

Taste Testing

Taste testing is a sampling of a flavor, texture or smell often performed in a cafeteria or classroom. Taste tests are good ways for food service staff to introduce new and nutritious foods to students.



The following set of documents will explain how to perform a successful taste test and give some tips for success. Easy recipes that have been successfully used in school cafeterias have been included at the end.

These resources were compiled from:

Vermont FEED: Food Education Every Day (<http://www.vtfeed.org/>)

Ohio Action for Healthy Kids (<http://www.ohioactionforhealthykids.org/>)

Pride of New York (http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/PrideOfNY/pride_index.html)

Taste Test Do's and Don'ts

TASTE TESTS DO'S	TASTE TEST DON'TS
Involve as many teachers, food service employees, parents, and other interested, school community linked adults as possible.	Expect things to happen too quickly. <i>(Substantive change takes time, dedication, set backs, disappointment and hard work.)</i>
Empower your food service workers to take over roles. More than merely "lunch ladies," food service workers have valuable insights into the eating habits and preferences of the students they serve daily.	Immediately ask kids what they want. <i>(You likely know the answer: pizza, french fries, ice cream, soda, and candy are likely to be their ideas for improving school lunch.)</i>
Provide students with choices from pre-selected, preferably locally grown or produced food items. Having options is good, but keep it within a reasonable scope based on availability and cost.	Introduce strange, exotic, or hard-to-get foods. <i>(Kids will try lots of things but their palates are not necessarily ready for "adult" foods. Also, cafeterias are unlikely to offer exotic foods that are hard to find and/or pay for.)</i>
Involve students in the preparation, serving, sampling, and tabulation of results from classroom or cafeteria-based taste tests.	Expect kids to love the food you're offering if they didn't have a hand in the preparation or were not involved in the taste test process.
Strengthen connections between teachers, administrators, and food service personnel by attempting to include them in normal school functions such as faculty meetings, awards or celebration ceremonies, lunch-related events and other in-class goings on.	Think changes can be made without the help and support of the food service personnel and food service director. <i>(Everyone should be focused on the same goal: serving students nutritious food, and it takes a variety of adult roles to see this come to fruition.)</i>
Think sustainability — testing food items you can serve with some regularity is better than offering exotic foods that will never find their way to lunch trays.	Be discouraged if food isn't accepted right away. <i>(Word of mouth, peer pressure, and repeated exposure will help build interest.)</i>

adapted from Dan Treinis, teacher, Burlington School Food Project

Sample Timeline for Coordinating a School-wide Taste Test

2-3 WEEKS PRIOR TO THE TASTE TEST:

- At the food committee meeting with food service personnel, decide what food will be tested. Make sure foods chosen fit into the school food program and align with your committee goals. (See *VT FEED Guide for Using Local Food in Schools*, and *Appendices A & J*, p.29 & 45 for recipe ideas.)
- Find a class(es) that is willing to prepare the food in the kitchen or classroom the morning of the taste test and that will help serve and survey.
- Find parents/volunteers who will help serve and clean up.
- Prepare an announcement of the taste test for the school newsletter or school-wide email
- Research and share nutritional information about the food, and have the recipe ready to send home to students' families. (See "Sample Letter to Families," Appendix E, p.39.)
- If purchasing from a farmer, contact him/her to be sure product will be available when you need it.

ONE WEEK PRIOR:

- Check with food service and classrooms involved to make sure everyone is prepared.
- Make sure necessary food items have been purchased or are being delivered on the date needed.
- Prepare a taste testing survey. (See Appendix C, p.34 for examples.)
- Advertise the taste test: school newsletter, school website, all-staff email, invite the local paper!

