

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 & I, p.29 & 44 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 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 Tests in the Cafeteria

The objectives of a cafeteria taste test are to involve students, teachers, parents, community members and food service in introducing new foods to students and to build the relationship between food service personnel and the rest of the school community. As students become familiar with taste tests, they will be more open to trying new foods. Regular taste tests can become an exciting school-wide event.

Choose foods to taste test that:

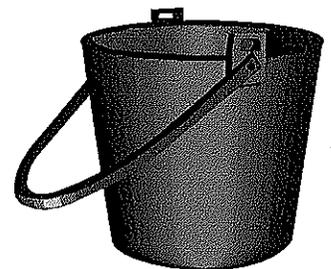
- increase consumption of whole grains, fruits and vegetables
- can be featured on the menu as a regular breakfast or lunch item
- will meet school food program requirements for nutrition, presentation, and cost.

Tips for Successful Cafeteria Taste Tests

- Always start with the food service personnel to plan a taste test. They can decide with you what foods to try.
- Partner with the PTO or a local business to help raise money for the food and for a taste test coordinator to work a few hours a month.
- Start with regular monthly taste tests of simple, affordable food (so it's easy to repeat if students like it).
- Find parents or community volunteers who can coordinate the classrooms with cafeteria activities. Food service personnel are unlikely to have the time to do this, although they can participate in some parts.
- Use local produce when possible and invite your local farmer or processor to join your taste test.
- If possible, work with teachers and food service personnel to have a small group of students help prepare the food. Remember, "If they make it, they will eat it."
- Offer small servings in a positive, non-coersive atmosphere.
- Advertise taste tests in the school newsletter or in letters home to families.
- Announce the results to the whole school after the taste test has finished and what the next steps are for that new food.
- Openly appreciate efforts made, and celebrate successes and lessons learned.

Taste Test Reminders!

- Wash hands well!
- Teach proper equipment use & care
- Dont forget to clean up!



Composting Rots!

Encourage children who can't finish their samples to compost the rest.