

HARVEST of the MONTH in the CLASSROOM



STRAWBERRIES

HISTORY

Strawberries have a history that goes back more than 2,000 years. They are indigenous to both the northern and southern hemispheres. Strawberries grew wild in Italy where the first mention of strawberries occurred in the writings of Cato, a Roman Senator. European explorers discovered tiny, wild strawberries in North America in 1588 when they landed on the shores of the state of Virginia. Early settlers in Massachusetts enjoyed eating strawberries grown by indigenous farmers who cultivated them as early as 1643. The strawberry is also not a true berry, in the botanical sense. The flesh we eat is actually a swollen part of the stem, called the receptacle. Native Americans called strawberries "heartseed berries" and ground them into cornmeal bread. Inspired by this recipe, colonists created a similar version, referred to today as strawberry shortcake.

FUN FACTS

Strawberries are grown in every state in the United States and every province of Canada.

It takes 30 days for each strawberry to grow from flower to fruit.

There are 6 towns named Strawberry in the United States!

Strawberry plants can produce strawberries for up to 5 years.

FARMER BIO



Joe Czajkowski farms 460 acres of crops in Hadley, Massachusetts. He grows a mix of vegetables including strawberries, rhubarb, blueberries, peaches, carrots, sweet corn, zucchini, butternut squash, kale, parsnips, corn, grape tomatoes and brussels sprouts. Joe's favorite strawberry variety is called Cabot because it's big, firm, glossy and tasty. They sell their farm fresh fruits and vegetables to Market Basket, C&S Grocers, Sweet Greens, UMass, and to the Worcester, Chicopee, Hartford, Amherst and Boston schools.

STRAWBERRY SALSA

Grades K-2 • 45 minutes



STRAWBERRIES

OBJECTIVES

Students will observe a strawberry with a magnifying glass, make observations, and identify the seeds. They will come up with descriptive words categorized by their sense of smell, sight, feel and taste. Students will work collaboratively to prepare a strawberry salsa recipe.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What senses do you use when you make observations?
- Using all of your senses, what are some words you would use to describe a strawberry?
- What makes strawberries so unique?

MA STATE FRAMEWORK(S)

- K-2 English Language Arts & Literacy

MATERIALS NEEDED

Student Cooking Stations

Cutting boards or paper plates (one for each child)
Plastic knives (one for each child)
3-4 large bowls (one for each table)
3-4 small bowls (one for each table-to use for compost)
Tablecloths (one for each table)
3-4 choppers (one for each table)

Teacher's Station

Paper plates
Plastic forks
Sharp knife
Cutting board
Large serving spoon

Sink Area

Sponge, dish soap, paper towels

Salsa Ingredients (for 20 students)

4 quarts local strawberries
1 cup green onions
1 cup cilantro
4 limes
2 teaspoons kosher salt
2 bags of corn tortilla chips
(Extra strawberries for the opening sensory activity)

STRAWBERRY SALSA

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PROCEDURE

Warm up: give each student or group a strawberry and a magnifying glass. Ask students to look closely at the whole strawberry and come up with words to represent how they look, feel and smell. Compile their words on an easel paper or the board organized by the senses.

Background information: Tell students that when strawberry plants grow they send out thin growths called "runners." These runners look like strings. When they reach the ground, they send roots into the soil and produce new plants.

Explain that strawberries are the only fruit that have their seeds on the outside. Ask students to take another look to examine the seeds on the surface of the berry. Can they guess how many seeds there are on one strawberry? After they have had a chance to guess, share that each strawberry has around two hundred seeds and that strawberries are the only fruit with seeds on the outside.

Activity: Tell students that they will be making strawberry salsa. Go over each of the steps of making the recipe, from washing the vegetables to tasting the salsa. Show the students each of the tools they will use and have them guess what the tool is used for. Demonstrate the proper way to hold and handle the tools.

Write the steps on the board or easel paper:

Step 1: Wash all fruits and vegetables.

Step 2: Using a plastic knife, remove the tops and slice the strawberries into a medium bowl. Step

3: Using fingers, remove cilantro leaves from the stems.

Step 4: Chop the green onions and cilantro.

Step 5: Add all ingredients to bowl and toss with the strawberries.

Step 6: Cut the lime and squeeze the juice into the strawberry mixture.

Step 7: Add salt and stir.

Step 8: Taste it!

Step 9: Clean up.

STRAWBERRY SALSA

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PROCEDURE, Cont.

Assign a group to wash the produce by running under water. Bring the produce back to the teacher's cooking station and prep them while talking a bit more about each ingredient. See preparation instructions in the ingredient list.

Ask the students to take a seat at the tables/desks. Put a few strawberries, green onions, a bit of cilantro, and a slice of lime on each child's cutting board. Prompt students to start slicing the strawberries by using their plastic knives. Place strawberry tops in a compost bowl and sliced strawberries in a separate medium bowl. Once the ingredients are small enough students can add them to the bowl of strawberries on the table. Prompt students to squeeze their lime into the salsa and to take turns mixing.

Give each child a paper plate with several chips and a spoonful of their groups' salsa. Prompt the children to try their salsa together all at once.

Kids can help in the clean up process by putting their plates in the trash and helping to pick up debris on the floor.

EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS

Mindful taste test: Ask the students to hold, examine and smell their strawberries. Then, have them take one bite and pause before chewing and swallowing the strawberry. How many words can they come up with to describe how the strawberry looks, feels, smells, and tastes? Record the descriptive words on the board.

Two book suggestions that go with this lesson are [The Berry Book](#) by Gail Gibbons and [The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry, and The Big Hungry Bear](#) by Don and Audrey Wood.