DAY OF:

- Announce the taste test during announcements, classroom meetings, and with signs in the lobby.
- Help food service set up for hosting students in the kitchen.
- Have the food service explain about food safety when preparing foods. Make time for everyone to wash their hands and put on hairnets or hats.
- If preparing in the kitchen, small groups of 4–5 students work best. If preparing in the cafeteria or classroom, divide the preparation tasks into small groups.
- Remind children to respect the workspace and workers.
- Rotate groups from classroom to kitchen, if necessary.
- Set up taste testing table before lunch periods begin.
- Take pictures and notes to report in your newsletter.

DAY AFTER:

- Send a letter home to parents describing the taste test, the food their child tasted, and the recipe to try at home. (See "Sample Letter to Families," Appendix E, p.39.)
- Have a classroom tally the results of the taste test and post them on a bulletin board or in the school newsletter.

Taste Testing in the...

Cafeteria:

Taste tests performed in the cafeteria are intended to include a wide range of the school community including students, teachers, and staff. By making cafeteria taste tests a frequent event students will become more willing to try new and healthy foods. It will also become an exciting school event.



Classroom:

Taste tests in the classroom are generally informal and a great way for students to get involved in food prep. After speaking with food service staff members these tested foods can be featured in the cafeteria.

Afterschool Program:

After school programs are a good place to test out local produce without having to get approval from your school's administration. Also, it can be a rewarding activity for students to help make their own food.

Classroom Taste Test Summary Sheet

Teachers, please complete below for item(s) shown

Teacher/Grade: _____ Date: _____

Did the students help prepare the snack? Y or N (circle one)

of students present: _____

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ITEM #1 _____

1. How many students tried the snack? _____
2. How many students liked the snack? _____
3. How many students would eat it again? _____

ITEM #2 _____





































1. How many students tried the snack? _____
2. How many students liked the snack? _____
3. How many students would eat it again? _____

ITEM #3 _____

1. How many students tried the snack? _____
2. How many students liked the snack? _____
3. How many students would eat it again? _____

Individual Voting Ballots for Taste Tests Parties

Cut out and give one ballot to each child

TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   	TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   	TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   
TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   	TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   	TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   
TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   	TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   	TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   
TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   	TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   	TASTE TEST Product _____ Date _____ (circle one): Like! Sort of... Don't Like   

adapted from Kathy Alexander, Ferrisburgh Central School, Ferrisburgh, VT, 2009

Nutrition Lesson #6

Butternut Squash Soup

This nutrition lesson is given to parent volunteers at Calais Elementary School who make the recipe at home and then bring it into their child's classroom for a taste test.

FOR THE VOLUNTEER BEFORE THE TASTE TEST:

About the Recipe:

Our recipe for this month will be one that students may remember trying in the cafeteria last year. The hardest part of the recipe is preparing the squash; after that it is pretty simple. You will need a blender or food processor. If your class has vegetarians, use the vegetable broth. You can also try it with soy milk and no butter if you want to make it dairy-free.

Recipe:

- 2 lbs. Butternut Squash, halved, peeled and seeded; cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup diced onion
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 3 cans chicken (or vegetable) broth (13 ¾-ounces each)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 Tablespoons butter
- 1/3–1/2 cup light cream or milk

Place squash in saucepan along with carrots, onions, and broth then add in the salt. Simmer 40 minutes uncovered. Puree soup in a blender or food processor along with 2 tablespoons butter. Pour a little hot puree into the 1/3–1/2 cup cream so not to curdle the cream; add to soup. This will make more than enough for one class. You could easily halve the recipe if you don't want leftovers (but it's so good, I bet you will)!

You can make it the night before and reheat it in the morning. If you have a thermos, that is probably the best way to transport it to school. Then just pour the soup straight into the sample cups.

