

ASPARAGUS

ACTIVITY PLAN



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★ INDICATES A FULL LESSON PLAN



Circle Time

Use circle time activities to explore fruits and vegetables through read-aloud books and other activities. Read and discuss books, pass around and talk about the featured fruit or vegetable, show and discuss Harvest for Healthy Kids picture cards, play a paper bag guessing game, and more!

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★ READ ALOUD BOOK AND DISCUSSION

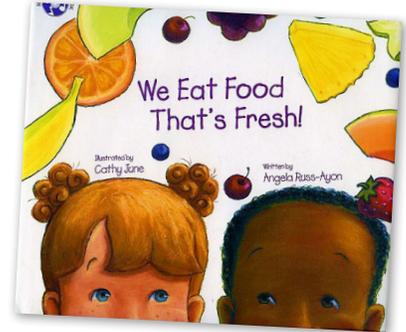
We Eat Food That's Fresh!

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children interact during a read-aloud and book conversation.
2. Children learn about different ways to prepare foods.
3. Children sing or dance along with the “We Eat Food That’s Fresh!” theme song.
4. Children learn to recognize asparagus.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Book: *We Eat Food That’s Fresh* by Angela Russ-Ayon
A few asparagus spears to pass around while reading



WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Pass around the asparagus before reading the story, or while you are reading. Invite the children to feel and smell the vegetables as they pass them along.
- Ask the children to think about the different ways foods are prepared as you read the book. While you read, point out the different ways foods are prepared in the book: boiled, canned, grilled, and baked. After you read, ask the children how foods are prepared in their homes.
- When you get to the last page of the book, make sure to point out the asparagus. Ask children if they recognize the vegetable. Remind them – this is asparagus!
- While you are reading, ask children questions, like:
 - Has anyone tasted asparagus? What does it taste like?
 - Has anyone ever seen asparagus growing in a garden or on a farm? Has anyone ever harvested asparagus?
 - How does asparagus grow? (Above the ground.)
- After you read the book, play the song from the CD that comes with the book. Encourage the children to sing along and dance to the music.

VOCABULARY

fresh
cooked
recipe
chopped
canned
fried
baked
grilled
frozen
chilled
boiled
peeled
juiced



BOOK LIST

Move beyond the featured book! Here are some ideas for books to read during the asparagus month:

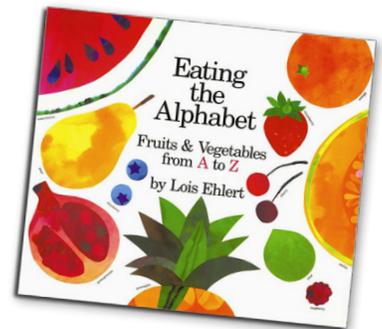
EATING THE ALPHABET

By: Lois Ehlert

Age: 3 & up

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: apricot, artichoke, avocado, apple, asparagus, blueberry, brussel sprouts, bean, beet, broccoli, banana, currant, cucumber, corn, celery, cabbage, cherry, carrot, cauliflower, date, endive, eggplant, fig, gooseberry, grapefruit, grapes, huckleberry, Indian corn, jalapeno, jicama, kumquat, kiwi, kohlrabi, lemon, leek, lettuce, lime, melon, mango, nectarine, okra, orange, onion, pineapple, peach, pear, papaya, persimmon, pomegranate, plum, parsnip, potato, pea, pepper, pumpkin, quince, raspberry, radish, rutabaga, rhubarb, radicchio, swiss chard, spinach, star fruit, strawberry, tangerine, turnip, tomato, ugly fruit, vegetable marrow, watermelon, watercress, xigua, yam, zucchini

An alphabet board book full of fruits and vegetables from A to Z.



