

THE EDIBLE
SCHOOLYARD
PROJECT

TASTING THE SEASONS

Summary: Seeking out the best tasting produce can be a source of inspiration and connection for consumers, growers, and chefs. In many cases, the search for delicious flavors is a main motivator behind peoples' decisions to buy, grow, or cook with organic and sustainably produced food. In this lesson, students explore ideas of taste, flavor, seasonality, and eating locally through activities that encourage them to notice and savor food.

Time: 60 minutes

Materials:

- Please review activities for material needs

Teacher Notes:

- The lesson [What is Flavor?](#) is a great preparatory lesson for this lesson.
- This lesson integrates activities from various lessons developed by the Edible Schoolyard Project. We recommend looking through the links provided to find the various instructions, materials, and worksheets needed to complete the activities of this lesson.
- This lesson opens with a mindful eating activity audio recording that prompts students to taste a strawberry or any small fruit. If you are not able to play the recording, we encourage you to lead students through the activity yourself.
- This lesson includes an excerpt from an article. You can assign the reading, read the excerpt aloud, or pull-out talking points to set up the discussion.
- For the “DISCUSS” sections, we recommend that you review the questions beforehand to prepare to lead the discussions. See [Facilitating Open Discussions](#) for more tips on leading open discussions.
- This lesson was developed for Edible Schoolyard Project's [Understanding Organic](#) curriculum and is part of the extension inquiries.



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Vocabulary:

- **Eating in season:** Eating food that was grown and harvested during the time of year that is best suited to that crop or animal. For example, eating tomatoes during the summer, or winter squash during the winter.
- **Local (food):** Food that was produced and distributed in one's community. Sometimes, people measure how "local" a food is by how many miles it had to travel before reaching your plate.
- **Mindful eating:** Paying close attention to the experience of eating while eating.

READ: Today we are going to discuss taste and flavor and how they connect to growing practices and seasonality. We are going to start today with a mindful eating activity. For the activity, you will need a small piece of fruit and a quiet place to sit.

DO: Go to the recording titled [Reflecting on Food](https://youtu.be/7D5tpg5WXGw) [https://youtu.be/7D5tpg5WXGw]. Follow along with the recording.

WRITE OR DISCUSS: When you have completed the mindful eating activity, write or discuss your answers to these reflection questions:

- What did you notice about the food that you ate? If you have eaten this food before, did you notice anything new this time?
- How did it feel to smell the food? What sensations, thoughts, or feelings did you notice while you were smelling it?
- How did it feel to eat the food? What sensations, thoughts, or feelings did you notice while you were eating?
- Was this different from how you normally eat? Explain.

DISCUSS: Review the vocabulary terms above. Then discuss the questions below based on the definitions above and your own experiences.

- What is "local" food? What kinds of local foods are available in your area?
- What does it mean to eat in season?
- How do you think local food and seasonality are related? Are they always related?
- How do you think seasonality influences the taste of fruits and vegetables? If you're not sure, make a guess and explain your reasoning.



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MIX AND MATCH: To investigate the idea of seasonality and explore how it relates to the flavors of fruits and vegetables, we are going to play a matching game using a [deck of fruit and vegetable cards](#).

DO: Print and cut out the [set of the cards](#). Take some time to familiarize yourself with the foods displayed on them, then order them according to at least **THREE** of the prompts below. (If you're not sure where to put something, just make your best guess).

- Your favorite to least favorite food
- The foods you eat the most often to the foods you eat the least often
- Sweetest to least sweet
- Wateriest to least watery
- Foods that store the longest to foods that go bad the most quickly

DISCUSS OR REFLECT: As a class, with a partner, or independently, discuss or reflect on the following questions:

- What do you notice about the different ways of sorting these foods? Did you see any patterns?
- What questions did this activity bring up for you?

DO: Now, you are going to try to sort the cards by the season in which they best grow. On the board, a table, or a piece of paper, write out the different months. Place each card underneath the month in which you think that food grows best. You might want to print out multiple decks as some of the foods will grow for multiple months.

DISCUSS OR REFLECT: After you have made your initial guesses, discuss or reflect on the questions below as a class, with a partner, or independently.

- What did you notice about your process? Was it challenging to match the fruits and vegetables with their season?
- What did you notice about your answers? Are there any patterns in the seasonality of different fruits and vegetables?
- Did anything in this activity surprise you?
- What questions do you still have?

REVIEW: Now check your answers. Look at a seasonality chart from your state. (See “OPTIONAL EXTENSION” below for links to different seasonality charts). Discuss what you notice.

- Which fruits and vegetables did you guess the seasonality for correctly? Which ones did you guess incorrectly? Why do you think that is?
- Now that your cards are arranged correctly, do you notice any new patterns in the seasonality of different fruits and vegetables?
- According to the seasonality chart, do you live in a region where many or few foods are available seasonally? Why do you think that is?
- If you live in a place where few foods are available seasonally (or if you were to), where do you think your fruits and vegetables come from? Do you think it would be possible to eat fully seasonally *and* locally?

TASTE: Experiencing the flavors of seasonal and local foods is one of the joys of eating organically and sustainably. For this activity you will try multiple varieties of a fruit or vegetables and note how the tastes differ. Check out our [Tasting Ballots](#) and choose **ONE** to complete. Consider finding a fruit or vegetable that is in season. We particularly love to do this activity with tomatoes, citrus, or apples! Check out the seasonality charts in the “OPTIONAL EXTENSION” section for help identifying a fruit or vegetable that is currently in season where you live.

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS:

- Learn more about seasonality by checking out the [USDA’s Seasonal Produce Guide](#) or search on <https://www.seasonalfoodguide.org>. This seasonality chart reflects California’s growing seasons. Depending on where you are, your growing seasons may be different. Explore [California](#), [Northeast](#), and [Florida](#), or find a seasonality chart for your state by searching online.
 - Explore one or more of the resources above. Then do a **3, 2, 1** reflection by answering questions about different fruits and vegetables that interest you. Write down **three** facts, phrases, or ideas discussed in the text. Write **two** things you found interesting about the text. Write down **one** question you have after reading the text.
 - Explore seasonality charts from at least two different regions. Pick a couple of different fruits and compare and contrast: How does their seasonality vary by region? How do you explain these similarities and/or differences?

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS CONTINUED:

- The fruit and vegetable deck is a great coloring activity! Color a full set before or after completing the sorting activities, and then write when that fruit or vegetable is in season on the back of each card.
- Create your own mega-deck by printing out the blank fruit and vegetable cards and drawing your favorite fruits and vegetables that aren't already included. Reflect on which fruits and vegetables you're interested in eating seasonally, or the fruits and vegetables that are important in your region or culture.

References:

Edible Schoolyard Project (May 15th, 2020). *Reflecting on Food #3 - Mindful Eating Activity* [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/7D5tpg5WXGw>

The Lexicon of Sustainability: Food Terms (n.d). *PBS.org*. Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/food/features/the-lexicon-of-sustainability-terms/>

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