WHAT TO TELL STUDENTS AT THE TASTE TEST:

There are three vegetables in this soup:

1. **Butternut squash** – This is the star of our recipe. Hold up a butternut squash and see if the students can identify it. This type of squash is called “winter squash,” not because it

grows in the winter, but because it has a tough skin which allows us to store it through the winter time. This is different from a “summer squash,” like zucchini, which does not keep. Ask students if they can name any other winter squashes (pumpkin, buttercup, butternut, delicata, spaghetti). You can ask if anyone knows what the squash looks like on the inside. If you cut it open, you would see the orange flesh and the seeds in the middle. Most winter squash are orange inside; and in general, orange foods are good sources of vitamin A. Vitamin A is important for good vision, bone and skin health. Winter squash tastes creamy and mild, and often sweet. The school cook gets local winter squash that has been cooked and pureed and then frozen. This makes it much easier to use it whenever she wants to make this soup.

2. **Carrots** – Another orange vegetable in this soup is the carrot. Carrots are also good sources of vitamin A.
3. **Onions** – There are some onions in this soup, but you won’t notice them because they have been blended together with the other ingredients to a smooth puree. Onions are a popular food in almost all parts of the world. Both onions and carrots are available to our cafeteria from Vermont farms.

HOW TO CONDUCT THE TASTE TEST:

Pass out samples of the soup. Go over the remaining ingredients (broth, milk/cream, butter, salt) so that kids can focus on the flavors they taste. Have them close their eyes while try it. Conduct a survey. Did they taste it? Did they like it? Would they eat it again? Point out when this soup will be served in the cafeteria at school.

A School Year of Seasonal Recipes

Corn Pie

SEPTEMBER

INGREDIENTS

3 large eggs
 ½ small onion
 1 Tb. flour
 1 Tb. sugar
 ½ tsp. salt
 1⅓ cup milk
 3 Tb. melted butter, slightly cooled
 2 cups fresh corn kernels (cut from
 2-3 cobs and lightly steamed) or
 frozen and thawed corn
 1 deep dish pie crust (*use a purchased
 crust or see recipe below.*)

FEATURED VEGETABLE:

• Corn •

Combine first five ingredients in food processor. Blend until onion is finely chopped (or finely chop onion by hand and stir all together in a large bowl). Add milk and cooled melted butter and process or stir until well blended. Transfer to a large bowl if using food processor. Mix in corn. Pour mixture into uncooked pie crust shell. Bake at 375° until filling is slightly puffed and top is golden, about 50 minutes. Cool slightly before serving.



Serves 8

Easy Pie Crust

1½ cups flour
 1½ tsp. sugar
 ½ cup canola oil
 2 Tb. milk

Mix flour and sugar directly in pie pan. Make a well in the center. Mix oil and milk and pour into well. Mix together with a fork until mostly blended, then use hands to press crust around and up edges of the pan. Fill and bake as directed in recipe.

Recipe provided by Rumney Memorial and Calais Elementary Schools

Apple-Cheese Quesadilla

OCTOBER

INGREDIENTS

12 apples, cored and thinly sliced
 50 ounces grated Vermont Cheddar
 25 whole wheat tortillas

FEATURED FRUIT: • Apple •

Place 2 oz. of cheese and apple slices (about ½ an apple per tortilla) on one half of a tortilla. Fold over and spray lightly with oil. Bake at 350° for 10-15 minutes. Cut tortillas in half before serving.
 Serves 50



Recipe provided by Rumney Memorial School

Butternut Biscuits

NOVEMBER

WET INGREDIENTS

2 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup milk
 1 cup canola oil
 4 cups cooked, mashed butternut squash (Bake squashes cut side down on oiled and watered sheets at 400° for 45 minutes, or until soft)

DRY INGREDIENTS

4 cups whole wheat flour
 4 cups flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup baking powder
 2 tsp. baking soda
 2 tsp. salt
 2 tsp. cinnamon

FEATURED VEGETABLE:• **Butternut Squash** •

Mix dry ingredients into wet, being careful not to over mix. Use a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ice cream scoop to make drop biscuits onto parchment lined sheet pans. Lightly flatten the balls of dough. Bake at 400° in a regular oven, or 350° in a convection oven. Check after 5 minutes, bake until golden brown.