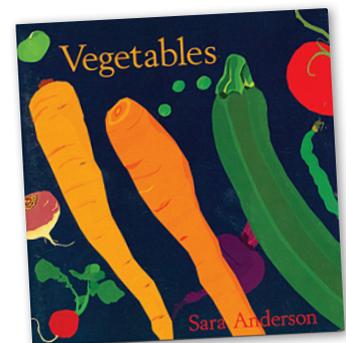
VEGETABLES

By: Sara Anderson

Age: 2 & up

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: celery, rhubarb, cucumbers, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, artichoke, turnips, carrots, peas, onion, eggplant, pumpkins, asparagus, lettuce, zucchini, beets, broccoli, spinach, corn, green beans, radishes, sweet potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage

Book features rhyming text and illustrations of brightly colored vegetables.



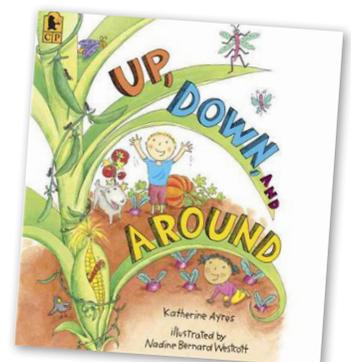
UP, DOWN, AND AROUND

By: Katherine Ayres, Illustrator: Nadine Bernard Westcott

Age: 2 & up

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: beets, pumpkins, broccoli, tomatoes, corn, green beans, cucumbers, peppers, potatoes, okra, onion, carrots

This fun, rhyming story tells the tale of how vegetables grow (broccoli grows up/beets grow down/green beans climb around and around). Children will love the bright, realistic illustrations, and the lilting rhymes.

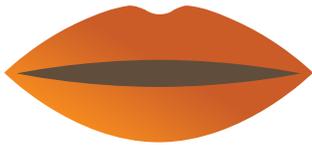




MORE IDEAS

“A” IS FOR ASPARAGUS

Talk with children about how asparagus starts with the letter “A.” Asparagus grows above the ground in straight shoots that we call “spears.” Ask children to come up with other words that start with “A,” and record their ideas on a large piece of butcher paper or construction paper. Hang the chart in the classroom for the month.



TASTE AND TELL

Gather children in circle time and offer tastes of raw and cooked asparagus. Ask questions like: What does asparagus taste like? How do the vegetables taste the same or different? Are raw vegetables different than cooked vegetables? Do the children like the taste? Record children’s responses on a chart, and hang it in the classroom.

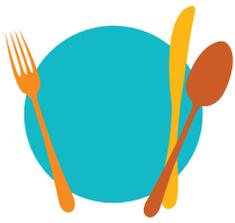
PAPER BAG GUESSING GAME OR SURPRISE BOX

Place an asparagus in a paper bag. Invite children to reach their hands in the bag and describe the feel and shape of the beet. Pull out the vegetables and ask children to describe their size, shape and color. Alternatively, use a cardboard box or a shoebox for this activity. Cut out a hole large enough to fit small and big arms through.



PICTURE CARDS

The Harvest for Healthy Kids picture cards can be used any time during the month in which the fruit/vegetable is featured. Picture cards come in three categories: Fruit and Veggie Photo Cards, How does it Grow? (botanical illustrations of fruit and vegetables), and Same but Different (vegetables/fruits in different colors, or different varieties of a vegetable/fruit). Find ideas for how to use these cards in the Harvest for Healthy Kids Teacher Bites, and on the back of each picture card.



Meal Time

Meal time is a great time to talk about fruits and vegetables, especially when a Harvest for Healthy Kids fruit or vegetable is being served! Use meal time to review something the children learned (e.g. that asparagus grows above the ground). You can also use hand stamps during meal time to congratulate children who “tried something new today!”

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MEAL TIME IDEAS

PLEASE PASS THE VEGGIES!

Children may be more likely to try new fruits and vegetables if they can touch and see the fruit or vegetable before it is cooked. When asparagus is served, try to have a few raw, whole asparagus spears on hand to pass around the tables. Talk with children about how whole vegetables like these were cut up and cooked by the cooks, so that children and teachers can have delicious, healthy food to eat!

