

Popcorn! Cross-Curricular

Explore popcorn across the curriculum. Choose activities and resources from this guide or substitute your own favorites.

Recommended Resources

Elaine Landau's *Popcorn!* is a great resource for older students; Tomie dePaola's *The Popcorn Book* is a good choice for students in early elementary. *The Popcorn Astronauts* by Deborah Ruddell includes a fun poem about popcorn.

Check out NEA's "Popcorn Activities, Grades K-5" (www.nea.org/tools/lessons/popcorn-activities-k-5.html) and the Substitutes FTW! page on "Using Popcorn in the Classroom" (<http://substitutesftw.blogspot.com/2012/10/using-popcorn-in-classroom.html>).

Activities

Math

- Sort corn kernels by color.
- Estimate the number of popped and unpopped kernels in containers.
- Calculate volumes in different containers.
- Divide popcorn into portions.

History & Geography

- Explore when and where popcorn was first eaten and how its use has varied in different cultures.
- Research where popcorn is produced now.

Language Arts

- Read and write poems about popcorn.
- Practice descriptive writing about the sensory experience of eating popcorn.

Visual Arts

- Use popped and unpopped kernels to make pictures.

Science

- Learn why popcorn pops.
- Experiment with different ways of heating the kernels.

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Health/Life Skills

- Try different popcorn recipes
- Discuss whether popcorn is junk food or a wholesome snack.

Music

- Listen to different versions of “Popcorn” by Gershon Kingsley. Discuss the different styles, what they have in common, and how they express something about popcorn.

Physical Education

- Play Popcorn Basketball.
- Try some of the games at Kid Activities “Popcorn Theme” (www.kidactivities.net/post/Popcorn-Theme.aspx).

Economics

- Explore the concept of scarcity using “Popcorn Economics” (<http://ecedweb.unomaha.edu/lessons/popcorn.htm>).

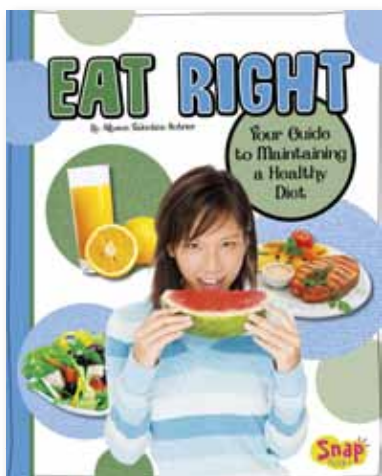
Yummy or Yucky?

Lead a discussion of diverse food preferences, using the following prompts.

- Brainstorm with students to create a list of their favorite and least-favorite foods.
- Go through the list, asking students to vote, by thumbs up, which foods they think sound yummy.
- Do the same for yucky, shown by thumbs down.
- Are there any foods on the list that everyone loves? That almost no one likes? That sound disgusting to some but others like?
- Ask students why they like their favorite foods. Probe beyond simple flavor to such factors as where, when, or with whom they eat these foods; memories associated with them; whether they help prepare them; and so on.
- Ask why other foods sound yucky. Have students tasted them, or are they just unfamiliar? Do they involve ingredients that students don't think of as edible (e.g., chocolate-covered ants or seaweed)? Are the flavors unusual or very strong? Are the textures unusual? Are they unappealing to look at? Why?
- How many favorites are made from ingredients that are grown locally? How many include many ingredients not produced locally?
- Which of the favorites are nutritious and healthy? Which are mostly empty calories, full of salt, fat, and sugar?
- How many favorites are traditional or ethnic foods associated with students' cultural backgrounds?
- Look at how many favorites fall into each of the taste categories: sweet, salty, sour, bitter, or umami.
- Gather information on foods that children love in different parts of the world. Good sources include Simply Multicultural's "Different Foods Around the World" (<http://simplymulticultural.com/2011/06/different-foods-around-the-world>) and Sara Jordan's "Awesome Snacks Kids Make Around the World!" (www.songsthatteach.com/activities/snacks.html). Describe some different foods and have students vote on whether they sound good or bad, with thumbs up or down. For those that get many thumbs down votes, ask students to explain.

Yummy or Yucky?

- Have students guess what foods they like that children from other countries or cultures might not like. (Examples, based on international high school exchange students' surprisingly consistent opinions, include peanut butter and root beer.) If you have students from other cultures, ask them about their experiences with American food.
- If possible, let students taste some unusual (to us) foods that children from other cultures love.
- Summarize by acknowledging that children in any class, region, country, or culture like and dislike many different foods for many different reasons and that no particular choices are more "right" than others. Our preferences have as much to do with where we live, what's readily available, what's familiar, and what's associated with family or cultural celebrations or traditions as they do with specific flavors or nutritional value.



More Suggested Books

The Digestive System (The Human Body) by Kristin Petrie. 2–5.

Eat Right: Your Guide to Maintaining a Healthy Diet by Allyson Valentine Schrier. 3–6.

Food Allergies by Christine Taylor-Butler. 2–5.

Food Chain Frenzy (Magic School Bus Chapter Books) by Anne Capeci. 2–5.

Food Jokes to Tickle Your Funny Bone (Funny Bone Jokes) by Linda Bozzo. 3–6. (RA)

Life Is a Bowl Full of Cherries: A Book of Food Idioms and Silly Pictures by Vanita Oelschlager. 1–5.

Popcorn! by Elaine Landau. 3–5.

The Popcorn Astronauts: And Other Biteable Rhymes by Deborah Ruddell. K–5. (RA)

The Popcorn Book by Tomie dePaola. K–3. (RA)

Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers and Up by Mollie Katzen and Ann Henderson. P–3.

Strega Nona by Tomie dePaola. K–3. (RA)