Makes 48 biscuits. For 150, make recipe 3 times

Recipe provided by Rumney Memorial School

**Roasted Root Vegetables**

DECEMBER

INGREDIENTS

15 lbs. potatoes
 2 lbs. parsnips
 5 lbs. carrots
 5 lbs. beets
 5 lbs. winter squash
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup canola oil, or enough to coat veggies
 kosher salt and pepper to taste

FEATURED VEGETABLES:• **Root Vegetables** •

Dice vegetables using a commercial food processor or by hand. Toss with oil, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Spread onto 5 sheet pans lined with parchment paper and sprayed with oil. Roast at 350° until crispy, 30-40 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes. *Serves 150 3-oz cups*

Recipe provided by Rumney Memorial School

**Apple Oatmeal Muffins**

JANUARY

DRY INGREDIENTS

4 cups oats
 4 cups whole wheat flour
 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup baking powder
 2 tsp. cinnamon
 2 tsp. salt

WET INGREDIENTS

1 cup plain lowfat yogurt
 2 cups milk
 1 cup oil
 1 cup applesauce
 1 tsp. vanilla
 4 eggs
 4 apples, cored, chopped (small pieces)

FEATURED GRAINS:• **Oats & Whole Wheat Flour** •

Beat wet ingredients together, add chopped apples. Combine dry ingredients in a separate bowl and add to wet ingredients being careful not to over mix. Spoon batter into greased muffin tins and sprinkle with brown sugar, if desired. Bake at 400° for about 20 minutes (15 minutes if using mini-muffin tins). In a convection oven, bake at 350° for 5 minutes, then rotate pans and cook 2-3 minutes more.

Makes 48 mini-muffins. For 144, make recipe 3 times.

Recipe provided by Rumney Memorial School



Balsamic Glazed Beets**FEBRUARY****INGREDIENTS**

20 lbs. beets, scrubbed and trimmed, leaving about 1-inch of stems attached
 1 cup balsamic vinegar
 ½ cup plus 2 Tb. maple syrup or honey
 ½ cup plus 2 Tb. olive oil
 ¼ cup minced fresh thyme or other herb

FEATURED VEGETABLE: • Beets •

In a large pot (or divide between 2 large pots) cover beets with salted water by 1 inch. Simmer, covered, 35-45 minutes, or until tender, and drain in colander. Cool until they can be handled, then slip off skins and stems. Cut beets lengthwise into wedges. Beets may be prepared up to this point 2 days ahead and chilled, covered. Bring beets to room temperature before proceeding. In a large skillet stir together vinegar, syrup or honey, and oil. Add beets. Cook beet mixture with salt and pepper to taste over moderate heat, stirring, until heated through and coated well. Sprinkle with herbs and toss gently.



Serves 150 sample sizes

Recipe provided by Calais Elementary School

Potato Fritata**MARCH****INGREDIENTS**

20 lbs. local potatoes, thinly sliced
 6 dozen local eggs
 5 lbs. local onions, chopped
 ¼ cup oil
 salt and pepper to taste
 8-10 cups grated mild cheddar or mozzarella cheese

FEATURED VEGETABLE: • Potatoes •

Bake thin layers of potatoes on 4 full-sized sheet pans, sprayed and lined with parchment paper. Bake at 450° (400° for a convection oven) until fully cooked and golden brown (20-25 minutes). Sauté all of the onions in oil until soft, 5-10 minutes. Mix 18 eggs and ¼ cup milk together in a bowl. Add salt and pepper to taste. Take ¼ of the cooked potatoes, ¼ of the sautéed onions, and place them onto a half sheet pan sprayed and lined with parchment paper. Pour the egg mixture onto the potato/onions and cook at 350° for 5-9 minutes until egg is nearly cooked through. Sprinkle 2 cups of grated cheese on egg and bake again for 2-3 minutes. One half sheet pan makes 40 servings. Repeat with remaining eggs and potato/onion 3 more times to make a total of 160 pieces.



