

Host a Family Taste Test

Overview

Make trying new foods less intimidating for children by inviting them to join you in the kitchen when cooking, planning a grocery list or for a healthy taste test! Taste tests provide children with opportunities to learn more about new foods in a fun and relaxing setting and encourages them to step out of their comfort zone by opening up to unfamiliar foods and become more aware of likes and dislikes. Make your taste test as simple or as grand as you'd like with these tips and resources!

Take Action

Invite Children to Help with Set-Up

- Pick a spot for your taste test. The kitchen table or outside on a picnic blanket? Not so nice weather - set up a picnic taste test on the living room floor!
- Learn about the origin of your food.
 - [Explore Farm to Table](#) to better understand the journey from seed to market.
 - See an interesting new fruit or vegetable at the grocery store? Give it a try! Have children learn more about the mystery fruit by googling the history and origin of the food. Ask children to make connections across different cultures and to compare similar foods and culinary practices.
 - For example, on your next grocery run, pick up a plantain and a banana. Research the difference between the extremely similar fruits and you may find that plantains are in the banana family but contain less sugar and taste less sweet than traditional bananas. They are also used differently around the world!
- Prepare your chosen taste test food in different ways to show children how the preparation of food changes the taste.
 - For example, try making baked sweet potato fries in the oven and sprinkle one half with salt and garlic powder and the other half with

cinnamon for both sweet and savory tastes of nutritious sweet potatoes.

- Allow children to touch, smell, squish, and poke the food to break down any walls of fear or obscurity. When children use all five of the senses to learn about a new food, it helps them ease into a new experience.

Create a Rating System

- Ask each family member to categorize each new food they taste. Categories can include but are not limited to: "I Love It", "I Like It", or "I Tried It". Talk to children about appropriate and respectful methods to communicate their likes and dislikes with others. Teach children to respect others' tastes and preferences even if they may differ from their own.
- To create a more detailed rating system, ask family members to rate their foods from 1-10, 10 being their favorite food of the taste test and 1 being their least favorite.



Explore Cuisine Across Different Cultures

- Choose a specific region of the world to focus on for your family taste test. Start with more familiar cuisines and work your way up to other areas of the world. A good place to start is to search the internet for "traditional [enter cuisine type] healthy foods." Experiencing foods from contrasting cultures allows children to broaden their perspective of the world and gain a social understanding of cultural differences.

Pick Your Favorites and Think Big

- After your taste test is over, ask each family member to list their favorites. Can you create a recipe using many or all of these foods? Use collaboration and communication skills to create a specific family recipe including many of your family's new favorites.

- Involve all family members in the cooking of new dishes. Cooking with children teaches children confidence in the kitchen and a deeper connection with the physical, mental, and social impacts of food.

Tips



Incorporate well-known foods into taste tests to make the experience less daunting. Allow children to try familiar and unfamiliar foods at their own pace. Never force a child to consume the foods.



Extend your family taste-test out to the entire family regardless of where they live by hosting a *virtual* family taste test! Send the ingredients to other family members in advance. Once everyone has set up a similar workspace with similar ingredients, create a video chat or phone call to share the experience from near and far.



When tasting fruits and vegetables, show students the fruit or vegetable in its whole and cut up forms. This will help students identify the fruit or vegetable in the grocery store.

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

Resources

[Farm to Preschool Taste Test Guide](#)
([Quality Care for Children](#))

[Tips and Information on Fruits and Vegetables \(Food and Fun\)](#)

Taste Tests With a Twist

Make taste tests interesting by putting a sweet or savory spin on a food that's traditionally the opposite. Don't be afraid to mix unique flavors!

Host a Taste Test

Expose your students to a variety of healthy food items so they'll eat better!

Easy Nutrition Education Activities

Use digital learning resources to take nutrition education at home to the next level.

Playing With Food

Encourage curiosity surrounding food by encouraging children to play with their food.