

ANSWER SHEET

Activity 1 – Food exploration using our senses

In this first activity, we are going to learn and understand how to use our senses in the lead up to eating a food. This activity aims to help adults imagine trying something new for the first time, just like many children.

Coriander has been used as an example, as people often have strong taste preferences. However, you can use any food you like, such as a fruit, vegetable, or herb you have never tried before or don't really like to eat.

Objectives

1. For cooks to understand the different senses we use when eating a food.
2. For cooks to understand and appreciate what young children may be experiencing when eating or trying a new food for the first time.

Required Resources

- A single food/ingredient – this might be a food you've never tried before (e.g. a feijoa), or it could be a food you've tried before, but didn't particularly enjoy it the first time (e.g. coriander)

Did you know?

For adults, eating is a 2-step process:

1. sit down at the table
2. eat.

For many children, when trying a new food, they are also:

1. learning to sit at the table
2. learning to use utensils
3. learning to feed themselves
4. experiencing the different senses of foods
5. talking and answering questions
6. processing distractions and interruption

Question 1

Complete the table below using the food you have chosen.

Note: Take your time while answering each of prompts relating to the sense. Really try to think about what you are experiencing with this food.

This activity is very subjective, and there are no right or wrong answers. Some people will find this activity challenging. As adults, we typically don't use many descriptors when eating food. Below you will find some example descriptors and you may use these to prompt the cooks throughout the activity. Many words are also interchangeable between the different senses.

You may like to use the following prompts/questions to help guide cooks through this activity. The below prompts use coriander as the example food. You can replace this with the food your network is using, or just say "food" if everyone is using something different.

1. Take a moment to visually explore the coriander – look at the colour across the leaves and stems, see the different shapes and outlines of the leaves. Does it remind you of another food? Or perhaps it reminds you of a herb garden?
2. Now we're going to feel the coriander – does it feel smooth or rough? Perhaps it scrunches in your fingers? Maybe it's even left a smell on your hands.
3. We can then use our nose and sense of smell to further explore the coriander – do you like the smell? Does it remind you of anything else? Perhaps it smells like the garden, or maybe it reminds you of a specific meal?
4. Finally, let's have a taste of the coriander! If you've eaten coriander before, and you know you don't like it, don't worry, you won't be forced to try it again. For those who are happy to eat it, discuss how the coriander tastes for you. Some people love coriander, while other people compare the taste to dish soap!
5. Take some time now to share your sensory experience with others around you. Did you learn anything new? If you don't like coriander, how did it make you feel having to touch, smell, or even think about tasting it?
6. For those of you who dislike coriander and can't stand the taste of it, imagine this was served to you for a meal and you were provided with no other options. For some children, this is how mealtimes can feel.

Example	Senses	Descriptors	Your experience The following words are examples to use when describing different senses. Depending on the food each cook has, everyone will have varying descriptors.
	Visual What does the food look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colour • Shape • Imperfections • Brightness 	Green, red, purple, etc. bright, dull, vibrant, colourful, looks similar to...
	Touch What does the food feel like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft • Hard • Brittle • Cold 	Soft, hard, hot, warm, cold, icy, wet, dry, brittle, bumpy, crumbly, grainy, squishy, gooey, mushy, tender, etc.
	Smell What does the food smell like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruity • Fresh • Earthy • Floral 	Fruity, fresh, earthy, floral, flavourful, spicy, etc.
	Taste What does the food taste like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweet • Salty • Spicy • Sour 	Sweet, salty, spicy, sour, bitter, mouthwatering, smoky, buttery, tangy, juicy, rich, tasty, fresh, wet, etc.
	Sound What can you hear when you're eating/chewing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crunchy • Crackle • Loud • No sound 	Loud, crunchy, crackles, popping, etc.

Facilitated discussion questions and answers

In addition to the basic instructions for the activity, have some discussion points ready to generate further interaction in the group. Discussion points can be especially helpful for an online cooks network sessions.

The following are examples only; you may like to use 1 or 2 of these questions to prompt further discussion:

1. Can you recall a recent time, or perhaps when you were younger, and you were served a new food you'd never eaten before? Was it a good or bad experience? Are you an adventurous eater and keen to try all new foods at least once? Or are you a bit more cautious, preferring to eat familiar foods before trying something new?
 - Reflecting on personal food experiences can help cooks to empathise with young children who are still learning about food and who may have also had negative experiences with food in the past.
2. Are there any common words or phrases you hear children describing the food or meals provided for them?
 - Children typically default to 'yuck' or 'disgusting' when describing foods they don't like. However, some may be using other descriptive words. Allow this time for cooks to share their experiences with managing fussy eaters in their centre.
3. As well as experiencing different senses while eating a food, we also process different senses around us during a mealtime environment. What are some sensory experiences that may occur during a meal or snack time? You may have heard some children, or even adults, talk about them before during a meal:
 - Visual – what can we see around us while eating:
 - Bright lights
 - Colourful pictures on walls
 - Watching other children/adults eating – is this distracting?
 - Touch – what else can we feel during a meal or snack time:
 - Our feet touching the floor – if we can't touch the floor, do we wriggle around more?
 - Our body on the seat – do we feel comfortable or awkward if the seat is too big?
 - If we are too hot or too cold in the room
 - Smell – what other smells might be in the room:
 - The smell of food cooking
 - The smell of different foods on the plate or table
 - Smells from outside
 - Sound – what else can we hear during the meal or snack:
 - The noise of people in the room (talking, playing, eating, etc.)
 - Noises from outside (traffic, construction work)

4. How might these other sensory experiences affect or impact the mealtime for children?

- Children can be easily distracted by other noises, looking out the window, watching other children eat or play, different smells in the room, etc.
- The mealtime environment itself can play a part in children's fussiness with food.
- We know that children at this age are inquisitive and wanting to assert autonomy and independence.
- Sometimes, everything else going on around them can seem more fun and appealing than sitting down and eating a meal.

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