

International Flavors

Objective: Children will learn how various spices are used in international cooking and which spices are most prevalent in different cultures.

Recommended Ages: 9 years old and up

Time required for project: 1 – 1.5 hours

Overview

This project is designed to introduce children to spices used in different international cuisines. They will use sight, feel, smell and taste to explore and compare various spices, then guess what country or region of the world uses that spice as a key ingredient in their cooking. If time allows, the group can make scones using their spices.

Supplies

Wilton Items Needed:

- ✓ White mini cupcake liners
- ✓ 10" Cake board (one per child)
- ✓ Parchment paper
- ✓ Cookie Sheet

Additional Kitchen Supplies (either leader can provide, or children can bring their own):

- ✓ 6-9 spices of your choice from the *Tasting Chart – Fact Sheet* (page 6)
- ✓ Several measuring spoons (1/8 teaspoon)
- ✓ Pens or pencils (one per child)
- ✓ Copy of My Spice Tasting Chart (one per child)
- ✓ Copy of World Map (optional – one per child)
- ✓ Ingredients for Basic Scones recipe, if making scones (page 7)

Project Outline

1. Introduction
2. Food Characteristics
3. Taste Test
 - a. Color
 - b. Texture
 - c. Smell
 - d. Flavor
4. Countries/Regions
5. Making Scones (optional)
6. Clean-up/Wrap-up

INTRODUCTION

Provide a quick overview of project

TASTE TEST

Give each child a Tasting Chart, cake board, a pen or pencil, and the number of cupcake liners equal to the number of spices you want to test. Place a 1/8 teaspoon or less of each spice into one of the liners. Write next to each what spice is in the cup.

Sample Board



Color and Texture

Have children just look carefully at each spice.

- They should describe the color of each spice on their chart.
- Next, they can describe the texture using words like powdery, soft, fine, coarse, etc. for each spice on their chart.

Food Characteristics

Provide a brief description of each characteristic. Have children jot notes on their sheet for each characteristic on the list if needed. They should first smell, then taste the spice. Caution them to taste a very small amount at first as some may evoke a strong response. For each spice, they should use one of the characteristics to fill in the table for smell and flavor.

Spices are generally described by their sensory characteristics. Below are the most commonly used characteristics to describe the taste (flavor) and/or the smell (scent) of a spice.

Bitter

Spices that have a sharp taste, lacking sweetness. Generally, gives a negative impression.

Cooling

Cooling spices are those that give the mouth a refreshed sensation. If your first thought was tasting mint in a tall glass of chilled water on a sweaty summer day, that is exactly the feeling your mouth gets from cooling spices.

Earthy

Earthy spices are those which taste like where they come from. You may say the flavor is dirty and undesirable.

Floral

These spices give a nice flavor that evokes feelings of spring. You may associate this flavor with teas.

Fruity

Spices with this flavor profile taste are sweeter and have a nice fruity scent.

Herbaceous

This seems like an obvious thing to say, but there is really no other language to describe this flavor except they smell like an herb.

Hot

This flavor is characterized by its ability to heat up your mouth quickly, sometimes making food unbearable enough to leave you coughing or crying. Smelling it may make your nose itch or make you sneeze.

Nutty

Some people associate this flavor with almonds. There is almost something buttery about the nutty flavor.

Piney

If you have smelled a pine tree before, you have a vague idea of what the pine flavor tastes like. It's a bitey flavor.

Pungent

Spices that fall under the pungent classification are strongly flavored and have strong smells as well. You don't have to get too close to them to catch their scent.

Sour

Sour flavors make your mouth pucker and can make your mouth water more.

Spicy

Spicy food is often intense, but doesn't last long.

Sulfury

It is most associated with scent over taste. It is sometimes described as a rotten egg smell.

Sweet

This flavor is defined by how much sugar our tongue can sense in a food. It may or may not have a strong scent, but if it does, it gives a pleasing sensation.

Woody

Woody flavors are those that taste vaguely like wood.

Country/Region

Based on their experience, have students then fill in what country or region they would associate the spice with. They may put more than one answer for each spice. Use the Fact Sheet on page 6 to

talk about regions where the spices are used heavily in that country/region's food. If desired, use the world map addendum to locate these areas on a map.

MAKING SCONES (Optional)

If time allows and you desire, assist the children in making a batch of basic scone mix (recipe on page 7).

