TASTE TESTING WITH KIDS

Encourage Healthy Eating Through Positive Taste Tests

WHY?

Research shows that children need many opportunities to try new foods before they will claim to "like" them. Following the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010, schools are following a new meal pattern which increase fruits and vegetables. Taste tests can help reduce food waste during school meals, by providing opportunities for students to learn and taste foods before seeing them in the lunch line. There are many ways to offer taste tests to kids, this fact sheet provides three examples provided by Erin Jackson, FoodCorps Service Member at Hyalite Elementary in Bozeman, Montana.

CHEERS!

Get kids excited by involving them in creating a "cheers" to the food they are about to taste. Explain to children that they are celebrating trying a new food. When people share a meal, they often do a toast to celebrate the moment and the food. Ask the children for ideas to choose something to say for their cheers. An example for carrots would be "Cheers to crazy carrots!" Decide on one phrase. Have children hold up their taste item, say the cheer, and then take a bite!

DON'T YUCK MY YUM, PLEASE

Nothing ruins a tasty meal, or a new food, like the person next to you saying "ewww, gross" as you are taking a bite. Set the expectation for kids in the beginning of taste tests that they should allow everyone the opportunity to enjoy a new food or one they already like. Provide kids with polite options to decline foods as "no, thank you" or "I prefer carrots instead of broccoli."

TRIED IT, LIKED IT, LOVED IT

Children love giving their vote and having a say in decisions. Create a voting system by writing "Tried it," "Liked it," and "Loved it" on three cups. See photo above for an example. Use dried beans, toy pieces, or other items for the kids to vote. A child receives a voting piece if they tried the new food. Once they have tried the sample, they can put their voting piece in one of the three cups. Notice there is not a cup for "I don't like it", which follows the *Don't Yuck My Yum* method above. The voting options are intended to stay positive and commend the children trying the new food.

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