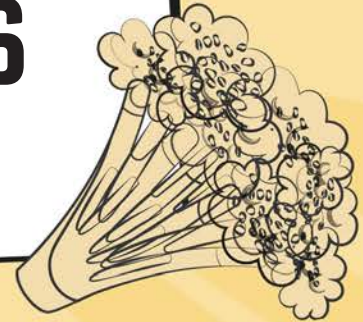




# Trying New Foods



**Delivering Taste Testing Sessions  
A Guide for kids' clubs**



# About the project

**Trying New Foods is part of a wider project to help more people access and enjoy healthy, sustainable food.**

We are working in collaboration with partners, including Our Food Trust, to support agroecological farms in Powys, Wales. These farms grow food in ways that are better for people and the environment.

## **This project aims to:**

- Increase access to fresh, seasonal vegetables
- Support children to try new foods and build confidence
- Create more demand for nutritious, sustainable food
- Strengthen links between communities and local food supply chains

By bringing food from farms into children's settings, this pilot helps children build familiarity with vegetables in a fun, low-pressure way. Over time, this can support healthier eating habits while creating new opportunities for local growers and strengthening links between communities and where food is grown.

To learn more about the project, follow the link or scan the QR code below



[Future Farms Partnership:  
100 Farms](#)



## Introduction

### **Purpose**

We're on a mission to help children explore new foods and build confidence, one taste at a time!

This guide is here to support you to deliver a tasting session as part of the Trying New Foods pilot in Kids' Clubs across the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in Birmingham.

As part of the pilot, your club will receive a Produce Tasting Box, along with supporting resources like this guide and a booklet with information about how to prepare and use the foods included. These are designed to make it easy for you to run simple, engaging sessions using the food provided.



OUR FOOD  
Trust

### Getting started

Produce means fresh fruits, vegetables and other plant-based foods that are grown to be eaten, especially those sold in shops or markets. This includes foods such as apples, carrots, spinach and tomatoes, as well as mushrooms, herbs, beans, pulses and nuts.

This session plan uses an approach called sensory exploration. This means encouraging children to explore food by:



looking



smelling



touching



tasting



listening

You can adapt this approach to suit your group and setting. There is no pressure on children to eat anything. Instead, the focus is on helping them build familiarity and feel more comfortable with new foods over time.

### Tasting guidance

The produce provided may vary and there may only be small amounts of some foods in the produce box. This means that the tasting portions may differ.

Tasting portions:

- When there is enough produce, the tasting portion should be approximately one tablespoon of the food.
- If only a small amount of produce is available, you can provide a tiny taste portion instead – this could be a thin slice or little cube of the food.

Children can also take part by looking, smelling, touching, discussing or watching others try the food. All of these count as trying.

As this is a pilot project, your feedback really matters. It will help us understand what works well and how we can improve and build on this approach in the future.

### Important note on dietary restrictions and allergies

Remember to consider any dietary restrictions or allergies the children may have and provide alternative foods to try where necessary.

You can find further guidance on food allergies [in the Food Profile booklet](#).

## Session Overview

**TASK 1** Introduce the session

**TASK 2** Get your food ready

**TASK 3** Set up the tasting stations

**TASK 4** Taste testing and sensory exploration activity

**TASK 5** Celebrate participation

## Task 1

# Introduce the session

"Today, we're going to become food explorers and try some new foods together!

Did you know it can take trying a food 10 to 15 times before we start to like it? That's because when we try something new, our brain sometimes goes, 'Hmm... what's this?!' especially if the taste, smell, or texture feels different. That's completely normal.

But each time we try it again, our brain starts to recognise it. It feels a little less new and a little less surprising, and over time we even start to enjoy it. So really, we're not just tasting food - we're training our tastebuds and learning something new.

Today, we're going to explore a range of different vegetables. Some might be completely new to you, some you might have tried before, and some you might not be sure about yet - and that's okay.

There's no pressure to eat anything you don't want to. But if you smell something, touch it, lick it, take a tiny bite, or even just look closely at it, that all counts as trying.

So today is all about being curious, being brave, and giving things a go in your own way.

Let's get started and see what we discover!"





Produce growing at Wern Farm, Powys, Wales.

