

How to Pick the Best

Skills: Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, Visual Arts

Objective: Students will learn how to select the best fresh produce and have a produce judging contest.

Background

Walk into the produce section of your grocery store any time of the year, and you'll find a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Modern transportation and storage methods make it possible for our local grocers to carry all kinds of produce year round. These foods come to us from many different places—cantaloupes from Texas, grapes, peaches, lettuce, and strawberries from California, oranges and avocados from Florida, blueberries from Arkansas, mangoes from Mexico, and bananas from Costa Rica. Oklahoma-grown fruits and vegetables are available in some grocery stores when they are in season. Farmer's markets are another place to buy locally-grown produce.

The best thing about fresh produce is how good it tastes and how good it is for you. But how can you tell, without tasting, which peach or tomato or cantaloupe will taste the best?

One thing to look for is deterioration. Produce can decline rapidly when it is on display in the grocery store. Many fingers will handle that peach or those grapes before you get to them. You need to handle produce to judge its quality, but you should be considerate of others by handling it carefully. Rough handling causes spoilage and waste.

Fruit that looks good usually tastes good, but fine appearance does not always insure fine quality. Often a very attractive fruit may not taste good. On the other hand, a fruit with poor appearance due to poor color or superficial blemishes may be delicious.

When buying vegetables, check for characteristic signs of freshness such as bright, lively color and crispness. Another way to judge good produce is by weight. The best produce is usually heavy for its size.

Most produce tastes better and costs less when it is in season. Produce grown locally tastes better. Produce shipped from long distances must be harvested before it is ripe and doesn't taste as good as produce allowed to ripen before harvest. The nutritional value of produce also decreases when it is stored for a long period of time.

Language Arts

1. Read and discuss background and vocabulary.
—Hand out copies of the “Reading Page” and V”ocabulary

P.A.S.S.

Kindergarten

Reading — 4.2,
Writing — 1.1,3
Science Process — 1.1
Physical Science — 1.1
Math — 1.1,;, 4.2; 4.3; 5.2
Social Skills — 1.3
Geography — 1.3,1.4
Visual Arts — 1.2; 3.1,2,3
Motor Skills — 1.7

Grade 1

Reading — 4.4
Writing — 2.1,4,5; 3.6
Listening — 2.1,2,6,7
Visual Literacy — 1.2
Science Process — 1.1,2; 2.1,2
Physical Science — 1.1,2
Math — 1.1,2a; 4.1a; 5.1,2;
Social Studies — 1.1; 2.4;4.1;5.1,2
Physical Activity — 1.1;2.1,2,3,5

Grade 2

Writing — 1.2; 3.4,6
Listening — 2.1,2
Visual Literacy — 2.1
Math — 1.1; 4.1,2b; 5.1,2,3
Social Studies — 1.1; 4.2;5.2
Science Process — 1.1,2; 2.1,2
Visual Arts — 1.4;3.1,2,4;
Physical Activity — 1.2,3,4;
2.1,10,11

Grade 3

Reading — 2.1
Writing — 1.1,2,3,4,5; 2.2,5,7; 3.4,6
Oral Language — 1.1; 2.3,5
Visual Literacy — 1.2; 3
Science Process — 1.2; 2.1;2.2,; 3.3
Math — 2.2b;4.2ab; 5.1c
Social Studies — 1.1;4.1;5.2
Visual Arts: — 1.4; 3.1,;2,4
Physical Activity — 1.2,5,9; 2.3

(Continued on next page.)

P.A.S.S. (Cont.)

Grade 4

Reading — 1.1

Writing — 1.2,3,4,5,6; 2.1a, 2; 3.4b

Listening — 1.2; 2.1,2,3; 3.3

Visual Literacy — 1.1;2.4;3

Science Process — 1..2;
4.1,2,3,4

Math — 2.3b; 4.4ab; 5.1b

Social Studies — 1.1; 3.2

Visual Arts — 1.3; 3.1,2,3

Physical Activity — 1.5; 2.2

Grade 5

Reading — 1.1

Writing — 1.3; 2.1,5

Listening — 1.1; 2.1,2,4,5; 3.3

Visual Literacy — 2.4

Science Process — 1.1,2;
2.1,2; 4.1,2,3,4

Physical Science — 1.1,2

Math — 2.1cd; 4.4; 5.1abcd;

