

READY

Children taste a variety of fruits and/or vegetables with healthy dips.

SET

- Check with children and parents about food allergies.
- Review Safe Food Handling Techniques on page 55.
- Copy one Rate the Taste worksheet for each child.
- Prepare fruits and vegetables into bite-sized pieces close to serving time, so that they stay fresh. (Hint: Purchasing pre-cut fruits and vegetables can reduce prep time, but may increase costs.)
- Place a variety of vegetables on a small plate for each child. Do the same for the fruits on a separate plate. Be sure to add familiar and favorite selections in with new, less familiar selections to encourage the tasting of these nutritious fruits and vegetables. As an alternative to raw vegetables, you may want to blanch some vegetables by putting them in boiling water for about one minute, removing them, and rinsing them quickly with cold water.
- Place a tablespoon of lowfat/nonfat salad dressing on the side of the vegetables and a tablespoon of lowfat/nonfat vanilla yogurt on the side of the fruit.
- If appropriate, promote this special Taste It! event to parents and community members.

GO

1. Have the children wash their hands with soap and water and clean the areas in which they will taste the food. If soap and water are unavailable, provide children with antibacterial wipes and ask them to thoroughly clean their hands before you begin.
2. Share with the children the steps that you took to make sure the food they are tasting is safe to eat. Explain that the fresh fruits and vegetables were washed with water, even those that are peeled, and the tops of the canned items were rinsed before they were opened.
3. Set some ground rules for your tasting activity. Ask the children not to make any negative comments or faces if they taste something they don't like. Give them permission to quietly and politely remove food from their mouths into a napkin. This encourages children to try new foods without fear.
4. Tell the children which fruits and vegetables they will taste today. Ask them if they have tried any of them before.
5. Distribute one plate of vegetables and one plate of fruits to each child. Give each child a Rate the Taste worksheet and a pencil or pen.
6. Encourage the children to try each fruit and vegetable without dip before they try it with dip. Remind them that using dips can add calories and fat. They should limit dips, use small portions of dip, and try to use dips that are low in sugar and fat.

Taste It!



TIME

- Prep — 25 minutes (may vary depending upon number and type of samples)
- Activity — 35 minutes

MATERIALS

- Raw vegetables and fruits, such as:
 - Vegetables: bell peppers (red, green, and yellow), broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, celery, jicama, radish, or zucchini
 - Fruits: apples, bananas, kiwifruit, mangos, nectarines, papayas, pears, plums, strawberries, or watermelon
- Lowfat/nonfat salad dressing
- Lowfat/nonfat vanilla yogurt
- Two small plates per child
- Napkins
- Tablespoons for dips
- Copy of one Rate the Taste worksheet for each child
- A pencil or pen for each child



Taste It!

7. Ask the children to complete the Rate the Taste worksheet. Older children can use adjectives to describe each item.
8. After the tasting is complete, lead a discussion asking the children the following questions:
 - Which vegetable was your favorite?
 - Which fruit was your favorite?
 - Would anyone like to share the adjectives they wrote about their favorite fruit or vegetable?
 - Were there any fruits or vegetables that you liked more than you thought you would? Why?
 - Which of the fruits and vegetables that we tasted today do you eat at home?
 - Are there any fruits and vegetables that you tasted today that you are going to ask for at home now?
9. Conclude the activity by encouraging the children to ask for their favorite fruits and vegetables at home.

GO FARTHER

- Have older children prepare taste tests of similar fruits and vegetables for others in the organization.
- Have children taste test blindfolded and guess what they are tasting.
- Have children draw a picture of their favorite fruit and vegetable that they tasted.
- Brainstorm different healthy toppings or dips that could be used with fruits and vegetables.

BRING IT HOME

- Ask children to share their Rate the Taste worksheets with family members.
- Have children take home their drawings to share with their families.

Try to conduct the tasting using fruits and vegetables that will be new to the children.

The activity will be more exciting if there are new and colorful options such as:

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| • Artichokes | • Grapefruit | • Passion fruit | • Squash (spaghetti, summer, and winter) |
| • Avocados | • Melon (cantaloupe, honeydew) | • Pears | • Sugar snap peas |
| • Asparagus | • Jicama | • Persimmon | • Sweet potatoes |
| • Bok choy | • Kiwifruit | • Quince | • Tamarind |
| • Cantaloupe | • Kumquats | • Radishes | • Water chestnuts |
| • Dried fruit (dried peaches or dried apricots) | • Lychee | • Bell peppers (red, green, and yellow) | • Watermelon |
| • Eggplant | • Mango | • Rhubarb | • Zucchini |
| • Figs | • Red cabbage | • Rutabaga | |
| | • Papaya | | |

You have several options for the taste test:

- Taste the same fruit or vegetable prepared several different ways (e.g., a steamed/microwaved vegetable and a raw vegetable)
- Taste fruits and vegetables that are all the same color (e.g., green: avocados, kiwifruit, peas, broccoli, etc.)

- Taste many different types of a fruit or vegetable (e.g., samples of green peppers, red peppers, and yellow peppers, or different varieties of apples)
- Provide different dips for fruits and vegetables (e.g., lowfat salad dressing with vegetables and lowfat yogurt with fruits)

To keep the cost down, purchase fruits and vegetables that are in season. You also can request donations from a local grocer, farmers' market, produce grower, produce distributor, or restaurant. See the Appendix for a sample donation request letter.



Safe Food Handling Techniques

Cooking and preparing foods are great ways to have fun, but play it safe and follow these simple safety tips.

General Food Safety

There are four simple keys to making sure that your food is safe from harmful bacteria:

- *Clean:* Always wash your hands, utensils, and surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after preparing food.
- *Separate:* Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separate from other foods when they are stored and when you are preparing them.
- *Cook:* Be sure to cook food for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria.
- *Chill:* Put prepared foods and leftovers into the refrigerator or freezer as soon as possible. Don't defrost foods at room temperature. Thaw them in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave.

Fruit and Vegetable Safety

- Rinse all fruits and vegetables with water, even if you don't eat the outside of the fruit or vegetable (such as bananas, cantaloupe, or oranges). If necessary, use a small vegetable brush to remove surface dirt. Before opening them, rinse the tops of the cans when using canned fruits and vegetables.
- Try to cut away damaged or bruised areas of fruits and vegetables.
- Use juices that have been pasteurized or treated to kill harmful bacteria. Pasteurized juices can be found in refrigerated sections of stores. Treated juices can be kept on the shelf in stores and are in juice boxes, bottles, and cans. Unpasteurized or untreated juice should have a warning label that says, "This product has not been pasteurized and therefore may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems."

Cooking Safety

- Always use clean, dry oven mitts whenever you use the oven.
- When cooking on the stove, make sure pot handles are turned away from the front of the stove so the pots are not accidentally bumped or knocked off.
- When uncovering a pot on the stove or a container from the microwave, open the lid away from you to let the steam out.
- Always turn the sharp edge of a knife or vegetable peeler away from you as you use it (use caution when handling a cheese grater, too). Keep your finger tips away from the sharp edge of the knife when cutting.
- Use a cutting board when you chop or slice ingredients.
- Keep the lid on when using a blender. Turn the blender off before you put any utensils inside the blender container.

For more information on food safety, visit www.foodsafety.gov.