

TASTING EXPERT

9-12 year old



[1 OF 3]

SUGGESTED DURATION

± 45 minutes (at activity leader's discretion). Ideally there should be one activity leader for every 8 to 10 kids, to encourage discussion (depending on group size and available material).

GOALS

- Help kids learn to discover foods using all 5 senses
- Discover aromas and the memories they can trigger, discover textures, be able to identify flavors, learn that the sense of smell plays a role in the taste of foods in the mouth (flavors), discover what are known as trigeminal sensations (e.g., spicy, bubbly, refreshing, fiery)
- Learn more about their own personal tastes
- Develop an appropriate vocabulary to talk about different foods and their sensory characteristics.

MATERIAL

For the group:

- 1 **Sensory chart, Age 9–12** to be laminated (p. 3 of 3).

Per pair of kids:

- Your choice of two different foods (Food 1 and Food 2) from the **Suggested foods** list (p. 2 of 3), plus one of each that the activity leader keeps hidden during the activity
- A paper napkin
- Dishware and cutlery for tasting sessions (small cups and plates, and utensils, as required)
- 1 blindfold or scarf
- Paper and pencil to take notes, as needed



**IMPORTANT: CHECK BEFOREHAND
WHETHER ANY OF THE CHILDREN
HAVE ALLERGIES.**

HOW TO PROCEED

- The kids pair up in teams of 2.
- One person in each pair puts on a blindfold.
- The activity leader hands out Food No. 1 to each child who is not blindfolded (everyone gets the same food). He sets aside the extra food (well hidden) for the final unveiling.
- The activity leader follows the **Tasting steps** (p. 2 of 3) to guide the children not wearing a blindfold as they explore their sensory perceptions of Food No. 1.
- The activity leader and the kids doing the tasting **must never mention the food!** They describe the food in as many words as possible by whispering them into their ear of their blindfolded partner to help him or her guess what the food is.
- Once the tasting is over, each child removes their blindfold and discovers the food. Are they surprised or did they guess what it was? It's a good idea to proceed with each step, even if some children have already guessed right. This will give them a chance to confirm their hypothesis.
- Switch roles for the Food No. 2 tasting/guessing game (plan on 15 min. per tasting).

For each step the activity leader proposes two tasting phases:

1. **Individual tasting:** Each unblindfolded child samples the food calmly, on their own. The activity leader asks questions to help them. This individual phase allows kids to explore foods without being unduly influenced by the others and to learn to trust their own instincts when it comes to their perceptions and preferences. Among 9- to 12-year-olds, this phase can last several minutes, during which time the activity leader can ask the youths to write down what they experienced.
2. **Whispering to their partner:** The activity leader once again asks the unblindfolded kids the questions and tells them to whisper their words into the ear of their partner. The kids can refer to the **Sensory chart** as needed. Once the two foods have been revealed, the activity leader can propose familiar words, keeping in mind that each person perceives things differently.

KEY MESSAGES TO REPEAT DURING THE ACTIVITY

*"There is no right or wrong answer! Taste is personal—it varies from one person to the next. You may like, love, or hate a food. The important thing is to explore it with whatever senses you choose—your eyes, nose, fingers...!" Urge the youths to try a food, **but never force them.***

TAKING IT ONE STEP FURTHER

Repeat the same activity with other foods from the list, choose other foods, use snack foods, etc.



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TASTING EXPERT

9-12_{year old}



[2 OF 3]

SUGGESTED FOODS

An arugula leaf, a spoonful of plain yogurt, a piece of grapefruit, a cooked noodle (e.g., farfalle, penne), a few corn kernels, a basil leaf, a pickle, half a spoonful of maple butter, sparkling water mixed with juice, a spoonful of baba ghanouj, a piece of blue cheese, a piece of fennel, a bite of smoked eel vs. smoked salmon, a piece of ripe persimmon, a piece of goat cheese, a spoonful of dessert tofu, a ground cherry, a piece of pumpernickel bread, a piece of roast pepper, a wasabi pea, a tiny bit of horseradish sauce, a piece of rapini (Italian broccoli, cooked or raw), a tiny bit of fish sauce (nuoc-mam), a piece of pickled pork tongue, a piece of pickled banana pepper (mild pepper)

ACTIVITY LEADER'S ATTITUDE

The activity leader creates a calm and welcoming atmosphere, is smiling and pleasant, encourages group discussion and individual participation, and makes sure each child's tastes are respected, whatever they may be.

