

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Food play is OK

Playing with food familiarises children with a diverse range of ingredients so they will be more inclined to try it. The more senses that are involved in exploring new food, the more children will learn. This activity encourages children to explore, observe, ask questions and listen to food in a playful context, without the pressure of tasting.

Learning aims

- Become familiar with a diverse range of fruit and vegetables
- Develop curiosity about food
- Develop listening skills
- Develop cognitive skills – categorising, observing and hypothesising
- Language development – describing, sorting, comparing, questioning
- Vocabulary enrichment.

Resources

- A range of fruit and vegetables
- Chopping board or appropriate, wipe clean surface
- A plate or bowl for each child
- Blender or juicer (optional).



Activity outline

1. Ensure children wash their hands and wash the fruit and vegetables thoroughly
2. Present the fruit and vegetables to the children. Ask questions - can you name them? Have you eaten them? Can you describe them? Remember to make it clear that they don't have to try it or even like it
3. Discuss how the fruit/veg grows: some vegetables grow below the ground (carrot, potato, beetroot, yam) and some grow above the ground (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower). Some vegetables grow as vines (cucumbers, squash, courgette, peas) while fruit grows on a bush (blackberries, blueberries, raspberries) or a tree (avocado, apple, pear). Ask if anyone has seen them growing and where they have seen them

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4. Ask for predictions of how easy or difficult it's going to be to cut the fruit/veg and what they think it will look like when it's cut
5. Invite children to choose which fruit/veg they would like to explore and support them to cut it up; encourage them to describe what it's like to cut and compare the outside to the inside
6. Model exploring by smelling, feeling and describing the experience
7. Encourage children to rub, squeeze or break their piece of fruit/veg to listen to the sound it makes (crinkly, crunchy, squeaky...). Can they describe the sounds or say which has the loudest sound?
8. To avoid waste, the fruit and vegetables could be used to make smoothies (although some vegetables, such as aubergine and mushrooms don't blend well). If there is a juicer available, they could also be juiced.

Extension ideas

- Concentrate on using other senses to explore different food, e.g. a feelie bag to concentrate on touch
- Grow some vegetables or visit an allotment or farm to look at growing fruit and vegetables
- Gather information from parents about which fruit and vegetables they use at home. Families from other cultures may use fruit and vegetables such as yam, bok choy, passion fruit, figs, etc. Make sure you include these foods to make links with home.

NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [Food safety and hygiene course - level 2](#) – online course