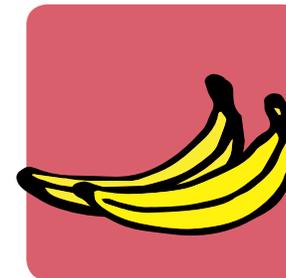


Conduct a Taste Test



A Lesson Plan for Engaging Students in the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement

EDUCATOR INFORMATION

Smarter Lunchrooms Background:

This lesson plan provides instructions for students to conduct a simple taste test, an effective Smarter Lunchrooms strategy to introduce students to new foods in a positive manner.

Smarter Lunchrooms Process:

This lesson follows the 4-Step Path to Building a Smarter Lunchroom. This lesson plan should be used after Step 1 of the 4-Step Path has been completed by one or more persons in the school where this lesson will be taught. Step 1 includes completion of the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard, taking photos indicated on the photo checklist, and reviewing these photos. Step 1 allows you to take an objective look at your cafeteria and service lines to help you to find opportunities to make simple changes in the lunchroom to help students make healthier choices.

Please review these resources:

> [Smarter Lunchrooms Handbook](#)

> [Montana Smarter Lunchrooms Success Stories](#)

> [Montana Educational Standards](#)

LESSON TIMEFRAME:

This lesson requires 2-3 (50-minute) class periods to complete.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Learn the benefits and steps to conducting a taste test in a school classroom or cafeteria.
- Complete a taste test and discuss ways to measure the success and/or impact of a taste test.
- Discuss ways to work cooperatively in completing a taste test.

LESSON MATERIALS, PREPARATION, & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

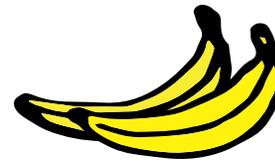
For this lesson, the following items will be needed:

- (Optional) Equipment to show YouTube videos (internet, screen, speakers)
- Access to a hand washing sink so students conducting a taste test can wash their hands before and during (if needed) the taste test
- Disposable food safety gloves for students to wear when conducting the taste test
- Adequate quantity of the food item to be tasted. The serving size can range from a teaspoon or tablespoon, up to an ounce per student
- Serving utensils; forks, spoons, plates, or napkins for students to use in taste test
- Use this easy Montana Taste Test “Try It, Like It, Love It,” process

Helpful hints and further resources:

- Inform the Food Service Director about this Smarter Lunchroom lesson, and invite her/him to collaborate with you on it. Ask her/him if she/he has a specific food item or new recipe that she/he would like to be tasted. This way, she/he could prepare the food item that would be used in the taste test.
- Decide on the date and the location of the taste test. Consult with the Food Service Director if she/he will be helping to prepare the food. Consider the location – will it be done just in your classroom with your students or do you and your students want to conduct the taste test with students from another classroom or will you conduct it with the entire school population in the cafeteria? If the taste test involves elementary students, ask the Food Service Director if the school participates in the USDA’s Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program and if a fresh fruit or vegetable that will be served for a future snack could be part of a taste test.
- Create a permission slip for students to have signed by their parents to allow them to safely participate. Make sure to note all food allergies or sensitivities!

- [Conducting Taste-Testing Activities in Schools: A Guide for Teachers and Administrators](#)



Introduction to the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement

Say: **“Today we are going to look at ways we can make small changes to encourage students to select, eat, and enjoy healthier foods in school without eliminating their choices.”**

Questions for students:

- Why do you think eating healthy foods is important?
- How do you think food choices impact our health?
- We make food choices every day. What do you think influences the food-related decisions that we make on a daily basis?
- Do you think our school environment impacts our food decisions? If so, how?
- Do you think there are ways we can improve our school lunchroom environment or the lunch line itself to encourage healthier choices?

Say: **“Today I’m going to introduce to you the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement, which is a project that works to promote healthy eating in the lunchroom, without adding cost for schools or taking away choices for students.”**

Introduce the Smarter Lunchrooms project. Consider reviewing or showing the [Smarter Lunchrooms Makeover video](#).

Let’s look at how Behavioral Economics influence behavior and choice in the cafeteria.

Summary of the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement: <https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/documents/SLM-Flyer-Inkjet.pdf>

Step 1: Spot

Complete Spot and Plan steps in Class Period 1.