Social Studies — 1.1; 7.6

Visual Arts — 1.1,2,3;
3.1,2,3,5;

Physical Activity — 1.1; 2.5

Grade 6

Reading — 1.1

Writing — 1.1,2,3,4,5,6; 2.7

Listening — 1.1,2,3,4;

Visual Literacy — 1.1; 2.2,4

Science Process — 1.1,2,3;
2.1,2; 4.1,2,3,4,5; 5.1

Physical Science — 1.2

Math — 2.1,2; 3.2; 4.2; 5.1

Social Studies — 1.1,3

Visual Arts — 1.1,2;
3.1,2,3,4,5

Physical Activity —
1.4

Matching Challenge.” included with this lesson.

—Students will read the reading page and highlight vocabulary words.

—Students will match vocabulary words with definitions.

2. Show students the fruits and vegetables you have brought.

—Students will describe each item out loud.

—Students will select one or two of the fruits and vegetables and write paragraphs describing them in as much detail as possible.

—Students will write paragraphs comparing and contrasting two or more of the fruits and veggies.

3. Students will write and produce plays with some of the fruits and vegetables as characters. Students should take some time to think about the characteristics of their fruit and veggie characters.

4. Divide students into groups, and assign a fruit or vegetable to each group.
—Students will develop posters or advertisements to persuade others that their fruit or vegetable is best.

For younger students

5. Students will name and sort (fruit or vegetable?) the produce you have brought to class.

6. Write the names of fruits and vegetables on the chalkboard. Students will practice writing the words.

7. Students will say words that describe specific fruits and vegetables.

8. Students will practice using synonyms and antonyms to compare and contrast the fruits and vegetables

Social Studies

1. Have students survey produce managers in local food stores to find out where the produce grown in the store comes from. Students should make a list of specific fruits and vegetables they want to know about. How much of the produce is grown in Oklahoma?

2. As a homework assignment, have students visit the produce section of a grocery store and look at produce labels to find the origins of fruits and vegetables sold there. Students should make a list and locate all the produce origins on a map.

3. Invite a produce manager to your class so students can ask questions. Have students prepare questions ahead of time. Ask the produce manager to demonstrate how to select the best produce.

4. Have students locate the origins of their favorite fruits and vegetables on a US or world map.

5. Have students research which of their favorite fruits and vegetables grow in Oklahoma.

6. Have students use the charts that follow to determine which states produce the most fruits and vegetables. Have students locate these states on a US map and discuss what factors might make fresh produce easier to grow in these locations.

Science

1. Lead a brainstorming session in which you ask students how they would select the best quality fruits and vegetables. Have a produce-judging contest. Bring an assortment of fruits and vegetables in a variety of conditions, and have students use the charts provided to determine which are the best quality. Assign a panel of judges to taste the produce and determine which group has made the best judgment, or invite a produce manager from your local grocery store or a nutrition specialist from your county Extension office or local hospital to judge the judges.
2. Observe the effects of rough handling on fruits and vegetables. Provide students with two samples of a delicate fruit or vegetable like peaches or tomatoes. Have students observe the produce and write down their impressions of its condition. Leave one of the samples alone, and have students pass the other around from one student to another until every student has handled it. Have students handle the produce as carefully as possible the first time and more roughly the second. After each round, have students observe the handled produce to see how it has changed. Compare it to the produce that was not handled. Cut the produce open to see the effects of handling. Have students create graphs to record their observations..

Math

1. The quality of many fruits and vegetables can be judged based on the weight relative to size. Discuss the concept of relativity. Have students measure and weigh an assortment of the same kind of fruit or vegetable to determine which ones have the most weight relative to size.
2. Have younger students arrange the fruits and vegetables according to size and geometric shapes.
3. Cut some of the produce into halves and quarters to demonstrate fractions.
4. Use fruits and vegetables to demonstrate addition and subtraction facts. Use fruits and vegetables to demonstrate 25, 50 and 75 percent and to relate to corresponding fractions and decimals.
5. Have students create patterns with the different fruits and vegetables (squash, squash, tomato; apple, orange, banana; etc.)
6. Have students guess which fruits and vegetables weigh the most and then test their estimates by weighing them.