## Task 2

# Get your food ready!



### OPTION A: PREPARE FOOD WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Involve children in preparing the food as part of the session. Children need to be supervised when using any food preparation and/or cooking equipment.

This option works well if:

- you have time during the session
- you have access to a suitable space for food preparation
- you want to build in more hands-on learning

Preparing food together can help children become more familiar with new foods and feel more confident trying them. It also helps children to recognise what different foods look like in their natural form.

### OPTION B: PREPARE FOOD IN ADVANCE

Prepare the food before the session so it's ready for children to explore and taste.

This is a good option if:

- you have limited time during the session
- you don't have access to a suitable space for food preparation
- you're working with a larger group

Having everything ready in advance means you can go straight into the activity and keep things simple.

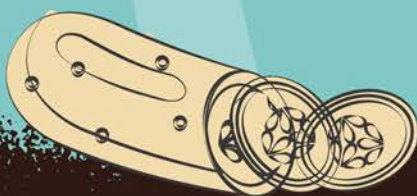


You can also prepare most of the food in advance, but keep one item whole to show children what it looks like and how it is prepared during the session.



## HOW TO PREPARE THE FOOD

1. Wash your hands before handling any food.
2. Use the Food Profile Booklet provided to identify each item and understand:
  - What it is
  - How to prepare it safely
  - Whether it needs peeling, chopping, can be eaten raw, or needs to be cooked
3. Wash all fresh produce thoroughly:
  - The produce you receive is likely to have soil on it and it needs to be washed under cold running water before eating, preparing, or cooking
  - Gently rub or brush the surface with a clean brush to remove any dirt
  - Dry if needed using a clean cloth or paper towels
  - After cleaning, sanitise the sink and food preparation area with antibacterial spray
4. Prepare the food using the guidance from the Food Profile Booklet:
  - Peel or remove outer skin if appropriate
  - Chop into small, bite-sized pieces (adult supervision required if children are involved with chopping)
  - Make sure pieces are an appropriate size to reduce choking risk
5. Place the prepared food into bowls or plates ready for tasting
6. The foods are now ready to try!



## Task 3

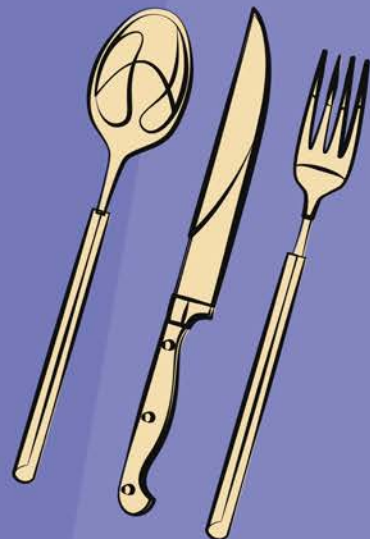
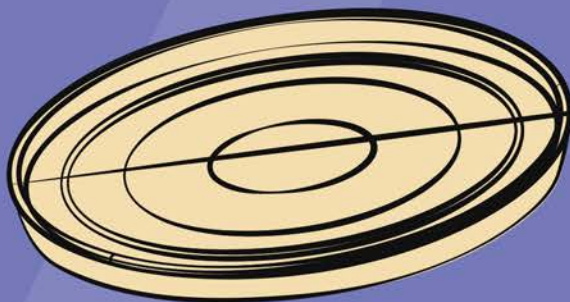
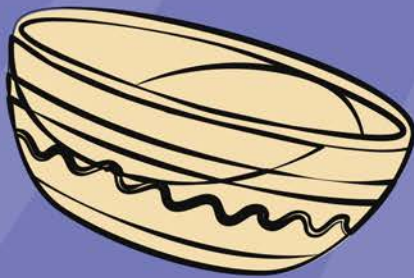
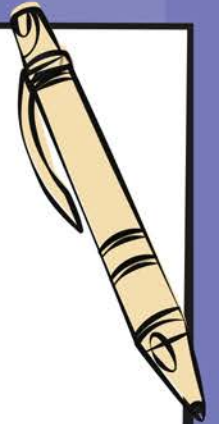
# Set up the tasting stations



### MATERIALS

- Selection of vegetables from the Trying New Foods produce box
- Bowls/plates for serving
- Spoons or serving utensils
- Small plates or bowls for children
- Drinking water
- Food Profile Booklet
- Pens and paper

Once your food is ready, set up your tasting stations so children can explore the foods.



