

EAT

CAFETERIA CONNECTION

Ask the students to examine the food seasonality poster in the cafeteria in order to identify a vegetable for which the harvest crop would be most affected by a local severe summer drought. Ask students to consider what would likely happen to the price of that food due to poor growing conditions. *Answers: Tomatoes*

LEARN

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Objective

Students will name fruits and vegetables typically harvested in the spring, summer, fall, and winter.

10 Minute Lesson

Through teacher-guided discussion, students will learn which fruits and vegetables to eat for all of the different seasons and how to pick the best fruits and vegetables at the supermarket. The teacher can also discuss which local fruits and vegetables are in season more specifically and how prices of fruits and vegetables fluctuate depending on the season, and how weather can affect the crops to increase or decrease the prices. Also discuss how it is better to eat in season for the best nutritional value and flavor.

LIVE

HOME ACTIVITY

Instruct students to visit a local grocery store or examine a supermarket advertisement circular and observe if any particular kinds of fresh fruits or vegetables are on sale. Decide if the items on sale are in season. Try to find out if any of the produce was grown locally (inform students there may be a sign in the store or a note in an advertisement, or the package for a bag of fruit or vegetables or a sticker on a piece of produce may give clues).

Teacher's Notes

Background

For the greatest nutritional value and flavor choose fruits and vegetables harvested at the peak of their freshness. See the guide below to help you choose the freshest fruits and vegetables in season:

Summer- Beets, Blackberries, Blueberries, Broccoli, Chinese Cabbage, Corn Cucumber, Eggplant, Green Beans, Nectarines, Peaches, Plums, Raspberries, Summer Squash, Tomatoes, Watermelon, Zucchini

Fall- Acorn Squash, Apples, Belgian Endive, Butternut Squash, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Figs, Garlic, Ginger, Grapes, Mushrooms, Parsnips, Pears, Pomegranate, Pumpkin, Quince, Sweet Potatoes, Swiss Chard

Winter- Chestnuts, Grapefruit, Kale, Leeks, Oranges, Radicchio, Radishes, Rutabaga, Tangerines, Turnips

Spring- Apricots, Artichoke, Asparagus, Carrots, Celeriac, Chives, Collards, Fava Beans, Fennel, Mango, Morels, Mustard Greens, New Potatoes, Pineapple, Rhubarb, Spinach, Spring Baby Lettuce Mixes, Strawberries, Sugar Snap and Snow Peas, Vidalia Onions, Watercress

10 Minute Lesson

Explain: Fruits and vegetables are at their peak nutritional value when they are picked ripe and in season. But fruits and vegetables that will be traveling long distances to markets aren't picked when they are ripe, but before ripeness. Once harvested, a vegetable is as nutritious as it's going to get. And in a double whammy, nutritional value actually decreases every day past harvest.

Nutritional value is not on the top of the agenda for large commercial vegetable farmers. In the days when all produce was local, horticulturists developing new strains of fruits and vegetables only had to consider several criteria: taste and nutritional value. But today, with much of the growing and harvesting handled by machines and with produce shipped around the world, several other criteria take priority, and taste and nutrition take a back seat. Sturdiness is one factor, and uniformity of size is another. Another key factor big producers take into account is grocery case eye appeal.

While these new criteria are important to the grower's profits, they add nothing to the health of the consumer. If anything, they detract from it. Sturdy produce that stands up to lengthy shipping will be shipped long distances, taking days on its journey to your table, and losing nutritional value with every day that passes between harvest and eating.

Ask the Class: *Why you should chose locally grown food in season?*

Possible answers include:

Eating local means more for the local economy; Locally grown produce is fresher; There is less time from farm to plate which equals more flavor; Locally grown food has longer to ripen in the natural process; Eating local is better for air quality and pollution because it usually has less miles to travel; Buying local keeps us in touch with the seasons; Eating local could protect us from bio-terrorism; Supporting local providers helps control local land development.

Introduce and explain the EAT Cafeteria Connection and LEARN Home Activity to the students.

Optional Enrichment Idea

Have students research what fresh fruits and vegetables are grown and harvested in their state during different seasons and local farms where such foods may be available. The following websites are good resources:

<http://www.fieldtoplate.com/guide.php> and www.pickyourown.org www.localharvest.org Have students taste a few seasonal produce items that are locally grown. Research and discuss the nutrients the foods contain.