Visual Arts

1. Have students arrange the vegetables as still life paintings and photograph or draw them.

Physical Activity

1. Have a vegetable toss with a variety of vegetables, some more durable than others—sweet potatoes, winter squash, eggplant, cabbage. Divide

Materials Needed

Assorted fruits and vegetables in a variety of conditions. See attached charts. (Check with your grocer about getting some produce in non-prime condition for judging.)

Vocabulary

deteriorate—To make or become worse or of less value.

characteristic—A special quality or appearance that makes an individual or group different from others.

consistent—Unchanging.

display—To put in plain view.

farmer's market—A place, usually out-of-doors, where farmers can sell their produce to the public.

firm—Having a solid or compact texture.

fresh—Not stale, sour, or spoiled

growing season—The period of the year that is warm enough for growth especially of cultivated plants; especially : the period between the last killing frost in the spring and the first one in the fall.

harvest—The season when crops are gathered; the gathering of crops.

in season— In a state or at the stage of greatest fitness (as for eating).

mushy—Soft and spongy.

produce—Fresh fruits and vegetables.

quality—Grade of excellence.

spoiled—Damaged; decayed.

store—To deposit in a place (as a warehouse) for safekeeping.

transport—To carry from one place to another.

students into teams and have relay races with students handing the veggies carefully from one to the other. The vegetable must be in one piece at the end. After the first round, have students toss the veggies from one to the other.

Additional Reading

Ada, Alma Flor, Zubizarreta, Rosa, and Simon Silva, *Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English*, Lothrop, 1997.

Ehlert, Lois, *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables From A to Z*, Voyager, 1993.

Hawkins, Linda J., *Alexander and the Great Food Fight*, Turner, 2002

Perez, L. King, and Robert Casilla, *First Day in Grapes*, Lee & Low, 2002

Rendon, Marcie R., and Cheryl Walsh Bellville, *Farmer's Market: Families Working Together*, Carolrhoda, 2001.

Name _____

Reading Page

How to Pick the Best

Read the following information about selecting the best produce. After reading, find the vocabulary words below, and highlight them with your highlighter.

deteriorate	characteristic	consistent	display	farmer's market
firm	fresh	growing season	harvest	in season
	mush	produce	quality	spoiled transport

Walk into the produce section of your grocery store any time of the year, and you'll find a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Modern transportation and storage methods make it possible for our local grocers to carry all kinds of produce year round. These foods come to us from many different places— cantaloupes from Texas, grapes, peaches, lettuce, and strawberries from California, oranges and avocados from Florida, blueberries from Arkansas, mangoes from Mexico, and bananas from Costa Rica. Oklahoma-grown fruits and vegetables are available in some grocery stores when they are in season. Farmer's markets are another place to buy locally-grown produce.

The best thing about fresh produce is how good it tastes and how good it is for you. But how can you tell, without tasting, which peach or tomato or cantaloupe will taste the best?

One thing to look for is deterioration. Produce can decline rapidly when it is on display in the grocery store. Many fingers will handle that peach or those grapes before you get to them. You need to handle produce to judge its quality, but you should be considerate of others by handling it carefully. Rough handling causes spoilage and waste.

Fruit that looks good usually tastes good, but fine appearance does not always insure fine quality. Often a very attractive fruit may not taste good. On the other hand, a fruit with poor appearance due to poor color or superficial blemishes may be delicious.

When buying vegetables, check for characteristic signs of freshness such as bright, lively color and crispness. Another way to judge good produce is by weight. The best produce is usually heavy for its size.

Most produce tastes better and costs less when it is in season.

Produce grown locally tastes better. Produce shipped from long distances must be harvested before it is ripe and doesn't taste as good as produce allowed to ripen before harvest. The nutritional value of produce also decreases when it is stored for a long period of time.