- Follow the recipe for the scones. Divide dough into the number of spices you want to test. Have children add a different spice to each scone.
- Once scones are baked, cool completely.
- Divide each scone so each child gets a taste.
- Follow up questions:
 - Do the spices taste different when put into a food?
 - Are there spices you like better than others as a flavor in a scone?

RESULTS

Discussion Questions

Encourage children to talk about their results and what they learned during the activity. If making scones, this discussion can take place while the scones are baking. There are no right or wrong answers on the color, texture, smell and flavor sections. Different spices will taste and look different to different people.

- Which colors of spices looked the most appealing to you? Which were least appealing? What made them appealing or unappealing?
- Do you think texture plays a part in flavor? Did coarser spices have a better or worse "mouth" feel for you?
- Which spice had a smell that most appealed to you? Which one least appealed to you?
- Which spice flavor was your favorite? Which one was your least favorite? Why? Did you prefer the spicy, sweet or sour flavors?

Find easy to follow Leader Guides and completion certificates for more activities at

<http://classpromo.wilton.com/girlscouts>.

CLEAN-UP AND WRAP-UP

INSPIRATION



Tasting Chart – Fact Sheet

Spice	Sweets or Savory	Characteristic	Country/Region
All spice	Sweets	Pungent, sweet	Germany
Anise	Sweets	Bitter, cooling, fruity, pungent, sweet	Middle East, Italian
Basil	Savory	Cooling, floral (Sweet)	Italian
Caraway	Savory	Sweet	African, Morocco
Cardamom	Sweets	Nutty, woody	France
Cayenne pepper	Savory	Spicy	Mexico, India
Cilantro	Savory	Earthy, Sweet	Central America
Cinnamon	Sweets	Spicy	China, Mexico, England
Cloves	Sweets	Bitter, spicy, sweet, woody	Germany
Coriander	Savory	Floral, nutty, spicy	Australia
Cumin	Savory	Bitter, earthy, nutty, spicy	Mexico, Central America
Fennel	Savory	Cooling, fruity, sweet	India, Middle East
Ginger	Both	Pungent, spicy	Thai, China
Mexican oregano	Savory	Bitter, herbaceous	Mexico
Dry Mustard	Savory	Bitter,	Germany
Nutmeg	Sweets	Spicy, sweet	Mexico, England
Oregano	Savory	Bitter, herbaceous	Italy, Mediterranean
Poppy seed	Sweets	Nutty, sweet	Germany, Czech Republic
Rosemary	Savory	Herbaceous, piney, woody	Czech Republic
Saffron	Savory	Earthy, floral	Spain, Portugal
Sage	Savory	herbaceous	Italy
Sesame seed	Savory	Nutty, sweet	Middle East
Tarragon	Savory	herbaceous	France
Turmeric	Savory	Bitter	Thai, India
Thyme	Savory	Bitter, floral, herbaceous, piney	Germany
Vanilla	Sweets	Cooling, Sweet	France

Basic Scones

Yield: About 8 servings

Skill Level: Beginner

Ingredient	Volume	Weight	
	Measure	Ounces	Grams
All-purpose flour	3 cups	13.3 ounces	376 grams
Granulated sugar	1/4 cup	2 ounces	50 grams
Baking powder	1 tablespoon	0.4 ounces	11 grams
Salt	1/2 teaspoon	0.1 ounces	4 grams
Butter, unsalted, cold	6 tablespoons	3 ounces	86 grams
Milk	3/4 cup	6.5 ounces	183 grams
Large egg, whole	2 eggs	3.6 ounces	101 grams
Clear Imitation Vanilla Extract	1 teaspoon	0.15 ounces	5 grams
Water	1 tablespoon	0.5 ounces	15 grams

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Prepare cookie pan with parchment paper.
2. In large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt; stir to combine. Cut in butter with pastry blender or two knives until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
3. In small bowl, whisk milk, 1 egg and vanilla. Add to dry ingredients all at once, stirring to moisten. On well-floured surface, knead dough 5-10 times until it comes together. Divide dough into the number of pieces equal to the number of spices you are using. Add 1/8 teaspoon of spice to each piece of dough, kneading the spice in thoroughly throughout the dough. Shape each piece of dough into a ball, place on the cookie pan and flatten to about 1 inch thick. Use a pen or pencil to write the spice included next to each scone.
4. In small bowl, whisk remaining egg and 1 tablespoon water together to make an egg wash. Brush egg wash over scones.
5. Bake 15-17 minutes or until lightly browned around edges. Cool completely on cooling grid.