



Taste the Colors

Target Audience

Children, ages 3 to 4

Behavior Objectives

Children who participate in this activity will:

- Touch fruits and vegetables, describing their colors, shapes, sizes, and smell.
- Try a bite of an unfamiliar fruit or vegetable.

Lesson Overview



20-MINUTE ACTIVITY!

- As an activity opener, use colorful fruits and vegetables and Power Panther finger puppets to tell children that “tasting the colors” is good for you!
- Children use words to describe colorful fruits and vegetables: how food looks, feels, smells, and sounds.
- For the tasting activity, the children taste and describe how the fruit or vegetable tastes. Recognize and reinforce participants by giving an Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ fruit or vegetable sticker. Repeat activity.
- Each child receives the family handouts, *Together at Home ... Let's Try New Foods!* to share with his or her family at home.



Colorful fruits and vegetables are fun for kids to eat - and they're good for them, too!

Materials

- Gather supplies for tasting: plate or tray to display the food, cutting board, small knife, and paper napkins.
- Gather and arrange four different cut and/or uncut fruits and vegetables on plates so you can talk about how they look on the inside and the outside. Consider seasonal, locally grown, or dried fruits.
- Order enough Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Power Panther stickers for each child at www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/orderform.htm
- Make copies of the two-page family handout *Together at Home ... Let's Try New Foods!* to give to each child to take home.



Background Information for Leaders

Use this information to guide your fruit and vegetable activities with children and their parents. It's not meant to be presented directly to children.

Fruits and vegetables help active, growing children stay healthy.

- Different colors of fruits and vegetables have different nutrients. Eating colorful fruits and vegetables is fun and healthy.
- Learning to taste, eat, and enjoy a variety of fruits and vegetables in childhood sets the stage for enjoying them throughout life.

Fruits and vegetables come in many different colors, sizes, shapes, textures, and tastes.

- Children learn and practice basic skills (e.g., observation, language, comparing, using their senses) as they discover, talk about, and taste different fruits and vegetables.

Fruits and vegetables that might be used in the “Taste the Colors” lesson include:

- red: tomatoes, beets, red pepper, radishes, strawberries, red apples, watermelon
- yellow: summer squash, corn, yellow pepper, bananas, lemon, pineapple
- green: green pepper, broccoli, cabbage, spinach, celery, okra, collard greens, bok choy, green grapes, kiwifruit, lime
- blue/purple: eggplant, blueberries, plums, purple grapes
- orange: carrot, sweet potato, acorn squash, orange, apricot, peach, mango
- white: cauliflower, onion, parsnip, jicama

For a more comprehensive list of fruits and vegetables by color category and for words to describe fruits and vegetables, refer to *Fruits and Vegetables by Color Category*, in *Fruits & Vegetables Galore: Helping Kids Eat More*. To view and download: www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/fv_galore.html



Information for Leaders *(continued)*

Encouraging children to try and accept new fruits and vegetables is more successful when they can taste them:

- Offer a familiar food and a new food at the same time.
- Offer a new fruit or vegetable when a child is hungry.
- Involve the child. Let them help choose and help you wash, prepare, and serve fruits and vegetables for tasting.
- Prepare fruits and vegetables for tasting in different ways. Finger foods are fun and easy! Cut into different shapes: chunks, strips, triangles.
- Offer a new food to a more adventuresome child first. Others will follow.
- Talk about the color, shape, feel, smell, sound, and taste - not about liking or disliking the food.
- Offer tiny tastes. Cut foods for tasting in bite-size pieces. Avoid fruits and vegetables a young child might choke on: whole grapes or hard vegetables, such as large raw carrot pieces.
- Encourage at least one bite, but let them decide if they want to taste. Avoid forcing a child to taste.
- Be a role model. Taste fruits and vegetables together.
 - Try again since a child may be cautious. Children may need to try a new fruit or vegetable 6 to 12 times before accepting it.
 - Respect differences. A child doesn't need to taste or like every food.
 - Be aware of any food sensitivities.
 - Be sure children have clean hands before they handle or taste food.



