Asparagus

Month: April
Time Required: 30 minutes
Alternative Tastings: Celery, Rhubarb

Lesson Goals

- Students will increase their knowledge of fruits and vegetables.
- Students will learn to try new fruits and vegetables and increase their preference for them.
- Students will learn that their peers like to eat fruits and vegetables.
- Students will learn how to ask their parents/caregivers for the fruits and vegetables tasted in class.

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to define and give examples of “local.”
- Students will be able to compare local fruits and vegetables.

Academic Standards Connection

Coming soon.

Essential Components Checklist

- Physical Activity
- “Asking” Discussion
- Voting
- Newsletters, BINGO Cards, Stickers, and Incentives
- Tasting

Materials

- 2-3 printed copies of Food Miles Activity Cards (attached; need 1 per student)
- Picture of asparagus stalk and plant
- Cooler
- Electric skillet
- Plastic tote (to transport electric skillet)
- Spatula
- Power strip (with long cord)
- Water bottle with water
- Rags
- Food storage bags
- Tasting supplies (plates, napkins, etc.)
- Asparagus for cooking (depending on class size)
- Olive oil
- Salt
- Pepper
Preparation

- Food preparation:
  - Wash asparagus and cut or snap off the bottom of each stalk
  - Portion asparagus into food storage bags (one per lesson)
  - Add olive oil and salt and pepper to the bag
- Print and cut (perhaps laminate) 2-3 copies of attached Food Miles Activity Cards

Engage

1. Introduction: 2 minutes
   The “Introduction” section is a time to introduce yourself, recap previous lessons, establish norms, or introduce the day’s lesson.

   *You may want to preheat your electric skillet for the cooking activity and alert students to the hot skillet. Preheat to medium, depending on the skillet.

2. Engage Activity: 6 minutes
   The “Engage Activity” section has two purposes: 1) to activate students’ prior knowledge and 2) to engage every student.

   Gather students in a large circle. In our town of (*community name*), there are lots of places nearby that we visit by car, by bus, by bike, by walking. Educator can share a personal example of a place they like to visit and how they get there.

   Think-Pair-Share: What are some places you like to visit in your neighborhood or town? Do you go to your local library, park, gas station, school, splash pad, etc.?
   - Think to yourself quietly. Have students close their eyes, put their fingers to their temples, and think real hard.
   - Then, have students turn to a partner and share their favorite local places.
   - After a couple minutes, bring the class back together and select students to share out. The educator can get students’ attention with a special word (perhaps “asparagus” or a clap back). If you use “pick-a-stick,” this is a good way to randomly select students to share.
   - Ask students how they get to their favorite places as they share aloud.

   Thank students for sharing, and introduce a new vocabulary word: **local**. Write “local” on the board and repeat together. All of your favorite places are called “local” because they’re close to where you live. For example, the park next to your house would be called your “local park.” Site places that students mentioned, and explain how they are local.

   We can also eat local food, meaning food that grows in gardens or farms, close to where we live.

Explore

3. Experiential Learning: **TIME**
   This is a time for students to familiarize themselves with what you’ll be tasting. The best way to do this is through a hands-on or exploratory activity.

   Our tasting today is a vegetable called asparagus. Asparagus can be local, because it can grow right here in Iowa. Show a picture of an asparagus plant. Asparagus is a stem that moves nutrients from the roots.
throughout the rest of the plant.

Show the bag of prepared asparagus stems and explain how you’ll be cooking them. Before you add the asparagus to the preheated electric skillet, ask students to listen very carefully for the “sizzle” noises. Add the asparagus to the skillet. Leave uncovered. Stir occasionally. Cook for 8 minutes or until tender.

Physical activity: While the asparagus is cooking, gather students in a large circle for a food matching game.

- Pass out food cards to all students (you will only use the front of the cards for this activity - the image of a fruit or vegetable and the words “Local to Iowa” or “Not Local to Iowa.”
- With music playing, students will move around the room to find different partners based on the prompts below. When the music stops, partners will discuss their cards with one another. Option: vary how students move around the room to increase physical activity, such as walk, hop, high-knees.
  - Round 1: Find a friend who has the same card as you.
  - Round 2: Look at your card. Is your card labeled “local to Iowa” or “not local to Iowa”? Find a friend who has a card with the same label.
  - Round 3: Find a friend who has a fruit or vegetable of the same color as yours.
- Play music each round to find new partners. Repeat until desired time.

4. Tasting Activity: 3 minutes

The “Tasting Activity” section is when students get to try the fruit or vegetable. Don’t forget to review your food tasting norms (for example, “don’t yuck my yum”).

