

FoodCorps Montana Guide

to Running a Lunchroom Taste Test

Whether serving food prepared by students or featuring a recipe you prepare in partnership with food service, reiterating the food you explored during class in the lunchroom can play a big role in generating student excitement and allowing them to have a fun, no-pressure opportunity to taste healthy food.

Here are a few things to consider when running a lunchroom taste test activity:

- You may elect either to set up a table separate from the lunch line where students can taste food or to coordinate with school food staff to have the food featured directly on the lunch line or salad bar. You can also have a mobile cart to walk around the lunchroom with (just ask food service to borrow one).
- If food will be served on the lunch line or salad bar, it is subject to state and county health department regulations.
- Make signs and posters describing the item being served and the farm source. You can also include fun facts. Make it big and colorful. If possible, include students in making signage.
- Label a container for student to deposit voting cards (“Like It” “Love It” “Tried It”). You can also use beans as a voting item and have 3 containers labelled, “Like it,” “Love It,” and “Tried It.”
- Bring out only enough food to serve a wave of students coming into the lunchroom, leave the rest of your food in a cool or hot container and restock prior to each group in order to keep things tasting best and to adhere to food safety recommendations. (Keep cold food below 41 degrees and hot food above 135 degrees).
- Kids love to touch and see foods in their whole, unprocessed form – save some of your food as props or bring in potted plants. For example, keep a whole beet or squash for kids to see and handle.
- If you have volunteers or a teammate to run the tasting, consider having one person stay at the table while the other person floats table to table to share samples with students who packed their lunch or who haven’t yet come to the table.
- If you are running a taste test alone, consider bringing everything right to the students. Use a lunch tray or metal sheet pan to carry samples, voting cards, and prizes directly to students to make sure you reach everyone and collect each student’s vote.

And here are some things to consider after the lunchroom taste test:

- Clean up any and all materials, left over food samples, and any kitchen equipment you used in the school kitchen facility.

- Count your votes from the taste test and record how many students tried, liked, and loved the food sample. Also record any qualitative data about the tasting. For example, record how the recipe was prepared.
- Write down any memorable quotes from kids...they always say the most amazing things!
- Report out about the results from the lunchroom taste test to school administration, school food service, teachers, in school newsletters, etc., as well as your FoodCorps site supervisor(s).
 - This is a great way to keep community partners and key people updated about your work and impact! Share the recipe out, too.

This resource was a collaborative project developed by:

Daniel Marbury

FoodCorps Michigan service member 2011-13

FoodCorps Michigan fellow 2013-2015

Kirsten Gerbatsch

FoodCorps Michigan service member 2011-2013

FoodCorps Montana fellow 2013-15