Teaching Activities

- 1. Introduce the tasting party...** to get children thinking about the fun of trying fruits and vegetables.
 - Explain that today they will have fun with a tasting party. They will taste some colorful fruits and vegetables as part of the fun!
- 2. Bring out the fruits and vegetables.**
 - Give children time to look (color, shape, size), feel, and smell.
 - Practice the names of the new foods as you explore them together.
 - Ask: How does this food:
 - Look? [green, orange, purple, round, skinny, oval, tiny, huge]
 - Feel? [fuzzy, smooth, bumpy, prickly, soft, hard, hot, icy]
 - Smell? [sweet, sour]
 - Ask: How are these foods alike and different?
- 3. Taste the colors...** give children the chance to be food tryers and taste one or more fruits and vegetables that are new.
 - Look at the cut fruits and vegetables. Talk about the inside color, any seeds or sections, and how they smell.
 - Invite children to try just one small bite of the food. Join the one-bite club with them. Trying just one bite is enough to talk about the taste. However, some children may not want to taste.
 - Ask: What words describe how these foods taste? [sweet, salty, bitter, spicy, bland, sour] How does the food feel in your mouth? [smooth, crunchy]
 - Invite children to have another taste.
- 4. Give every child an Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ sticker for joining in.**

If a child decides not to taste this time, that's okay.
Encourage the child to taste next time.

 - Review by asking: What colors did we taste today?



Extra Teaching Activities

If you have more than 20 minutes, these are some extra activities you might do.

☀️ **Create simple finger puppets...** put a fruit or vegetable sticker (broccoli, carrots, tomato, orange, grapes, strawberries) and a Power Panther sticker from the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ stickers on seven of your fingertips. Gather children in a circle. Introduce each finger puppet with a wiggle of your finger(s) with the sticker(s) and these words:

- “I’m the Power Panther. I eat veggies every day. *[Teacher wiggles fingers.]* Veggies give me power to help me learn and play. Can you name my ‘veggie friends?’” *[Children name broccoli, carrot, and tomato.]*
- “I’m the Power Panther. I eat fruits every day. Fruits give me power to help me learn and play. Can you name my ‘fruity friends?’” *[Children name grapes, orange, and strawberries.]*
- “We’re the fruits and vegetables. Do you eat us every day? Fruits and veggies give you power to help you learn and play. Can you name our bright colors?” *[Teacher wiggles one fruit or vegetable finger at a time as children name their colors.]*
- Everyone says, “Taste the colors!”



- Print out Power Panther clip art: www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Zone/clipart.html

☀️ **Color them healthy...** With the children’s help, make a “Taste the Colors!” bulletin board display of fruit and vegetable pictures. Children may color or draw their own pictures with crayons, markers, or paint, or find colorful magazine pictures. Add clip art of Power Panther and the words “Taste the Colors!”

☀️ **Sing together!** Add some music and fun by singing the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Power Panther songs (*Power Panther is Here* and *If You Wanna Be Like the Power Panther*): www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/collection/collect_tools.html

At-Home Activities

When you talk with parents, you might suggest these activities. Encourage children to “taste the colors” of other fruits and vegetables.

- ☀️ **Give each child** the two-page family handout, *Together ... Let's Try New Foods!* One side of the handout has tips for parents on helping children try new foods, and the other side has an “I tried it” chart to keep track of new foods the child tastes. Encourage them to try fruits and vegetables!
- ☀️ **Read about fruits and vegetables...** Visit the library together to find children’s books about fruits and vegetables (such as, *The Carrot Seed* by Krauss, *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z* by Ehlert, *Blueberries for Sal* by McCloskey, *Cherries and Cherry Pits* by Williams). Talk about the story and the picture. Have children re-tell the stories in their own words. Plan to taste the foods you read about.
- ☀️ **Plant a tasting garden.** Encourage parents to plant vegetables or herbs in their backyard or in pots. For young children, a two-foot garden or a single pot is big enough. These are some easy vegetables and herbs to grow: cherry tomatoes, lettuce, bell peppers, onions, and zucchini... and basil, chives, parsley, mint, and rosemary. For help with gardening, give parents these handouts:



