

GROW YOUR OWN POTATOES



Guide 7: Texture Carousel

We want everyone to enjoy eating potatoes but we know that for some students eating can be challenging. Students' anxieties surrounding food can be lessened by taking part in fun exploratory activities involving food, and if some happens to get eaten no one will mind.

It is important to fully brief everyone who will be working with your students during this activity prior to it beginning.

It is **very** important that all staff involved in these activities know they are 'no pressure' activities; staff should not be coaxing students into eating during these activities, or leading the activities in such a way that eating is implied to be the goal. The goal is to have fun. The primary way staff will support students in discovering the taste of the foods involved in this activity is simply by withholding instructions telling the students not to put things in their mouths. Staff can **occasionally** eat some of the food themselves as part of the fun, but care should be taken that this is not interpreted as an instruction for students to do the same.

You may find some staff are concerned that these activities do not encourage good table manners. Reassure staff by explaining that this is a creative task, clearly designated as such: it is not taking place at the dinner table; students can be told it is an art lesson; cutlery is not present. Table manners are a contextual skill and are reinforced in the correct environment i.e. at the dinner table, with cutlery and due decorum.

Do not be downcast if students do not eat during this activity, contact with the food and enjoyment of food are all important steps towards students being willing to eat a range of foods. Students will have the opportunity to explore textures and smells that might put them off eating the foods, if they begin to associate these things with fun then they will be more likely to eat the food when they encounter it at a meal time.

The primary objective of this activity is to **have fun!**

Set up

Your classroom carousel will depend on what you have available in terms of space, resources, and potato based foods. Aim to have 5 different areas, with 5 different potato based foods to explore. Try to cover a range of textures, smells and tastes. Be aware of any allergies your students have when choosing what to include on your carousel.



GROW YOUR OWN POTATOES



Here are some suggestions:

Mash

- Mashed potato press – have objects to press into a large tray of mashed potato.
- Mashed potato pictures – smear a layer of mashed potato onto an individual tray and use it to write your name in or draw a picture. You may choose to flavour the potato with some herbs, or change its texture by adding a little milk.
- Mashed mix up – create mash from different varieties of potato, have some smooth and some fluffy. Place the mash in pots. Have pots of slices of colourful veg. Use the mash to stick the vegetables slices together to form colourful caterpillars. Raisins will make good eyes your caterpillars.
- Gravy painting – create a big mash canvas, and provide pots of gravy or salad dressing, or other runny condiments that might be eaten with potatoes use clean paint brushes or just fingers to paint with the condiments onto the canvas. Decorate with bits of vegetables – allowing students to cut vegetables with clean scissors can help to relieve any anxieties that might spring up from being asked to use a knife and fork. Remember this is an art lesson.

Chips

- Create healthy potato wedges by following the recipe here (insert link). Try to shape them uniformly. Use as construction toys to build towers or little huts. This is a great activity for accidental eating “oh dear this one is too long for my house” bite the end off, “now it fits.” The focus is on house building, the small amount of eating is secondary and done very casually. Don't suggest to a student that they do the same. If they look as if they might look happy, but don't create a situation where you appear to be holding your breath to see if they will. Play it cool.
- Dilute food colouring and use chips as paintbrushes.
- Play a game and use chips as counters – any game yours students are familiar with will do, but ones where more than one piece is needed would be ideal.
- Slice potato into thick chunks, cut using cake cutters and then cook, use different shapes to play games, e.g. noughts and crosses could be played on a mash board out of circular and star shaped chips.

Baked and boiled

- Make basic baked potato dinosaurs (link) and allow students to play with them.
- Dinosaur game, you could create a game like Beetle Drive where by rolling a particular number on a dice allows you a new part for your dinosaur. e.g rolling a 1 gets you a handful of pepper triangles to make spines for your dinosaur, 2 gets you a wedge for the head and so on. It doesn't have to be a dinosaur, a slice of a baked potato could be decorated as a face, or you could invent potato monsters.



GROW YOUR OWN POTATOES



- Create a chunky soup with potatoes in, or a potato salad, and allow students to explore it, you could hide things in it to be rummaged for. You could try activities that encourage them to get their faces near to the soup, you can buy simple party games where players wear a headband with a hook on it and have to hook up floating plastic rings, you could invent your own.
- Soup sailing, use a smooth potato based soup, e.g. leek and potato, make it quite runny. Students can use toy boats or create small paper boats themselves, giving them straws to blow the boats along is a good way of them smelling the soup, and also gives them an easy way to try it if they wish.

Get creative, once you get started you'll be able to think of lots of fabulous ways to give your students opportunities to encounter and explore healthy foods. Have fun yourself and your students will have fun too!

