



## FOOD AS A COMMODITY

**Summary:** In this lesson students will explore what it means for food to be a commodity, what makes food edible but not sellable, and how to can make informed decisions with what we choose to eat. Students will prepare a salad using “imperfect” produce.

### Learning Goals and Objectives:

- Learn ways to repurpose foods before going bad.
- Understand what makes a food edible but not sellable.

### Materials:

- An assortment of imperfect-looking vegetables and fruit for the salad
- Salad greens
- Salad dressing ingredients (included below)

### Vocabulary:

- Commodity: an economic good such as a product of agriculture.

### Teaching Notes

- Before offering this lesson, educators may want to first teach the skills covered in the [Knife Safety](#) and [How To: Cut Vegetables](#) lessons.

### References:

- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Commodity. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved April 4, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/commodity>



# FOOD AS A COMMODITY

## Opening Circle

- Explore the concept of food as a commodity:
  - “Last time we talked about the amount of food wasted both domestically and globally. And just how that food gets wasted on the consumer, or individual, level, food waste also occurs systemically in places like grocery stores, in schools, restaurants, and other food systems. Today we are going to talk about a way that food gets wasted before it gets to the store or your plate and the problems that arise when food is treated as a commodity (a product that is useful for the economy).”
  - “Because food is treated as a commodity in our society, food is often wasted because it is not sellable, despite it still being edible. For example, have you heard of companies that sell “imperfect” or “ugly” produce? Companies like Imperfect Produce and Misfit Market specialize in reselling food at a reduced price to reduce the waste of perfectly good food.”
- Pose the question to students:
  - “When purchasing from the grocery store what are some expectations people have about what is acceptable produce? Are those expectations still held when purchasing from a farmers market or even when eating produce from a garden?”
  - Hold up examples of “imperfect” produce that students will be cooking with today, sharing that while these may not make it to grocery store aisles, they are otherwise perfectly good to eat.

## Introduce Recipe

- “Today we are going to be a salad using produce that might not make it to grocery store aisles. You will also have the chance to create an original salad dressing.”
- Transition into table groups.

## Table Groups

- Review knife safety with students.
- Share the ingredients they will be using as well as the handout on creating their own dressing.
- Assign ingredient preparation jobs. Prepare the salad and set the table.

## Closing

- Clean up classroom.
- Exit question: What are some negative impacts of food being a commodity? Are there any positives?



# SALAD DRESSING [RECIPE VISUAL]

## Create your own salad dressing recipe

### STEP ONE

IN A BOWL MIX TOGETHER \*ACID,\*ALLIUMS, HERBS AND SPICES

- CHOOSE \*ACID (VINEGAR OR LEMON OR LIME JUICE)



3 TABLESPOONS  
RICE VINEGAR



3 TABLESPOONS  
APPLE CIDER VINEGAR



3 TABLESPOONS  
RED OR WHITE WINE VINEGAR



3 TABLESPOONS  
CHAMPAGNE VINEGAR



2 TABLESPOONS  
WHITE VINEGAR



JUICE OF HALF OR WHOLE  
LEMON OR LIME

- CHOOSE \*ALLIUMS (GARLIC, ONIONS, LEEKS)



1 SMALL  
SHALLOT



1 CLOVE  
GARLIC



1 TABLESPOON  
RED ONION



1 SMALL  
GREEN ONION



A BUNCH  
CHIVES

DIRECTIONS: MINCE YOUR ALLIUM

- CHOOSE FRESH HERBS: 1 TABLESPOON



DILL



THYME



MINT



PARSLEY

DIRECTIONS: MINCE, CHOP OR CHIFFONADE THE HERBS. CHOOSE ONE OR MORE THAN ONE!

• CHOOSE SPICES AND FLAVORINGS:



BLACK PEPPER  
\*TO TASTE



1 TEASPOON  
RED PEPPER FLAKES



2 TEASPOONS  
MUSTARD

• CHOOSE SWEETNER: 2 TEASPOONS (OPTIONAL)



BROWN SUGAR



HONEY



PALM SUGAR

## STEP TWO

SLOWLY ADD OLIVE OIL TO THE OTHER INGREDIENTS

• CHOOSE OILS



3/4 CUP  
EXTRA VIRGIN  
OLIVE OIL



1/4 CUP SESAME OIL  
+  
1/2 CUP OLIVE OIL



1/4 CUP NUT OIL  
(WALNUT, AVOCADO, PISTACHIO)  
+  
1/2 CUP OLIVE OIL

\* WE RECOMMEND USING OLIVE OIL FOR THE RICH FLAVOR IT HAS. YOU CAN USE VEGETABLE, CANOLA, OR PEANUT OIL IN A PINCH. BUT THE FLAVOR WILL BE LESS PRONOUNCED.

DIRECTIONS: ADD THE OIL BY POURING A THIN STREAM, WHILE WHISKING CONSTANTLY. IF THE DRESSING IS TOO THICK, ADD A LITTLE BIT OF WATER, 1 TEASPOON AT A TIME. ANOTHER OPTION: PUT ALL INGREDIENTS INTO A JAR AND SHAKE IT VIGOROUSLY. THIS IS A GREAT TASK FOR YOUNG ONES TO HELP WITH IN THE KITCHEN.

WANT TO MAKE YOUR DRESSING  
CREAMY? OMIT 1/2 CUP OIL AND ADD:



1/2 CUP YOGURT



1/2 CUP BUTTERMILK



1/2 CUP MAYONNAISE



## STEP THREE

ADD SALT TO TASTE

