

Basic Vegetable Gardening

Lesson 16: Cooking for Nutrition

Lesson Summary: Boys and girls will taste vegetables cooked using different methods. They will learn how cooking can keep nutrients in foods.

The boys and girls will learn how cooking can keep or take away nutrients from fruits and vegetables.

Time: 40 minutes

What you need for the lesson:

- Vegetables cooked in different ways – fried, boiled, steamed, and raw
- Notebooks for taking notes

Lesson Steps

1. (2 minutes) – Introduction

Review the last lesson. Talk about what you are going to do today.

2. (3 minutes) – Talk about different ways of cooking vegetables.

Ask boys and girls how to cook vegetables in different ways.

Answers: eaten raw, dried, cooked in a pan, boiled, steamed, baked, and with other foods.

3. (15 minutes) Eat vegetables

3.1 Taste vegetables.

Let the boys and girls taste many types of vegetables cooked in different ways. Be sure to label the plates or bowls so boys and girls can tell how the foods were cooked.

3.2 Fill out this chart. Write this chart on the board. Have members copy it into their books. Then, together, fill out the chart. Write words in the chart to tell of the taste and texture of each vegetable. Examples are in the chart.

Change the chart if needed.



Vegetable	Boiled	Raw	Fried	Steamed
Carrots	soft	hard		crisp tasty
Sweet Potato				
Greens				



4. (10 minutes) Talk about the nutrients in vegetables.

4.1 (5 minutes) Talk about which type of cooking is the best for a healthy body.

Most foods are better for the body when they are not cooked. Raw food has more nutrition.

Vitamins in produce are highest when fruits and vegetables are raw or not cooked. Some vitamins are destroyed if the vegetable is heated, or exposed to water or oxygen.

Example:

- When we boil greens, many of the vitamins move from the greens to the water.
- When we cook tomatoes, some of the vitamin C is destroyed.
- Drying sweet potatoes destroys the vitamin A that helps our eyes.

Ask: Which foods today do you think tasted the best?

Answer: There is no one right answer. Some foods are not tasty or easy to eat raw. So we cook them. Some people do not have good teeth and must cook their foods.

Because we still need to cook some foods, it is best to cook fruit and vegetables with as little water as possible. Cook for only a short time so fewer nutrients are lost in the water. Green or orange cooking water has vitamins in it. Use that water for soup to save the nutrients that cooked out from the food.



4.2 (5 minutes) Have members write down these key points.

To get the best nutrition from your garden fruits and vegetables:

- Eat raw when you can.
- Steam – not boil. If you do not have a way to steam, try the next two ways of cooking.
- Cook for as short a time as possible. Don't cook foods too long. When you cook too long the nutrients are destroyed in the hot water when boiling.
- Use very little water to cook. This works best with vegetables that are not over-ripe.

Ask: Did any of the foods change color when they were cooked? Sometimes the color changes due to the acid in the foods. Acid does not change the nutrition of the food.

5. (5 minutes) - Review

Ask these questions:

- How does the cooking method affect the taste, texture, smell, and color of the vegetable?

Answer: Sometimes the color changes due to the acid in the foods. Some methods, such as boiling, make the food softer. Steaming keeps it crispy.



- How does cooking change the amount of nutrients in vegetables?
Answer: The longer food is cooked, the more nutrients are destroyed by heat or dissolved into the cooking water.
- What does orange- or green-colored cooking water show?
Answer: The color shows that nutrients are lost in boiling.
- What did you discover about eating vegetables prepared differently?
Answers: Will vary.
- What is the best way to prepare each of the foods to have them be the most nutritious while still tasty?
Answer: Will vary by food. Boiling is a poor method because many nutrients are thrown away with the water. Steaming is better than boiling. But some people do not know how to steam or do not have the pots they need. If you do cook, use little water for a short amount of time.
- What is your favorite vegetable or fruit?
 - What nutrients are in this fruit or vegetable?
 - What is a new way to cook it?
 - Which method is best to keep the most nutrients?

6. (1 minute) - Close

Talk about when the next lesson will be and what the topic will be.

Wash your hands!

Remind everyone of this important safety tip!

Everyone is vulnerable to a variety of food-related illnesses, these illnesses are spread easily by dirty hands.

Wash hands before preparing food!

Wash hands after using the toilet!



These steps are easy and effective ways to prevent disease.

Children in particular often suffer from diarrheal diseases that could be prevented simply by washing their hands.