



# Taste Tests

Oftentimes, students may be unwilling to select a new food offered as part of the school meal. Offering taste tests as part of a Harvest of the Month Program is a great way to introduce students to the smell, taste, and texture of a food in a non-intimidating way. Taste testing new foods prior to adding them to a menu can help increase selection of the food and reduce food waste.

## Best Practices for Taste Testing:

1. Select the food item you will be offering for the taste test. Consider offering multiple taste tests to increase the students' exposure to a certain food or recipe.
2. Describe the featured food to students and display any educational and promotional materials.
3. Ensure the food item is a sample portion or cut into small pieces so each student can taste a bite of the item. Consider leaving unprocessed samples of the food or recipe ingredients at the taste test to allow students to see the food in its original form.
4. Offer portions of the item to each student. Allow students to decline samples if they are uninterested or unwilling to participate in the test.
5. Have students share their thoughts using the appropriate survey design for each age group.

A key factor to conducting a successful taste test is getting feedback from the students on the food they tried. Student surveys provide valuable information as to whether students would try the food item again if featured on the school meal service line. It is important to determine the best survey design for the age group. Elementary students respond to surveys that use smile and frown faces or sticker charts that allow them to indicate if they "Tried it!", "Liked it!", or "Loved it!". While middle and high school students can complete more in-depth surveys with detailed questions.

Taste tests work well when they are scheduled on a regular basis. As students become familiar with taste tests, they are more likely to try new foods. Consider ways to promote the taste test to generate excitement, such as enlisting students to create posters or flyers and advertising the taste test on the school announcements.