

Taste Testing in the Classroom

Enjoy your produce with children using these tips.



Why Is Tasting Important?

Small bites can go a long way

Children need positive experiences with new foods to learn to like them. Tastings are a great, low-pressure way for children to get to know new foods and they're an interactive, sensory learning activity. Offer tastings before you add new foods to the menu or to connect the garden to the classroom. Pair a tasting with a book about the food or other hands-on activity for an even richer learning opportunity.

Tips for Classroom Tasting

- **Timing:** Time tastings for when children are hungry, such as before lunch or at snack time. Pick-up time is another great time and will get families involved.
- **Ground Rules:** Teach children, “Don’t yuck my yum!” Offer positive language that children can use to describe what they think, like, “yum; okay; not today.”
- **Set-up:** Prepare table surfaces as you would for mealtime. Have children wash hands. Make sure any food that needs to be refrigerated is kept cold up until it is needed in class. Serving each child's sample in an individual cup, plate, or napkin can help reduce the spread of germs.
- **Foods:** Offer small portions. Try offering fresh veggies with a small serving of healthy dip (see our great low-fat ranch recipe!). Or, offer a veggie in two ways and have children vote on their favorite dish.
- **Table talk:** Ask children to use their senses and describe the food even before they taste it. Talk about where the food came from, how it was grown, or what part of the plant it is.
- **No pressure:** Children should be allowed to taste or not. Role model tasting and encourage children to try. If a child does not participate at first, say, “Mmm...this tastes good. Would you like to try some?” If no, say, “Okay, maybe another time!” This shows children that they can learn to like it and change their mind.

Low-fat Ranch Recipe



This recipe is perfect for involving young children! They can measure, scoop, and stir the ingredients, then try the dip with veggies! Use fresh herbs from your garden if you have them. You can scale up the quantity of the dry herb mix to store for later use. Just add 1 tablespoon of the dry mix for each cup of yogurt. Children can even package up the dry mix and recipe as a creative gift!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 Pinch dill weed
- ½ Tablespoon garlic powder
- ½ Tablespoon onion powder
- ½ Tablespoon salt
- ½ Tablespoon minced onion (optional)
- 3 Cups low-fat plain Greek yogurt
- 1% or skim milk (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Mix all dry ingredients in a bowl or jar with lid. Stir or shake to combine.
- 2 Add the spice mix to the yogurt and mix well.
- 3 If needed, thin the dressing with milk.