Name _____


Vocabulary Matching Challenge

Match the vocabulary words from the story with the definitions listed on the right. Write the correct letter in the space beside each number.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ deteriorate | a. having a solid or compact texture |
| 2. _____ characteristic | b. to become worse or of less value |
| 3. _____ consistent | c. a special quality or appearance that makes an individual or group different from others |
| 4. _____ display | d. a place, usually out doors, where farmers can sell their produce to the public |
| 5. _____ farmer's market | e. unchanging |
| 6. _____ firm | f. to put in plain view |
| 7. _____ fresh | g. not stale, sour or spoiled |
| 8. _____ growing season | h. soft and spongy |
| 9. _____ harvest | i. fresh fruits and vegetables |
| 10. _____ in season | j. the period of the year that is warm enough for growth of cultivated plants; the time between the last frost in spring and the first one in fall. |
| 11. _____ mushy | k. the season when crops are gathered |
| 12. _____ produce | l. at the stage of greatest freshness |
| 13. _____ quality | m. grade of excellence |
| 14. _____ spoiled | n. to deposit in a place for safekeeping |
| 15. _____ store | o. damaged; decayed |
| 16. _____ transport | p. to carry from one place to another |


answers: 1. b; 2. c; 3. e; 4. f; 5. d; 6. a; 7. g; 8. j; 9. k; 10. l; 11. h; 12. i; 13. m; 14. o; 15. n; 16. p

Fruit


	WHERE IT PROBABLY COMES FROM*	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO AVOID	PEAK SEASON	PEAK SEASON IN OKLAHOMA
APPLES <i>manzana</i>	WA, NY, MI, CA, VA	Firm, crisp, well-colored apples.	Apples which yield slightly to pressure or have bruised areas	September through November	June through September
BANANAS <i>plátano</i>	Central and South America	Firm, bright bananas, free from bruises or other injuries.	Bruised fruit or fruit with discolored, dull grayish skin.	Available year round	Can't grow in Oklahoma
GRAPES <i>uva</i>	CA, AZ	Green grapes should be almost yellow; red grapes should be mostly all red. All grapes should be plump.	Soft or wrinkled grapes or bunches with brown, brittle stems.	June through December	August through September
KIWIFRUIT <i>kiwi</i>	CA	Plump, unwrinkled fruit, firm or slightly yielding.	Fruit that is shriveled, moldy or extra soft.	October through June	A variety of kiwi is grown in home gardens in OK, but the fruits are smaller than those found in supermarkets.
CANTALOUPE <i>melón</i>	CA, AZ, TX	Pale yellow skin, pleasant cantaloupe aroma, slightly yielding at blossom end.	Attached stem, pronounced yellow rind color, softening over entire rind, large bruise areas.	May through December	July through December

* Fresh market produce comes to our local grocery stores from a variety of locations, depending upon many factors, including availability, price, etc. Today, a great deal of produce is also imported from foreign countries when unavailable in the US.


Fruits

	WHERE IT PROBABLY COMES FROM*	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO AVOID	PEAK SEASON	PEAK SEASON IN OKLAHOMA
WATERMELON <i>sandia</i>	TX, FL, CA, OK	Firm, symmetrical melon free of bruises, cuts and dents. Heavy fruit for size. Creamy yellow spot underneath.	Melons that are light weight or that have dents or bruises	June through August	July through October
ORANGE <i>naranja</i>	CA, FL, TX, AZ	Firm, heavy oranges with fresh, bright-looking skin which is reasonably smooth.	Light-weight oranges. Very rough skin texture. Oranges with cuts or skin punctures, soft spots and weak areas at the bottom.	April to November	Can't grow in Oklahoma
PEACH <i>melocotón</i>	CA, SC, GA, OK, AR	Peaches that are fairly firm or becoming slightly soft. Skin color between the red areas should be yellow or creamy.	Firm or very hard peaches with a distinctly green color. Very soft fruits. Fruit with large flattened bruises or that show signs of decay.	May through November	June through September
STRAWBERRY <i>fresa</i>	CA, FL, OR, WA	Bright, clean appearance, uniform good color. Individual small cells should be plump and tender but not mushy.	Leaky and moldy berries. Wet or stained spots on containers. Attached stems	May through June	May through June


