

Tasting guide

When running a tasting session with children, make sure it is a positive experience. Be encouraging and enthusiastic. Explain clearly how the session will work and that it is good to try new things so we can find out what we like. Tell the children that if they find they can't swallow a particular sample, they can quietly remove it from their mouths with a piece of kitchen paper and throw it away. Praise those children who are willing to try samples and partner them with those less willing. Do not force children to try any of the food, just provide encouragement.

Here are some top tips to help you deliver safe and successful tasting sessions.

Preparation

- Undertake the 'getting ready to cook' steps before you prepare the samples:
 - remove any jewellery;
 - tie back long hair;
 - roll up long sleeves;
 - put on an apron;
 - wash and dry hands – wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap and dry properly.
- Ensure the food preparation area to be used to prepare the samples is uncluttered and clean.
- Check the equipment you will use is clean and in good working order, e.g. no rust, no cracks where bacteria can gather.
- Cut the food to be tasted into small sample sized pieces as close to the time of tasting as possible.
- For samples not being tasted immediately, ensure these are covered and refrigerated (unless this is a food that is not usually refrigerated such as bread), until they are needed (sometime within the same day).

Tasting

- Ensure all the children have their own plate (these can be paper) or a piece of kitchen paper to serve their samples onto or to rest partly eaten food they are tasting.
- Ensure water is available for the children so they can clean their palate while sampling.
- Have some additional kitchen paper or paper towels available in case children need to remove food from their mouths.

- Make sure there is a bin available to dispose of waste.
- Ensure food is served with one spoon or utensil and children have their own with which to eat the served food. Do not allow children to put the spoon or utensil they have eaten from back into the food.
- Instruct the children to wash and dry their hands thoroughly before their begin tasting.
- Talk to the children about how to use their sense to sample the food.
 - Look at the food - What is it like? Describe the colour and texture.
 - Pick up the food – What does it feel like? Describe how it feels, e.g. hard, soft, squidgy.
 - Smell the food – What does it smell like? Describe how it smells, e.g. cheesy, smoky, garlicky, peppery. Have you smelt anything like this before?
 - Taste the food – What does it taste like? Describe how it tastes (e.g. sweet, salty, bitter). Describe the texture (e.g. bumpy, smooth).
- The children could record their thoughts about the food they have tasted. This could be undertaken in the following ways:
 - display a large sheet of paper for each food to be tasted and task the children to write describing words (or draw a facial expression) on sticky notes which they can then attach to the sheet of paper for each food;
 - younger children could use the **My food book** to record their tasting experiences (this can be found on the Food – a fact of life website, 3-5 years tab, Cooking area – tasting);
 - children could use the **Tasting ingredients worksheet** which includes a word bank (this can be found on the Food – a fact of life website, 5-7 years tab, Cooking area – Planning to cook).

Tips for encouraging young children to try new food

- Show children a new food a few times before you ask them to taste it.
- Put new food with familiar food they like, e.g. a new fruit in familiar yogurt.
- Taste the food with the children.
- Offer one new food at a time.
- Choose brightly coloured food with mild flavours and interesting textures.
- Give food special names, e.g. calling broccoli 'mini trees'.