

# STEP-BY-STEP TASTE TESTING VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

Follow the best practices for group taste testing by using the checklist provided here. Print it out, laminate it, and display it in a place where food is prepared or served. Use a dry-erase marker to check boxes and monitor your progress.

## PREPARING TASTE TESTING

**Objective:** Prepare a safe and clean environment for young children to taste new vegetables and fruits.

- Determine if the taste test will be conducted during the meal or as a separate activity. Establish a routine for taste testing, making them part of the weekly schedule.
- Share what will be tasted with families ahead of time to ensure children do not have allergies. Plan to have an alternative option available or an alternative way for the child to participate as needed.
- Follow standard food-safety guidelines such as hand washing, rinsing vegetables and fruits, and cleaning the preparation area. Consider if the food might be a choking hazard for some children. Steamed vegetables and small bites lessen the choking hazard.
- Prepare the featured vegetable or fruit. Consider preparing it with seasoning/spices or serving with a complementary dip or spread.
- Let the children help prepare the vegetable or fruit in a way that is age appropriate.
- As with mealtimes, set the table together with needed plates, napkins, and placemats.
- Give clear directions to begin tasting. Demonstrating directions will help with understanding before starting.
- Model positive language that children may use to express their opinion and to describe what they are tasting. For example, “yum,” “tasty,” or “hmm, I’m not sure yet.”
- Emphasize respect for each other and taking turns to share opinions and describe the taste, texture, aroma, and color.
- Print one Taste-Test Worksheet for each child. See the Tools section.

## READY TO BEGIN

**Objective:** Facilitate a positive tasting and learning experience for young children.

- Gather around the table family-style with washed hands and space for all.
- Take time for each child to see, touch, smell, taste, hear (tapping, crunch in mouth) the vegetable or fruit. Guide the discussion on what the children are sensing, allowing time for questions.
- Allow children to serve themselves, with the teachers setting the positive environment and offering encouragement.
- Have fun with it. Be positive and encouraging without trying to influence the child’s choices to taste or not to taste! Use descriptive names for vegetables and fruits to develop vocabulary (e.g., Greeny bean, Crunchy carrot, Spicy radish, etc.).
- Emphasize respect for each other and taking turns to share opinions and describe how the vegetable or fruit looks, feels, smells, sounds, and tastes. Ask questions as prompts.
- During the taste test, help children place a sticker or draw in the box that most reflects their reaction (i.e., I like this, I like this a little, I don’t like this yet, and I haven’t tried this yet) on the Taste-Test Worksheet.

## AFTER TAST TESTING

**Objective:** Evaluate the taste-testing process by reviewing the children’s reactions, making necessary adjustments, and planning for future success.

- Review the class results recorded on the Recording Reactions to Taste Test tool. How many children tasted the food? What elements did the children like or dislike?
- What additional activities can you do to strengthen the tasting experience? See Wraparound Activities for ideas.
- Consider consistency in the featured vegetable or fruit presentation. Can the family easily replicate it at home if directions are provided?



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