Review ‘Spot’ Findings - the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard and the photo checklist.

The Scorecard and photos may have already been completed by a school food service staff member, or a parent or community member. If not, a teacher and several students should complete this task together, asking the Food Service Director for information as needed.

Then, review the completed Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard, and notice that: “A vegetable, fruit, or entrée taste test is offered at least once a year” is listed as a strategy. Say: **“Today we are going to look at how to motivate students to try a new food such as a unique fruit, vegetable, entrée, or grain. By offering a taste test we are helping to increase a student’s willingness to try new foods. Often, when we try a new food, we end up liking it more than we thought we would. This is based on two of the six behavioral economic principles which are Impacting Taste Expectations and Suggestive Selling, both of which help influence students to make healthier choices.”**

Information for the Educator: Why Conduct Taste Tests?

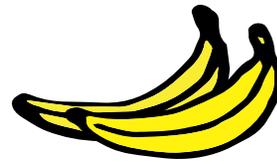
- Many people are reluctant to try new foods, especially fruits and vegetables, or foods that are unfamiliar to them.
- Tastings are a fun and non-threatening way to provide an opportunity to students to expand the variety of foods that they consume, especially nutrient-rich foods like whole grains, vegetables, or fruits.
- For some people, it takes numerous (6-21) opportunities for them to try a food before they like it. Therefore, even if they do not participate, the exposure could bring them closer to this goal.

Questions for students:

- Why do you think conducting a taste test with students is an important step to introducing them to new foods?
- What are other benefits to conducting taste tests with students in a school setting?
- How can a taste test help to expand the variety of foods a student eats? Why is expanding the variety of foods eaten important?
- Have you ever participated in a taste test in a school or grocery store?
- What are some fruits, vegetables, grains, or other foods that would be good options to offer in a taste test? Think of some new or unique foods that are being offered in the school cafeteria currently that might need to be taste tested to increase students’ acceptability of them. (Hints: kiwi, sweet potatoes, dried beans and peas like black beans or lentils, and whole grains like couscous or quinoa). Think of some Montana-grown foods that may be new foods to try. (Hint: lentils, kale, beets, squash, whole grains).
- How would the item be prepared or served in a taste test? Would we try making hummus or roasting beets? Would we offer a smoothie that may be served during breakfast or lunch? Would we prepare a vegetable to be served on the salad bar?

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Step 2: Plan

Say: **“Now that we have reviewed the benefits of conducting a taste test and what possible foods we may want to offer in Step 1, ‘Spot,’ let’s start the 2nd step – ‘Plan.’**

Say: **“Today we will learn an easy method for conducting a taste test of a fruit or vegetable in a school.”**

Information for educator and/or the students to review:

- Review the Montana [“Try It, Like It, Love It”](#) taste test method.
- [Check out a \(1-minute\) video for conducting a taste test in the cafeteria.](#)
- Food safety practices and [good handwashing techniques](#) are important in conducting a taste test.
- See how Montana Schools are using taste testing to introduce students to a new Montana-grown food each month with the [Harvest of the Month](#) program.

Small groups:

Break students into four groups and have them discuss the important steps to follow in conducting a taste test. Assign each group two tasks related to conducting the taste test. In each group, the students will identify any other school staff, parents, or community members that they may need to collaborate with in completing their task.

Topic/tasks to be divided amongst small groups:

- Determine a location for the taste test (current classroom only, another classroom of students, or the entire cafeteria population). Have students write and send an invitation to another classroom to invite them to the taste test.
- What food will be tested? Will it be prepared in the school kitchen or Family and Consumer Science room? Will it be purchased in a ready to eat portion (i.e. a ready to eat processed food – like Montana’s own Kracklin’ Kamut)? Are there any food allergies or intolerances that limit the foods to be tasted?
- List the food safety steps that need to be followed in conducting the taste test. This could include appropriate temperatures, sanitation, knife safety, etc.
- Determine the budget for conducting a taste test that includes food, paper supplies, and food-safe disposable gloves for students distributing the “samples.”
- Review the process for the taste test. Will the students follow the “Don’t Yuck My Yum” principle and conduct a “Cheers”? How will the “tasters” be asked to taste the food so they aren’t pressured into eating it?

