



Debate Plate Lesson Series

Overview

In this six-part 8th grade humanities lesson series, students discuss and reflect on the factors and considerations that influence personal food choices; consider the impacts of food choices on personal well-being, the environment, and other people; and debate the questions, complications, and paradoxes associated with the what's, how's, and why's of food choices.

1. **Introduction to Food Systems and Choices** (*in the academic classroom*) - Students read and discuss an article about the Mandela Foods Cooperative (MFC), a small community-run grocery store in West Oakland. Using MFC as a case study, students analyze and discuss the intersections of health, environment, labor, economic inequality, and food access.
2. **Health & Nutrition** - Students make red lentil stew and spiced cabbage slaw and reflect on how their own understandings of health and nutrition impact their relationship to food and food choices. At the table, they debate whether or not the government should regulate what kinds of food may be served for school lunch based on health and nutrition guidelines. If so, how should those health and nutrition guidelines be decided and who should create them?
3. **Environment** - Students make frittata and salad with their choice of salad dressing, and discuss the relationship between food choices and the environment with a specific focus on water use and food waste. At the table, students share stories of people in their lives who practice thrift or avoid waste.
4. **Labor & Justice** (*in the academic classroom*) - Students watch a short video about the 2010 fight by the Coalition of Immokalee workers for a penny more per pound of tomatoes picked, and read an article that describes where consumer food dollars go in the food system. Students make posters that synthesize the information, and discuss the roles consumers, government officials, and food system workers play in working for a more just food system.
5. **Labor & Justice** - Students make broccoli macaroni and cheese and lemonade, and compare the proportion of consumer dollars that go to different players in the food system for from-scratch and boxed macaroni and cheese options. Students analyze and discuss the differences between mac and cheese options, and debate the role consumer responsibility should play in food choices.
6. **Cost & Access** - Students make vegetarian chili and cornbread, consider the many forms of food access, and discuss how cost and access impact food choices. Students debate whether access to food that is good for you, good for



the environment, and good for other people currently is a right, privilege, or responsibility, and what it should be.