Vegetables

	WHERE IT PROBABLY COMES FROM*	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO AVOID	PEAK SEASON	PEAK SEASON IN OKLAHOMA
SNAP BEANS <i>alubias</i>	FL, GA, CA	Fresh, bright appearance, with good color. Young tender beans with firm, crisp condition	Wilted or flabby bean pods, serious blemishes and decay. Thick, tough, fibrous pods.	Available year round	June through October
BROCCOLI <i>brócoli</i>	CA, AZ	Firm, compact cluster of small flower buds. Dark or sage green clusters.	Spread bud clusters, enlarged or open buds, yellowish-green color, wilted condition.	Available year round	Two seasons: May and October through November Best in fall
CABBAGE <i>col</i>	CA, FL, TX	Firm or hard heads that are heavy for their size. Outer leaves should be a good green or red and free from serious blemishes.	Cabbage with wilted or decayed outer leaves or leaves turned decidedly yellow. Worm-eaten outer leaves.	Available year round	Two seasons: May through June and October through November
CARROTS <i>zanahoria</i>	CA, TX	Well-formed, smooth, well-colored and firm carrots.	Carrots with large green "sunburned" areas at the top and roots which are flabby or show spots of soft rot.	Available year round	July through October
EGGPLANT <i>berenjena</i>	FL, CA	Firm, heavy, smooth and uniformly dark purple eggplants	Eggplants which are poorly colored, soft, shriveled, cut or which show decay in the form of irregular dark brown spots.	July through October	July through October

Vegetables

	WHERE IT PROBABLY COMES FROM*	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO AVOID	PEAK SEASON	PEAK SEASON IN OKLAHOMA
<p>GREENS—spinach, kale, collard, chard, mustard, chicory, endive, escarole, turnip, beet <i>verdura</i></p>	CA, FL, GA	Leaves that are fresh, young, tender, free from defects, and that have a good, healthy color.	Leaves with coarse, fibrous stems, yellowish green color, softness or wilted condition.	Available year round	April through June
<p>OKRA <i>abelmosco</i></p>	TX, LA	Tender pods under 4 1/2 inches long. They should be bright green color and free from blemishes.	Tough, fibrous pods, indicated by tips which are stiff and resist bending or by hard pod.	July and August	July through October
<p>SUMMER SQUASH—crook neck, zucchini, pattypan <i>calabacin</i></p>	TX, AZ, CA	Squash that are tender and well-developed, firm and fresh-appearing. Glossy instead of dull skin. Neither hard nor tough.	Overmature squash, which will have a dull appearance and a hard, tough surface.	May and June	May through October
<p>BELL PEPPERS <i>pimiento morrón</i></p>	CA, FL	Peppers with deep characteristic color, glossy sheen, relatively heavy weight and firm walls or sides.	Peppers with very thin walls (indicated by light weight and flimsy sides), peppers that are wilted or flabby, with cuts or punctures.	Available year round	July through October
<p>WINTER SQUASH—acorn, butternut, spaghetti <i>calabasa</i></p>	TX, AZ, CA	Squash with hard, tough rind, heavy for its size (meaning a thick wall and more edible flesh).	Squash with cuts, punctures, sunken spots, or moldy spots on the rind. A tender rind is a sign of poor eating quality.	Early fall through late winter	August through October

Vegetables

	WHERE IT PROBABLY COMES FROM*	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO AVOID	PEAK SEASON	PEAK SEASON IN OKLAHOMA
CORN ON THE COB <i>elote</i>	FL	Fresh, succulent husks with good green color, silk-ends. Ears that are well-covered with plump kernels.	Under-developed kernels, very large kernels, dark yellow or dried kernels, wilted or dry husks.	May through December	June and July
CUCUMBER <i>pepino</i>	GA, FL	Good green color, firm over entire length, well-developed..	Overgrown cucumbers that are large in diameter and have a dull color. Shriveled ends.	Summer months	June through October
LETTUCE <i>lechuga</i>	FL, AZ, CA	Freshness, good bright color	Heads of lettuce which are hard and lack green color. Heads with irregular shapes. Tan or brown around leaf edges.	Available year round	April through June
SWEET POTATOES <i>boniato</i>	TX, NC, LA, MS	Firm sweet potatoes with smooth, bright, uniformly-colored skins, free from signs of decay.	Sweet potatoes with worm holes, cuts, grub injury, or any other defects which penetrate the skin	Available year round	August through October
TOMATOES <i>tomate</i>	FL, CA	Tomatoes which are smooth, well ripened, and free from blemishes. For fully ripe fruit, look for an overall rich, red color and a slight softness.	Soft, overripe, or bruised tomatoes, and tomatoes with green or yellow areas near the stem scar, and growth cracks.	Available year round	May through October

US Map



World Map

