



FOOD RULES! THE STUFF YOU MUNCH, ITS CRUNCH, ITS PUNCH AND WHY YOU SOMETIMES LOSE YOUR LUNCH

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Food & Nutrition Science Activities for Teachers & Librarians

Provided by the author

1. The Great "Nutrition-Facts Label" Competition

Chapter 6, "The Facts About Foodooz," is all about understanding the FDA's "Nutrition Facts" label. Turning the chapter into real-world experience is easy. On pages 42 and 43, there is a side-by-side label comparison of two imaginary foods, including a list of 10 things to look for on a label. You can use this spread and the list to compare any real-world foods. Ask students to bring in a variety of food items with labels, have them break into groups for comparison, and help them make nutrition-value judgments based on what they see. For a bonus social studies lesson, donate the items to a local food bank when you're done. Ah, what the heck... Let them tear into a spare bag of popcorn—then you can teach them about fiber as described on page 57.

2. You CAN Teach Good Taste

Well, maybe not. But here are two good ways to teach ABOUT taste. On page 52, in "Your Tongue Is Not a Toy," we use nose-holding and candy canes (with their built-in safety retrieval handles) to teach that people only taste sweetness with the tips of their tongues, but it's really the sense of smell that gives the full peppermint flavor. It's a great way to get rid of leftover candy canes, too. On page 53, in "Give Yourself A Food Mustache," we give kids a way to change the flavor of foods by smelling one food item while eating another. It doesn't have to be as messy as it sounds. Just holding an open bottle of mustard under the nose while eating some chocolate will make the point that smell has a tremendous effect on taste.

3. How Much Is A Gram Anyway?

We buy pounds and ounces of supermarket stuff, but in nutrition we speak in terms of grams. How can we visualize grams? Well, here's a chance to use all those nickels in your change bucket. It turns out that a nickel coin weighs about five grams. In Chapter 5, "Someday We'll Just Pop Nutrition Pills Instead Of Eating, Right?" we explain how much protein we need a day. It turns out to be about the weight of 10 nickels. Carbohydrates? About the weight of 60 nickels. Fats? No more than the weight of 13 nickels. Fill plastic bags with each quantity so kids can actually feel and compare about how much protein, carbohydrates and fats they need each day. If you have an especially dexterous group, have them try to stack up a full days-worth of 83 nickels, as on page 38. Yeah, right.

4. Turn The Pyramid Upside Down

The government's Food-Guide Pyramid is beginning to look a little like wallpaper, don't you think? It's a great tool, but after 10 years it's becoming so familiar that people probably don't notice it as much as they should. In Chapter 7 of *Food Rules!*, we pull a simple stunt to give the pyramid some new life—we turn it upside down and call it the "Food Rules Food Funnel!" All the food groups appear in the same proportions as in the pyramid; it's just a fresh, humorous way of looking at it. To build your own three-dimensional Food Funnel, use a large sheet of clear acetate, usually found in the poster board sections of office supply stores, and cut and roll it into a "funnel" shape. Postal-tape works well on the seam. You can then have one student hold the funnel while another fills it with the appropriate serving sizes of food—maybe a few marshmallows and a pat of margarine to start, followed by containers of yogurt, nuts, tuna, a sausage? Then you add the vegetables and fruits and top everything off with the big bread, cereal, rice and pasta group. Whether you make this activity neat and clean or fun and messy, it's a great way to actually engage the kids in the whole "food pyramid" concept.

5. Show 'Em How To Eat

Give a kid a bag of chips and he or she'll eat for what... two minutes? Teach a kid to open and drain a can of tuna, wash and dice a piece of celery, toss in a little mayo, and voila! You've given him or her a lifetime of decent lunches. Problem is, in today's rushed lifestyles, parents don't necessarily get around to teaching such simple things at home. Why not put *Food Rules!* into action at school? Chapter 19 offers recipes for "Good Food Without Hot Stoves Or Too Many Dirty Dishes." You probably have many ideas of your own for kid-friendly recipes. (Anyone for GORP?) The point is, here's a chance to show and tell kids things they need to know—how and why to wash vegetables, how to use a knife safely, why whole grain breads are better than processed breads, etc. Every morning, TV shows feature food segments with guests showing grown-ups simple ways to prepare all kinds of snacks and foods. Just pretend you're on one of those TV shows, and the kids are the studio audience. Hey... There's no business like show business.

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