

EAT

CAFETERIA CONNECTION

Ask the students to examine the food seasonality poster in the cafeteria. Ask them to consider which vegetable on the poster for which the crops would most likely be ruined by unexpected late Spring frost. *Answer: Peas (peas grow above the ground and are typically harvested in the Spring)*

LEARN

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Objective

Students will name fruits and vegetables typically harvested in the spring, summer, fall, and winter.

10 Minute Lesson

Through a teacher-guided discussion, children will learn what fruits and vegetables to eat by season. Also they will gain understanding which fruits and vegetables are doing well or not this season because of the weather. The students will understand how to pick the freshest and ripest fruits and vegetables.

LIVE

HOME ACTIVITY

Instruct the students to accompany an adult when they go food shopping to look for a fresh green leafy vegetable typically harvested in the spring- for example, lettuce, spinach, kale, collards. Suggest they ask the adult if they could purchase some of the food and then assist in the preparation of that food in a meal the family could enjoy.

Teacher's Notes

Background

For the greatest nutritional value and flavor choose fruits and vegetables harvested at the peak of their freshness. See the guide below to help you choose the freshest fruits and vegetables in season:

Summer- Beets, Blackberries, Blueberries, Broccoli, Chinese Cabbage, Corn Cucumber, Eggplant, Green Beans, Nectarines, Peaches, Plums, Raspberries, Summer Squash, Tomatoes, Watermelon, Zucchini

Fall- Acorn Squash, Apples, Belgian Endive, Butternut Squash, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Figs, Garlic, Ginger, Grapes, Mushrooms, Parsnips, Pears, Pomegranate, Pumpkin, Quince, Sweet Potatoes, Swiss Chard

Winter- Chestnuts, Grapefruit, Kale, Leeks, Oranges, Radicchio, Radishes, Rutabaga, Tangerines, Turnips

Spring- Apricots, Artichoke, Asparagus, Carrots, Celeriac, Chives, Collards, Fava Beans, Fennel, Mango, Morels, Mustard Greens, New Potatoes, Pineapple, Rhubarb, Spinach, Spring Baby Lettuce Mixes, Strawberries, Sugar Snap and Snow Peas, Vidalia Onions, Watercress

10 Minute Lesson

Explain: Fruits and vegetables are at their peak nutritional value when they are picked ripe and in season. But fruits and vegetables that will be traveling long distances to markets aren't picked when they are ripe, but before ripeness. Once harvested, a vegetable is as nutritious as its going to get. And in a double whammy, nutritional value actually decreases every day past harvest.

Nutritional value is not on the top of the agenda for large commercial vegetable farmers. In the days when all produce was local, horticulturists developing new strains of fruits and vegetables only had to consider several criteria: taste and nutritional value. But today, with much of the growing and harvesting handled by machines and with produce shipped around the world, several other criteria take priority, and taste and nutrition take a back seat. Sturdiness is one factor, and uniformity of size is another. Another key factor big producers take into account is grocery case eye appeal.

While these new criteria are important to the grower's profits, they add nothing to the health of the consumer. If anything, they detract from it. Sturdy produce that stands up to lengthy shipping will be shipped long distances, taking days on its journey to your table, and losing nutritional value with every day that passes between harvest and eating.

Ask the Class: *Why you should chose locally grown food in season?*

Possible answers include:

Eating local means more for the local economy; Locally grown produce is fresher; There is less time from farm to plate which equals more flavor; Locally grown food has more time to ripen in the natural process; Eating local is better for air quality and pollution because it usually has fewer miles to travel; Buying local keeps us in touch with the seasons; Eating local could protect us from bio-terrorism; Supporting local providers helps control local land development.

Introduce and explain the EAT Cafeteria Connection and LEARN Home Activity to the students.

Optional Enrichment Idea

Have students research what fresh fruits and vegetables are grown and harvested in their state during different seasons. The following websites are good resources: <http://www.fieldtoplate.com/guide.php>, www.pickyourown.org. Have students taste a few seasonal produce items that are locally grown.