## HOW TO SET UP YOUR STATIONS

### 1. Lay out the food

- Set up each food at a separate table (each table is a tasting station)
- The tasting stations should be cleaned and sanitised
- Aim to provide a small piece for each child:
  - When there is enough food, offer about 1 tablespoon per child
  - When food is limited, provide a tiny taste (a thin slice or small cube) per child
- Encourage children to explore the food together by sharing observations as well as tasting

### 2. Label the foods

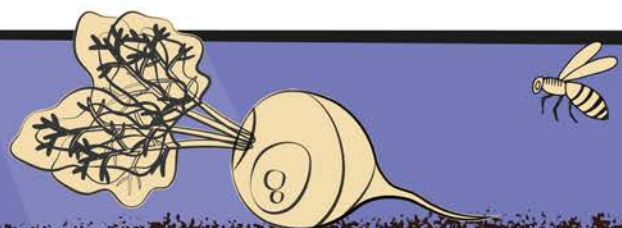
- Make labels that show the food name at each tasting station to help children identify what they are exploring
- Another option is to have the Food Profile Booklet open on the relevant food page
- This can help to start conversations about the food

### 3. Organise children into small groups

- Assign each group to a starting tasting station
- Explain that they will explore one food at a time before moving to another tasting station
- Encourage children to take turns tasting where there is limited food, while others observe and describe

### 4. Prepare for a smooth session

- Make sure children wash their hands before starting
- Have water available for children to drink
- Keep wipes or cloths nearby for spills
- Ensure there is enough space for children to move safely between tasting stations



## Task 4

# Taste testing and sensory exploration activity



### HOW TO INTRODUCE THE TASK

"Around the room, you'll see different tasting stations, each with a different vegetable to explore. You'll be working in small groups and starting at one station, then moving around so you get a chance to try them all.

At each tasting station, your job is to explore the food using your senses. That means looking at it, smelling it, touching it, and if you feel ready, taking a very small taste."

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. At each tasting station, ask children to explore the food using their senses

Encourage children to:

- Look (sight) – What do you see?  
(e.g. colour, shape, size, smooth, rough, shiny, dull, familiar/unfamiliar)
- Smell – What can you smell?  
(e.g. strong, mild, sweet, fresh, earthy)
- Feel (touch) – What is the texture?  
(e.g. soft, hard, smooth, bumpy, crunchy, juicy, slippery)
- Taste – What is the flavour?  
(e.g. sweet, sour, bitter, mild, strong, fresh)
- Hear – What can you hear?  
(e.g. crunchy, soft, quiet, no sound)

Encourage children to explore in different ways. Observing, describing, or watching others try the food are all positive ways to take part.



2. Encourage group discussion at each station:

- "Does it taste like anything you've tried before?"
- "How did it feel in your mouth?"
- "Was it different from what you expected?"
- Remind children "You can train your taste buds to like new foods - it can take 10–15 tries."

3. After a short period, ask groups to move to the next station. Repeat the activity so that all groups can explore each food.

4. Provide each child with something to write on (either during or at the end of the activity). Ask them to:

- Rate each food (e.g. like / not sure / don't like or out of 5)
- Share comments with their group



## Task 5

# Celebrate participation



**Celebrate children's participation and teamwork by awarding certificates**

### HOW TO INTRODUCE THE TASK

"You've all done an amazing job exploring and trying new foods today! Now it's time to celebrate your achievements. We're going to create certificates to recognise things like trying something new, being brave and working as a team!"

Invite children to design their own certificates using paper, pens and crayons.

Provide simple templates or prompts:

- "I was brave and tried..."
- "A new food I tried today was..."
- "Our group worked well because..."

Encourage children to decorate and personalise their certificates.





1.

**Make it a group activity**

Taste testing in group settings, such as at school or at kids' clubs, is a fantastic way to expose children to a variety of different flavours, textures and food combinations. It's a safe environment where you can offer small, non-threatening portions of food in a way that's fun, interactive, and creates a positive and playful environment with friends. This is really key in helping children and young people to develop a healthy relationship with food.

2.

**Don't force children to try food**

Children should not feel forced to try any foods – the motivation to try them needs to come from within the child for it to have a positive effect long term. If they feel forced to try them, they will develop a negative association with the food.