The activity leader respects the pace of each child. For example one child may spontaneously taste the food while for another, just touching it with their fingers may already be a challenge.

The activity leader samples the foods together with the children, to help put them at ease, and expresses her appreciation. If she doesn't like the food, she should feel free to say so, but should show her willingness to use her other senses to set an example, e.g., "I don't really like this food, but I'm going to get a sense of it by smelling it with my nose."

TASTING STEPS

At each step the kids can refer to the **Sensory chart** or come up with other words that spring to mind during the tasting.

1. Look at it!

- Have you ever seen this food before? Does it look appetizing?
- How would you describe it (color, shape, size, look, etc.)?

2. Touch it with your fingers, lips, and tongue!

- Do you like the texture?
- How would you describe what you are touching?

3. Smell it!

- Do you like the smell of it? Why?
- How would you describe the smell? Does it remind you of anything, like a food or dish, a place you've been before, a person?

4. Taste it!

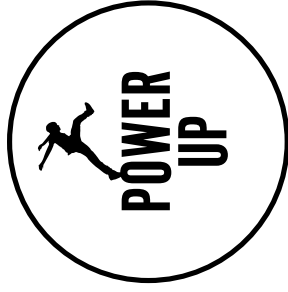
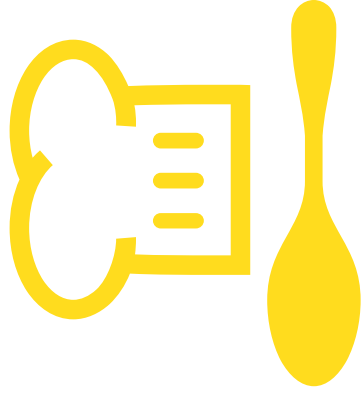
- Pinch your nose while tasting the food. Continue chewing, then unpinch your nose. Does it taste different now? What you tasted as soon as you unpinched your nose is called the "aroma." It's the smell of the food that you experience when you put food **in** your mouth.
- Did you like the flavor(s)? Why? Did you notice that you can taste the flavors just as well when your nose is pinched as when it is unpinched? That's because it's your tongue that registers taste. Did you think it tasted salty? acidic? bitter? sweet?
- What other feelings did you notice in your mouth? Was it spicy? refreshing? bubbly? fiery? These sensations are neither aromas nor flavors, but they are part of the way we taste. They're called trigeminal sensations. Fancy word, eh? ☺
- Did you like the texture? Why? Did you recognize the same texture you described in Step 2?

5. Survey (show of hands)






- Who liked this food? Who didn't like it?

TASTING EXPERT SENSORY CHART

Age
9-12



[3 OF 3]

APPRECIATION OF FLAVOR*		DESCRIPTION OF FLAVORS AND OTHER SENSATIONS		DESCRIPTION OF TEXTURES	
I don't like it 	SALTY 	SWEET 	LUMPY texture like oatmeal 	DRY texture like crackers 	
			SOUR like lemons 	FLESHY texture like cantaloupe 	
	BITTER like dark chocolate 	STRINGY texture like celery 	CRISPY texture like chips 		
		FIERY like Dijon mustard 	MELT-IN-YOUR-MOUTH texture like chocolate 	JUICY texture like watermelon 	
	I love it! 	SPICY like radish 	SOFT texture like bread 	CREAMY texture like yogurt 	
		BUBBLY like sparkling water 	RUBBERY texture like shrimp 	SMOOTH texture like pudding 	
<p><i>*The flavor of a food is an experience that involves all the senses.</i></p> <p>Note: Participants can also describe the smell, which may remind them of Grandma's cottage, Christmas cookies, a walk in the woods in the fall, or other memories. They can also name the source of the smell (it smells like mint, roses, toast, etc.) These are all ways to help kids express and develop their tastes!</p>					