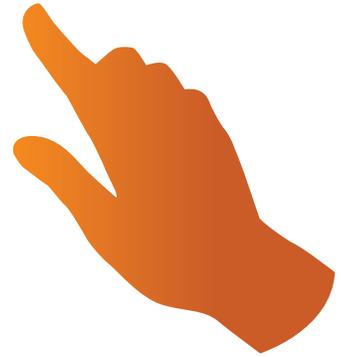


TABLE TALK

When children are trying asparagus during meal time, ask them questions, like:

- What do they taste like? Are they soft? Crunchy? Sweet? Salty?
- Does anyone have a garden? What do you grow in your garden?
- Has anyone tried to grow asparagus?
- How do asparagus grow? (The roots grow underground, asparagus spears grow above the ground.)
- What part of asparagus do we eat? (The stem or spear.)

“A” IS FOR ASPARAGUS

Talk with children about how asparagus starts with the letter “A.” Asparagus grows above the ground in straight shoots that we call “spears.” Ask children to come up with other words that start with “A,” as you eat together.





Activity Time

Activity Time (e.g. “free choice” in Head Start centers, or full group activities) is a perfect time to introduce more activities like cooking projects and sensory explorations of fruits and vegetables.

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★ SENSORY EXPLORATION

Bendable, Snap-Able Asparagus Spears

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children describe the feel, smell, taste, and color of asparagus.
2. Child compare the look and texture of asparagus buds (tips) and asparagus stems.
3. Children learn how to use their hands to snap off the woody ends of asparagus spears.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

One or two bunches of asparagus, with woody ends attached
Chart paper
Markers

WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Ask children to explore the asparagus with their hands, eyes, and noses. Invite children to gently bend asparagus spears to test their flexibility.
 - Ask children to describe the feel, smell, taste, and color of asparagus.
 - Record children's responses on a chart paper to hang in the classroom.
- Ask children to compare the look and texture of asparagus buds (tips) and asparagus stems (smooth). Remove some of the buds from the stems so that children can explore the pieces separately.
 - How does the asparagus bud feel (bumpy?)? What about the asparagus stem (Smooth? Soft?)?
 - Ask children to compare the texture and color of the very bottom of the asparagus stem (the woody end) with the rest of the stem.
 - Record children's responses on the asparagus chart paper (see above).
- Teach children how to snap off the woody ends of asparagus spears. Hold the tip with one hand and the end with the other. Bend the asparagus spear until it snaps naturally above the woody end. Invite children to try!
- Offer small tastes of raw asparagus and, if desired, cooked asparagus. Remind children that they will need to wash their hands after tasting and before continuing to explore the vegetables.
- Give children a hand stamp for exploring a new vegetable!



ASPARAGUS COLORS

Asparagus also comes in white and purple, though sometimes these colors can be difficult to find. Check your local farmers market or grocery store. If you can find them, bring in different colors of asparagus for children to explore. If you find purple asparagus, make sure to cook some so that children can watch the color change from purple to green!





★ COOKING ACTIVITY AND TASTING

Asparagus Tacos

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children participate in cooking activity and learn how to make asparagus tacos.
2. Children practice snapping asparagus spears.
3. Children taste and describe asparagus tacos.

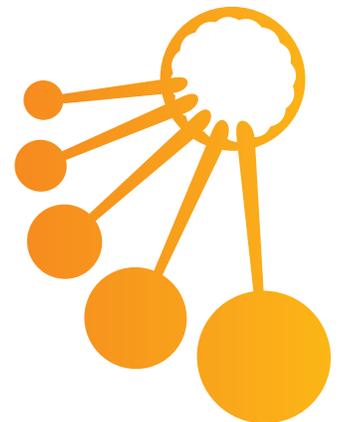
WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Ingredients for recipe **(next page)**

One or more box graters or a small food processor, large pitcher or bowl with a lip, medium bowl, wooden spoon or other mixing utensil, colander, measuring spoons and cups, glass jar (or other container to hold pickles)

WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Children wash their hands and sit or stand around the activity table.
Announce: “Today we are going to make a recipe called asparagus tacos.” Ask if anyone has tasted asparagus before. What did it taste like? Who has tried tacos?
- Introduce each ingredient as you place it on the activity table.
- Children can help snap the woody ends of the asparagus.
- Children can help cut the asparagus spears in half or thirds using plastic knives.
- Children can crumble cheese with their hands for the tacos.
- Children can help slice avocado with plastic knives.
- Children can make their own taco by taking a tortilla and adding asparagus and toppings.
- Children can help make corn tortillas (see next page).
- Give children a hand stamp for trying something new!
- As always, remember to keep children away from all sharp cutting utensils, electrical devices, and hot food and surfaces at all times.





★ COOKING ACTIVITY AND TASTING

Asparagus Tacos

ASPARAGUS TACOS

makes about 20 tastes

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. asparagus (2 bunches)
2 Tbs. olive oil or other vegetable oil
Salt
1 package corn tortillas or homemade tortillas

Optional, to serve:

Cotija or another crumbly white cheese
Lime
Avocado, sliced

**Note: asparagus is best used within 2-3 days from purchase.*

DIRECTIONS

1. Chop or snap off the tough, woody root end of each asparagus spear. Wash and pat dry.
2. Cut each asparagus spear in half.
3. Put a large, wide pan on the stove and bring to medium heat. Add the olive oil and move the pan to coat in oil.
4. Add the asparagus and cook, stirring, for 3-4 minutes. Test the asparagus (it should be a little firm).
5. Add a small sprinkling of salt for flavor.
6. Heat the corn tortillas in a microwave or one-by-one on a hot pan, if preferred.
7. Make your taco by filling a tortilla with asparagus and whatever toppings you like. Crumbled cheese, a squeeze of lime, and a slice of avocado is delicious!



HOMEMADE TORTILLAS Corn tortillas are easy to make! You will need a mixing bowl, liquid and dry measuring cups, measuring spoons, a rolling pin, plastic wrap, a spatula, and a skillet. For the tortillas, you will need 2 cups Masa Harina and 1 ¼ cups warm water. In the bowl, mix the water and masa with your hands to get a firm ball. Divide the ball into 16-20 pieces. Pat it with your hands to get a circle, about 4 inches. Place the circle between two pieces of plastic wrap, and use a rolling pin to make a circle about 6 inches across. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook each tortilla for about a minute on each side. Hold cooked tortillas in a towel until ready to eat.

For more directions and pictures, visit: <http://www.kidsarecooks.com/1206009.html>



★ HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS RECIPE BOOK

Have children decorate and put together a recipe book throughout the year, including each month's cooking activity recipe!

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children create a drawing to accompany the Asparagus Tacos recipe, and use crayons, markers, or paint to create art.
2. Children tell the class about their artwork.
3. Children remember and connect learning experiences about asparagus.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Printed copies of family versions of recipes for each child; recipe on ½ of page (8 ½ x 11)

Crayons, markers, paint, magazines with fruits and vegetables, crayons, scissors, glue

Asparagus spears, for display

Family Recipe: Asparagus Tacos (**page 14**)



HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS RECIPE BOOK:

Start this activity in the beginning of the year. Have each child decorate a cover for his or her fruit & veggie recipe book. Bind each child's book with enough pages for a recipe and picture for each month (8 months). Have children take the recipe book home with the welcome newsletter. Then, each month, using the recipe decorating activity to add recipes to the books! Children can take home their decorated recipe with a monthly newsletter, or just pinned to their bags or clothing!



