole grain crust, sauce, a variety, or vegetables, and part-skim mozzarella cheese.

Fruit or Garden Salad

Can include many different fruits or vegetables for sampling.



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TASTE TEST

- **Prepare To Grow.** Involve the children and all of their senses in exploring the fruit or vegetables. Place the fruit or vegetable in a brown paper bag and ask the children to describe what is in the bag. For example, is it soft? Is it hard? Does it have a smell? Is it cold? Is it smooth? Children are more likely to try a food they have explored.
- **Sow Seeds of Success.** Children will be more willing to try a food if they know it is okay to remove something they do like rather than swallow. Never force a child to eat a food. Model how to politely decline to taste a food or use a napkin to remove the food from the mouth.
- **Seed and Re-seed.** Plan to offer the foods many different times. Studies show some children need to be offered a food up to five times before they will taste it. In addition, the food may need to be offered more than a dozen times before a child will choose to eat it at a meal. Do not give up – some seeds take longer to grow than others.
- **Start in Fertile Ground.** Offer new foods first to children willing to try new things. Watching a peer eat a food can help the most reluctant eater bud into a food taster.
- **Be Still, Little Seed.** For safety's sake, have the children eat while seated, not walking around. Moving while eating can increase the risk of choking.
- **Offer Bites, Not Bushels.** Offer small tastes of food at first. A child can be overwhelmed by a large portion and may even refuse to try a food, fearing it must be finished. Portions need to be small enough for small mouths and large enough so a child has to chew the food. It is safer to have a piece that cannot be swallowed whole. Be prepared to offer more if a child desires to taste it again.
- **Know the Growing Season.** Fresh fruits and vegetables in season usually taste best and are less expensive. Fresh produce is available year round; peak flavor and value frequently coincide with the growing season. Frozen or canned foods offer an option for fruits and vegetables out of season.
 - **Use locally grown produce when possible.** Refer to the Palmetto Picks, South Carolina Harvest Finder, SC Produce Availability Table and other resources from the South Carolina Department of Agriculture to determine which produce is in season.
 - **Invite local farmers to come talk to the children.** To locate local farmers, use the SC farmer profile on the SC Farm to Preschool website.

TASTE TEST REMINDERS

- Wash hands well!
- Make sure that anyone involved with preparing and serving foods at taste tests is practicing safe handling food practices.
- Have options for children with allergies.
- Sit down while tasting.
- Do not forget to clean up!



For more information on food safety, refer to:

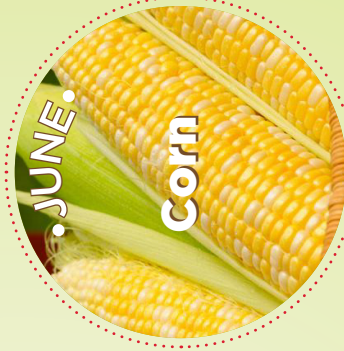
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Kitchen_Companion.pdf?redirecthttp=true

The document was adapted from “Eat Smart...It’s A Matter of Taste”, Eat Smart, Move More, Grow Healthy Toolkit; SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, 2012.



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PALMETTO PICK OF THE MONTH



EAT SMART...IT'S A MATTER OF TASTE

I Tried It Card

Today I tried: _____

I (circle one):



- Really liked it
- Liked it
- It's not my favorite, but I will try it again



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