Serves 160 pieces of fritata

Recipe provided by Rumney Memorial School

Carrot & Raisin Sunshine Salad

APRIL

INGREDIENTS

10 lbs. local carrots (5 to 6) grated
 5 cups raisins
 80 oz. (2 ½, 32-oz. containers)
 lowfat vanilla yogurt
 10 diced local apples

FEATURED VEGETABLE:**• Carrots •**

Mix all ingredients together in a mixing bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 15 minutes. Toss again before serving.

Serves 100 sample sizes

Recipe provided by Calais Elementary School

**Parsnip & Potato Chips**

MAY

INGREDIENTS

15 lbs. parsnips, peeled and thinly sliced
 10 lbs. potatoes, thinly sliced
 1 cup or more, canola oil
 kosher salt to taste

FEATURED VEGETABLES:**• Parsnips & Potatoes •**

Toss parsnips and potatoes in separate bowls with oil and salt until lightly coated. Place a thin layer of parsnips onto sprayed and parchment paper lined sheet pans. Do the same with potatoes. Do not mix together until they are fully cooked. (Parsnips take a bit longer to crisp.) Cook at 400°, checking every 10 minutes until fully cooked and crispy. Combine together and serve in small paper cups.

Serves 150 sample sizes

Recipe provided by Rumney Memorial School

**Rumney Garden Wraps**

JUNE

INGREDIENTS

75 whole wheat tortillas, 8-inch round
 4 lbs. mesclun greens
 3 lbs. spinach
 3 beets, grated
 3 lbs. carrots, grated
 2 bunches salad turnips, grated
 Salad dressing (*see below*)

Maple-Balsamic Vinaigrette

1 cup balsamic vinegar
 1 cup maple syrup
 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
 4 cups olive oil

FEATURED VEGETABLES:**• Lettuce & Spinach •**

Toss your salad ingredients and set aside. Next, mix the first three vinaigrette ingredients. As you stir, slowly add the olive oil in a thin stream, stirring constantly. Pour a bit of the dressing onto your salad (this recipe makes a few days worth of dressing). Wrap the salad in a whole wheat tortilla. Slice tortilla in half at an angle. Enjoy!

Serves 150

Recipe provided by Rumney Memorial School



Cafeteria Recipes

(Courtesy of Julie Holbrook)

❖ Popcorn with Honey Butter (Snack)

- Serves one -

Ingredients:

- 2 cups air popper popcorn
- ¼ tsp. butter
- ¼ tsp. honey

Recipe:

- Multiply ingredient quantities by number of those being served
- Mix together and serve

❖ Granola Bar (Snack)

- Serves 48 -



Ingredients:

- 3 packed cups of seedless raisins
- 1 cup honey
- 1 ½ cups smooth salty peanut butter
- 1 ½ cups dried sunflower seeds
- 4 ½ cups oats
- 1 ½ cups semisweet chocolate chips

Recipe:

- Multiply ingredient quantities based on number people served
- Mix ingredients together
- Form mixture in pan and let set
- Cut when ready and serve as bars

❖ Tomato Soup

- Serves 105 -



Ingredients:

- 3 gal. low sodium chicken broth
- 1 lb. lightly salted butter
- 10 oz. chopped raw celery
- 2 lbs. chopped raw onions
- 2 tbsp. black pepper
- 3 tbsp. table salt
- 4 bay leaves
- ¼ cup dried parsley
- ½ cup granulated garlic
- 3 tbsp. basil leaf
- 3 tbsp. dried marjoram
- 3 tbsp. oregano leaf
- 2 tbsp. dried thyme leaves
- 2 #10 cans of red ripe canned tomatoes
- 1 gal raw cubed butternut and winter squash

Recipe:

- Sauté onions, celery, in butter with salt, pepper, bay leaves and the rest of the spices.
- Add cooked squash and cook for 30 minutes
- Combine stock, tomatoes and add to mixture
- Heat for at least an hour and until 165°
- Reduce heat and cover. Simmer for 20 minutes
- Serve hot, 1 cup.