Family Recipe

ASPARAGUS TACOS

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. asparagus (2 bunches)
2 Tbs. olive oil or other vegetable oil
Salt
1 package corn tortillas or homemade tortillas

Optional, to serve:

Cotija or another crumbly white cheese
Lime
Avocado, sliced

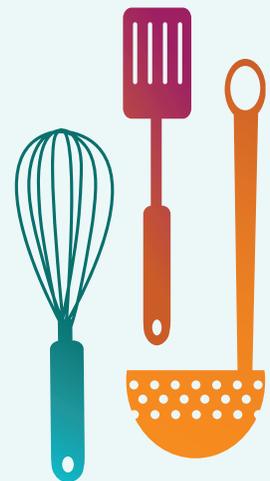
DIRECTIONS

Chop or snap off the tough, woody root end of each asparagus spear. Wash and pat dry. Cut each asparagus spear in half.

Put a large, wide pan on the stove and bring to medium heat. Add the olive oil and move the pan to coat in oil. Add the asparagus and cook, stirring, for 3-4 minutes. Test the asparagus (it should be a little firm). Add a small sprinkling of salt for flavor.

Heat the corn tortillas in a microwave or one-by-one on a hot pan, if preferred.

Make your taco by filling a tortilla with asparagus and whatever toppings you like. Crumbled cheese, a squeeze of lime, and a slice of avocado is delicious!





★ CREATIVE ARTS

Watch our Garden Grow

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children learn that we can grow asparagus in a garden.
2. Children review how asparagus grows.
3. Children make their own asparagus to display in the classroom “garden.”

WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Colored paper, yarn, paint, or other art supplies
Scissors
Glue

WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Provide children with asparagus spears, circles/triangles for the tips, and glue.
- Make asparagus spears from green, purple, and/or white paper. Cut out small circles or triangles of brown or purple paper using a hole punch or scissors.
- Create a sample asparagus spear by taking a green/purple/white shape and pasting small circles or triangles at the tip.
- Tell children: we can grow asparagus in a garden. Ask children if anyone has ever grown asparagus in a garden.
- Ask children to remember how asparagus grows (the roots grow underground; the spears grow above the ground).
- Show children example asparagus and tell children: today we will be making asparagus for our “class garden.”
- Invite children to make their own asparagus for the “class garden”
- Designate a space on a wall in the classroom for the “class garden.” Add to the wall each month with children’s colorful creations of the featured fruits and vegetables in the Harvest for Healthy Kids program.





Fast and Fun

Beyond circle time, meal time, and activity time, there are other simple ways to highlight the Harvest for Healthy Kids program, and teach children about fruits and vegetables. Take a look at the ideas below for easy ways to have fun with Harvest for Healthy Kids throughout the day.

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FAST AND FUN

PUPPETS

If you have puppets in the classroom, bring them into your Harvest for Healthy Kids activities! Try having a puppet introduce the featured fruit or vegetable at the beginning of the month. Puppets might also be used to introduce ingredients for a cooking activity, or during other activities.

HAND STAMPS

Use your favorite hand stamps or stickers to acknowledge children's participation in Harvest for Healthy Kids activities (e.g. cooking, sensory exploration, planting, reading) throughout the month.

DISCOVERY TABLE

Use the "discovery table" or another area of the classroom to explore different activities on a garden. Put out soil and various garden tools, such as rakes, hoes, and small shovels and spades. Include seeds and a small watering can. Allow children to explore the soil and use the tools, while practicing different jobs on a garden. This can be a great activity for children if you plan to have (or already have) a school garden at your center.

TASTING CHART

Create a chart with children's names on the left side in rows and the featured fruit and vegetable names on the top in columns. Each month, give children a stamp or sticker in the fruit/vegetable box next to their name if they tasted the fruit or vegetable anytime during the month. Hang the tasting chart in the classroom.



ABOUT HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS

Harvest for Healthy Kids is a nutrition program designed to introduce children in early care and education settings to a wide variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables through their meals and snacks and classroom activities. Monthly family engagement activities support parents in promoting healthy eating habits at home. Harvest for Healthy Kids is a partnership between Mt. Hood Community College Head Start and Early Head Start and the School of Community Health at Portland State University.