- *Gardening Together*, from *The USDA Team Nutrition Calendar Companion*:
www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/calendarcompanion.html
- *Team Nutrition Days ... and Beyond*:
www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/howtokit.html
- *Grow a Family Garden* from *Nibbles for Health*:
www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/grow_garden.pdf
- *Seeds Grow and So Do We* and *Grow Your Own Herb Garden* from *Tickle Your Appetite for Child Care*:
www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/tickle.html

Community or School-Wide Activities

“Taste the Colors” with the Power Panther™

Invite the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ spokescharacter, Power Panther, to bring attention and fun to your community’s health, nutrition, food, or education events. Power Panther can give Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ stickers to kids who participate in these events. The Power Panther costume is available for loan at no cost to those groups or individuals associated with FNS programs. Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Web site (www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Zone/costume.html) tells you about the Power Panther and provides information on booking, and using the costume.

Useful Resources

- **Additional Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Resources**

www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard

- **Making Nutrition Count for Children**

www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/nutritioncount.html

- **Tickle Your Appetite for Child Care**

www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/tickle.html

To order: National Food Service Management Institute

www.nfsmi.org/Information/Guide.html

- **Nibbles for Health**

www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles.html

- **Sense-ational Food poster**

Includes parent take-home sheets on backside of poster

www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/sensational.html (English)

www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/sp-sensational.html (Spanish)

We want to hear from you! Share your success stories with the Food and Nutrition Service by sending news clippings, photos, and event descriptions to: eatsmartplayhard@fns.usda.gov

Together at Home... Let's Try New Foods!

Enjoy all kinds of foods! That's good advice for kids – and for you. When kids learn to enjoy many foods, they have more choices for smart eating throughout life. That's good because different foods promote growth and health in different ways. Food variety makes eating more interesting and fun, too. Remember: seeing, trying, comparing, and talking about different foods is part of learning.

Good feelings about trying new foods help lead to a lifetime of healthful eating. Try new fruits and vegetables as fun experiences with your child.

- **Offer a new food first, before foods your child eats already.** Kids usually are more willing to try new foods when they are hungry.
- **Have your child choose a new food as you shop.** Trying new foods is more fun for kids when they pick them.
- **Do a taste test. Talk about a new food.** Have your child describe the color, shape, feel, smell, sound, and taste – and not whether your child likes or dislikes it.
- **Go for at least “one bite.”** But stay away from forcing your child to taste. Keep food trying positive.
- **Try new foods, too.** Encourage your whole family to try new foods! Kids copy what they see and hear. Don't say anything if you don't like the food.
- **Prepare new foods in different ways.** Many kids prefer to pick up raw vegetables with fingers. That may seem better than the same new vegetable that is cooked.
- **Try and try again.** Many kids need to try a new food 6 to 12 times before they like it. It's normal for kids to be cautious at first.
- **Relax.** Your child doesn't need to like every food. Everyone (you, too) has different food favorites.



Together at Home... Let's Try New Foods!

Clip this!

Give your child credit for trying new foods. Keep an "I tried it" chart on the refrigerator. Write the name of each new food. Your child can add a star ★ each time he or she tries it.

I Tried It!

My New Food

Tasting Stars ★★

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____



Handout 2

Taste the Colors

Try this:

Use new words as you explore new foods together.

Ask: How does this food:

- Look? Green, orange, purple, round, skinny, oval, tiny, huge
- Feel? Fuzzy, smooth, bumpy, prickly, soft, hard, hot, icy
- Sound? Crunch, crackle, splash, pop, snap
- Taste? Sweet, salty, bitter, spicy, bland, sour