- How will the “tasters” record their results? Are you using the “Try It, Like It, Love It” method? Will the “tasters” write down their opinion using a ballot or by dropping a counter (dried bean) in a cup? Or will you use a program like SurveyMonkey™ to develop a survey for “tasters” to enter their responses?
- Determine the date, time, and number of students needed to conduct the taste test. Determine tasks for other students. Will they help the food service staff prepare it or tally the results? Is signage needed to promote the taste test or help the “tasters” understand how to list their responses or vote on their ballot? Think about if any of your “tasters” are non-readers.
- Determine an evaluation process by answering the following questions. How will we know that the taste test was a success? How will we know if it made any impact on motivating students to try the food again? (Hint: Step 4, “Prove It” will review ways to answer these questions.)

As a group, once the topics are discussed and the decisions are made, a Taste Test Plan can be written up.

Step 3: Do

Complete the Do and Prove steps (if time permits) in Class Period 2.

Say: **“Now let’s move towards the 3rd step in the Smarter Lunchrooms Path – which is to ‘Do’ the Taste Test.”**

Using the Taste Test Plan that was created in Step 2 – “Plan It,” have the students conduct the taste test.

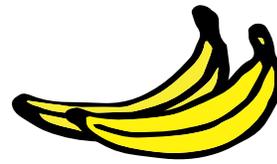
Say: **“Now that we have a Plan to conduct a Taste Test, we can assign students to the different tasks and complete the taste test.”**

Assign students to the following tasks:

- Setting up the table and area for the taste test. Wiping down the table with a cleaning and sanitizing solution. Putting out the utensils, plates, and napkins.

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- Preparing signage (if needed) to help students score or report their responses.
- Preparing or helping to serve the food items to the students.
- Assisting the Food Service Director or staff if they are helping with the taste test.
- Preparing the “taste test ballots” or gathering the beans and “Try It,” “Like It,” and “Love It” cups. Or if using SurveyMonkey™ getting a computer and creating the survey.
- Reviewing the directions with the “tasters” to follow in tasting the food and voting by their response/ballot/bean.
- Encouraging the “Cheers” before the tasters try their food.
- Tallying the results of the responses/ballots.
- Cleaning up after the taste test is done. Storing or returning any leftover foods and paper supplies.

Say **“Now that the taste test is done, let’s go to Step 4 to discuss if it was successful.”**

Step 4: Prove

To be done at the end of Class Period 2 or in Class Period 3.

Say: **“Great job on conducting a taste test! The 4th and final step of the 4-Step Smarter Lunchrooms Path is to ‘Prove.’ To wrap up, we will talk about how we can evaluate if the taste test was a success and if it has made an impact on motivating students to try the food again. It is important to find out if doing a taste test is increasing the number of students making healthy choices, so using the ideas we came up with, we are going to try and ‘Prove It.’”**

Review with the students that in order to prove something, information or data has to be collected before, during, and after the event or change(s). Have the students tally the responses/ballots to determine the number of students that tried the item, liked the item, or loved it. Have the students invite the Food Service Director to the class to hear this discussion or share a student-developed report with the Director.

Information for educator and students:

The success of a taste test can be measured in several ways:

- Did the taste test process run smoothly? Is there anything you think we should do differently in the future?
- Did most “tasters” like or love the food?
- Did you collect information about what “tasters” did or did not like about the food product? Taste, texture, look, spice, etc.?
- Did you get any indication they will try it again?
- Do you think it will help to increase student selection and/or decrease food waste of that item when it is served in the cafeteria or at home?
- Did it provide a fun and non-threatening way to motivate a student to try a small taste of food?
- Do you think this event will motivate a student to try another new food in the future?
- Should taste tests be done at school? How often? By whom? What foods?

Class discussion:

Utilizing these questions, have a class discussion about the success and impact of the taste test. Ask the students to share their thoughts on how they felt the taste test went.

Additional questions or follow-up activities for students (as a class or in small groups):

- What did we learn from the taste test that may be helpful for the Food Service Director or parents to know? Review the data from the taste test and share it with the Food Service Director.
- How could we evaluate if the taste test that we did actually “nudge” students to make healthier choices in the lunchroom?

[> Assessment Tools](#)