Before you pass out any samples, be sure to review your brave tasting rules (for example, don’t yuck my yum, we all try together, etc.). As students receive their samples, ask them to use their senses while they wait. Invite students to taste asparagus.

Reflect

5. Voting Activity: 2 minutes

This is a time for students to give their opinion on what they tried!

As students taste the asparagus, have them vote with their thumbs. Observe their voting and offer positive reinforcement regarding the Brave Taster Rules. If a student dislikes the tasting, perhaps ask what they would change about it.

6. Reflection: 5 minutes

Reflection is one of the most important processes for students to process and retain new information or experiences. Give students an opportunity to reflect on what they’ve learned or tried in your lesson. This is an excellent place for students to practice the “Asking Discussion”.

Reflection questions:

- **Will** someone share what they liked or loved about the asparagus? Select a couple students to share.
- **Will** someone share what they would change about the asparagus? Select a couple students to share.
- Raise your hand if you’re excited to go home and tell your family about tasting asparagus.
  - Ask a student with a raised hand: if you wanted to try this at home, how might you ask your grown-ups?
  - You might also ask additional questions like, where could you buy asparagus?

Leave newsletters, incentives, stickers, and BINGO sheets with the teachers to pass out.
# Food Miles Activity Cards

Instructions for Grades K-1: For Grades K-1, only use the front of the cards for this activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit</th>
<th>Local/Not Local</th>
<th>Distance from School Community</th>
<th>Distance from Farm/Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asparagus</strong></td>
<td>Local to Iowa</td>
<td>Number of miles</td>
<td>Name of PABS school community at name of farm or town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Banana</strong></td>
<td>Not Local to Iowa</td>
<td>3,000 miles</td>
<td>Name of PABS school community in Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apple</strong></td>
<td>Local to Iowa</td>
<td>______ miles</td>
<td>Name of PABS school community at name of farm or town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orange</strong></td>
<td>Not Local to Iowa</td>
<td>1,000 miles</td>
<td>Name of PABS school community in Florida.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cabbage</strong></td>
<td>Local to Iowa</td>
<td>______ miles</td>
<td>Name of PABS school community at name of farm or town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pineapple</strong></td>
<td>Not Local to Iowa</td>
<td>4,000 miles</td>
<td>Name of PABS school community in Hawaii.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit/Vegetable</td>
<td>Local to Iowa</td>
<td>Not Local to Iowa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Broccoli</strong></td>
<td>Broccoli grows ______ miles away from name of PABS school community at name of farm or town.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carrot</strong></td>
<td>Carrots grow ______ miles away from name of PABS school community at name of farm or town.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beet</strong></td>
<td>Beets grow ______ miles away from name of PABS school community at name of farm or town.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green Bean</strong></td>
<td>Green beans grow ______ miles away from name of PABS school community at name of farm or town.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Watermelon</strong></td>
<td>Watermelon grows ______ miles away from name of PABS school community at name of farm or town.</td>
<td>Watermelon grows 1,500 miles away from name of PABS school community in Arizona.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lemon</strong></td>
<td>Lemons grow 1,500 miles away from name of PABS school community in Arizona.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson Supplement

Recommended Books
“Up, Down, and Around” by Katherine Ayres
“Inch by Inch: The Garden Song” by David Mallett
“The Garden Surprise” by Zoe Hall

Physical Activity
“Exercise Your Name” (page 12) in “Brain Breaks” (consider spelling “local” or “asparagus”)

More ideas for physical activity are available at https://idph.iowa.gov/inn/play-your-way/brain-breaks.

What You Need to Know About Asparagus
- Asparagus grows in Iowa in the spring.
- Asparagus is a perennial plant (meaning it grows back year after year) member of the lily family.
- The plant can grow for 15 years and can be harvested after three years.
- After two to three months of harvesting, the plant looks like a fern and then goes to a dormant stage.

Facts About Asparagus
- Asparagus is believed to have originated in Greece 2,500 years ago.
- The name asparagus is from a Greek word meaning short or sprout.
- A spear can grow 10 inches in 24 hours (demonstrate with a ruler).
- There are green, white and purple varieties. The green variety is the most popular.

Health Connection
- Good source of Vitamin C, to keep students healthy and to heal cuts and scrapes (cross arms to reinforce the super defense shield)
- Good source of Vitamin A, to help our eyes, especially our night vision (reinforce with super goggles on the eyes)

References and Resources
https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/produce-item/asparagus/
https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide/asparagus
http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/AgDiversification/pdf/asparagusbrochure3.pdf

This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. It was developed by the Iowa Department of Public Health in partnership with the Iowa Department of Human Services. September 2020