[Potato printing is a common art technique involving potatoes; it has not been included here as it uses uncooked potatoes that are not suitable for eating. You might be able to include it if you used firm boiled potatoes and food dye, or condiments to print with.]

Introduction

Tell your students that this is an art lesson, (if you have a cue that you use, or a symbol, to represent art use that), all about potatoes. Throughout this lesson you may choose to reinforce your communication with your students by using signs or symbols (links) to highlight key words.

Explain that we will be thinking about texture, sculpture and painting, all using potatoes and that everyone will have a turn at doing everything.

“Texture is the different way things feel.”

Offer your students things of different textures to pass around the circle. Take comments about the different way these things feel. (A potato can be one of these items)

“Sculpture is about building things that look beautiful.”

If your students have done sculpture work before you might like to show them some of the things they have created, alternatively show them photographs of a few sculptures (you may want to choose sculptures by the food artists mentioned at the bottom of this document).

Ask your students if they know what painting is. Reinforce the idea that painting can be done in lots of different ways, show images of representational paintings, imaginary scenes and abstract scenes. Ask your students what they would like to paint.



GROW YOUR OWN POTATOES



Activity

Students will be given 5 minutes (you can adjust the time to suit your setting) at each station on the carousel. When 5 minutes is up a bell (or any prompt you choose) will sound and then everyone must move on to the next activity in the carousel.

Let your students know that the main objective of this lesson is to have fun.

You can support the fun feel to the lesson by playing music: what about 'The Monster Mash' ?

- For younger students you could use 'One potato two potato.' [As this is a short song you could use it as the bell that signals when it is time to move to the next activity, students could have the duration of the song to reach their next station on the carousel.]
- For older students a browse of youtube turns up many a funny potato based song, try Lord of the Rings Potatoes remixes. [It goes without saying that when using Youtube it is wise to listen to songs prior to sharing them with your students to check for any inappropriate content].

You can use songs to cue the movement of the carousel, when the song ends move to the next station.

*If possible ask a member of staff to take photos of students enjoying the activities.

Plenary

Ask students what they enjoyed about the session. If it has been possible to take photos share these with the students.

Refer to the texture prompts used at the start of the session: "This texture is smooth, can you find me a smooth potato texture"

[Teacher shows a piece of satin or other smooth fabric, student selected goes to mash table and smoothes the potato mash.]

Show a sculpture photo: "Did anyone build a sculpture like this?" Refer to photos or have a student build a sculpture to match the image.

Painting. "What did you paint?" admire paintings.



GROW YOUR OWN POTATOES



Give the lesson a formal finish by summarising the work and indicating that the lesson is over. Once you've done this, if any students have eaten potato during the activity, you can joke with them about it, ask them how it tasted and congratulate them for trying it.

Concerns:

“Are we teaching children to play with food?”

“What if they do this in the dinner hall?”

You know your students best and know what to expect of them. The aim of this activity is to give students the opportunity to interact in a fun and non-pressurised way with food.

We are teaching students that it is okay to play with food in an art lesson, this is true: there are artists like Jason Baalman who paint with food, Jason even used chips instead of paint brushes.

Other artists who use food in their work include: Jason Mecier (collager), Jim Victor (sculptor), Carl Warner (painter/collager), Dieter Roth (painter/sculptor), James Parker (sculptor), Song Dong (sculptor), Ray Duey (sculptor), Tamás Balla (sculptor/ animator), Prudence Emma Staite (sculptor/jeweller/painter).

And of course there are Giuseppe Arcimboldo's food portraits, which aren't made of food but look as if they could be.

For students who already confidently eat a range of foods, if they begin to build with their chips at dinner time, it is okay to remind them that that sort of behaviour belongs only in art lessons and not in the dinner hall.

If you have a student who has an anxious relationship with food who begins to build a chip tower during their next dinner time, perhaps they are taking a bit of the knowledge that food can be fun into the dinner hall and remembering it there by repeating the action. Considering letting them do so, accomplish happiness around food first, tackle table manners later.

As with so many things there is a spectrum of needs. Our first concern is that all students feel happy around healthy food and become willing to eat it. You can support behaviour expectations for your students at dinner time by choosing where they sit, e.g. by seating students who are anxious about food, and would therefore be allowed to play with it, together, or by sitting those who are anxious with those who will heartily wolf down their dinners and already know not to play with it and so wouldn't be influenced to do so if someone else on their table were to begin to do so.

You know your students best and will know the most appropriate arrangements for them. Keep in mind the main goal: to have students happy about food, and you will be able to find ways to facilitate the achievement of all your students.