# 18 Top Tips for Taste Testing Activities



3.

**Praise "giving things a go"**

Rather than praising a child for trying a particular food, praise the trait of being adventurous and "giving things a go". This means they are more likely to take on that trait as part of their identity and "give things a go" in other situations.

4.

**The word "like" doesn't always mean what we think it does**

Adults often interpret children saying "like" or "not like" as permanent opinions, but children's tastes and preferences change over time. Younger children also say they "don't like" something because they haven't developed the language yet to communicate what they mean, and sometimes they are trying to say, "I don't want it right now", "I feel nervous so I don't like that feeling" or "I'm full". Support children with exploring what they think about foods.

5.

**You have to try it to know if you like it**

Remind children they can't know if they don't like something if they've never tried it. It might be their new favourite food!



6.

**Move towards "Not sure about it...yet"**

Avoid language such as "not liking" a food, and instead say "not sure about it yet". This changes the focus from a simple "like/dislike" opinion about the food, and towards a sliding scale where they could try it again in the future and discover like it more.

7.

**Small portion sizes**

Keep the portion sizes small, to avoid overwhelming the child. This can be as little as one bean, or a tiny piece of broccoli.

8.

**Provide alternatives for allergies**

Consider dietary restrictions and allergies and provide alternatives so they can still participate in the activity.



9.

**Break down food categories**

Children often categorise food under general labels, for example, "I don't like vegetables". It's important to give them opportunities to break down this label, and realise that they do like raw carrots, for example. Once

they realise that they do like some foods from that category, it makes it easier to introduce more foods.

Also, you can break down the label of a particular food and suggest that they might like it more when prepared or cooked in a different way. This means they are more likely to give that food a go in different contexts as they might discover they like it.

10.

**Don't focus on negatives**

If a child doesn't want to try a food, don't focus on it, and instead say, "That's no problem – I know you're adventurous so I bet you can do it next time!" and move on to praise someone who is doing well.

11.

**Reward progress**

Praise children for making individual progress rather than focusing on all children achieving the same thing. Children will have different responses to taste testing due to previous exposure, or lack of, to the food. A child who tries a food that they've never tried before has made huge progress.

12.

**Train your taste buds to like food**

Remind children that it can take 10-15 tries to develop a liking for a food, and sometimes when we first try a food our brain doesn't know what to think. We need to train our taste buds to like a food!

13.

**Praise individual milestones**

If a child has never tried a food before, then them touching and exploring the food with their hands, or touching it with their tongue, should be celebrated.

Tailor praise to the child and their individual progress even if it's a small step.

14.

**Provide water to drink**

Provide water for children to cleanse their palate.

15.

**Praise role models**

Praise those who are doing well, especially those who are role models to other children and young people. Those who are nervous about trying the food often respond more to what a role model does than an adult encouraging them to try the food.

15.

**Have engaging discussions**

Encourage engaging discussions whilst trying food, for example by sharing interesting facts about the foods being tasted.

16.

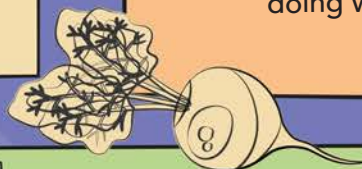
**Discuss experiences as a group**

Encourage the children and young people to discuss what they have tried and share their thoughts with the group. This is a good opportunity to highlight positive experiences and for children to share how they have overcome challenges.

18.

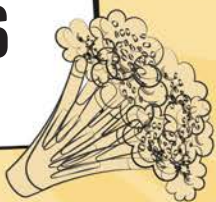
**Don't make nervous children the focus of attention**

Give plenty of opportunities for a child to try a food without them being the focus of attention. They will often give it a try when no one is looking if they can see others enjoying the food and getting praised and rewarded.





# Trying New Foods



## About the Trying New Foods Project

This booklet was produced as part of the Trying New Foods project, helping children explore fresh, seasonal vegetables through fun tasting activities and hands-on learning.

Working with partners, including Our Food Trust and agroecological farms in Powys, Wales, the project supports children to build confidence trying new foods, while strengthening connections between communities, local food producers and sustainable food systems.



**A Birmingham Food Revolution Initiative**