

Alaska Grown — Fresher by Far

By Joe Winter

Materials

- Alaska Grown produce
- Imported vegetables, fruits
- * Labeling material
- Data collection journals
- Paper plates

Objective

Give students an appreciation for locally grown foods.

Suggested grade levels

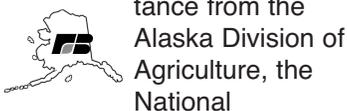
K-6 (modify to grade level)

Alaska Content Standards

Science A 2-3
English A; C 2-5
Geography A 1,4



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Alaska Division of Agriculture, the National Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium and USDA. For information, visit www.agclassroom.org/ak

Introduction

This is a see, touch, taste test for students to understand the benefit of Alaska Grown foods.

Background for Teachers and Older Students

The Alaska Grown label is used only on foods grown or raised in the state. It is an indicator the food has not been shipped in from outside of Alaska. It also implies freshness, quality and a commitment to Alaska. In this lesson students can compare Alaska foods to nonAlaska foods.

Teacher Preparation

Purchase or have donated Alaska produce and imported (from anywhere outside Alaska) produce, e.g., carrots with greens on them, shelled peas, leaf lettuce, large cabbage head, Yukon Gold potatoes, strawberries, raspberries. Purchase a small amount of each product from both the local producers' farmers' markets, then, buy a small amount of each from the grocery store. **Hint:** *When purchasing produce from the stores try to find produce on the shelves that is not the best pickings. I know this many sound like the data can be skewed but Alaska Grown growers will not put a product on the shelf that is of poor quality. When grocers pay for produce they have to try to sell it and some grocers have no choice but to sell poor quality produce because of availability.*

Activity/ Procedure

Students will be asked to brainstorm ideas of where their food comes from. They will also be given the task to wash the fruits and veggies. (Remember to keep the locally grown and the grocery products labeled or separated). Finally they will test the produce to see which produce is more appealing to the students and why?

Questions to ask:

- Does the produce look nutritious and good to eat?
- How does the produce feel? (Soft, floppy, crunchy, rubbery, mushy, firm)
- How does the produce taste? (Sweet, bitter, mushy, sour, fresh, juicy)
- Once the produce is washed and separated with labels (local produce/ shipped produce) the students will do a series of 3 tests on the produce.

Students will document in their journals which veggie/fruit they are comparing. Each pair of students should do a minimum of 3 items.

Test 1: *The Sight Test*

Have the students in pairs come up and do an observation of what words they would use to describe the fruit/veggie they are testing. Have them write down the words in their data collection journal.

Examples: Strawberries: red, green, white, moldy, large, small, etc.

Terms to Define

Import
Export
Data
Availability
Organic



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Have them document which fruit/veggie looks better to them in their journals.

Test 2: *The Touch Test*

The student pairs will now be given the 3 products they chose on a paper plate. They will feel the fruits/veggies to see if the Alaska and the shipped produce have texture differences. Have the students write down words that would describe how their chosen fruits/veggies feel, e.g., Cabbage: firm, flimsy, soft, mushy, floppy, crisp, heavy, etc, Have the students document which fruit/veggie feels better to them in their journals.

Test 3: *The Taste Test*

The student pairs will now taste their 3 products chosen and see which item tastes better verses the Alaska grown and the shipped produce.

Carrots: Alaska Grown vs. Shipped Produce

Shelled Peas: Alaska Grown vs. Shipped Produce

Strawberries: Alaska Grown vs. Shipped Produce

Hint: Have the students test one product at a time. This way they will not get confused when they document their choices in their journals.

Have them come up with some words that describe their tastes for each product. Examples:

Juicy, sweet, sour, bitter, crunchy, soft, firm, etc.

Have them write down their words for each product in their journals.

Data Collection:

Discuss the findings with each veggie/fruit compared. Make a large word list for each separate fruit/veggie used. Be sure to separate the word list. For example;

Alaska Grown Strawberries vs. Shipped Strawberries

Red, firm, juicy, fresh

Red, mushy, juicy, moldy

After collecting the words ask why some of the shipped produce looks, tastes, and feels so different than Alaska Grown produce.

Discuss shipping process, labels from where food is shipped from, mapping distances, and shelf life. All these things contribute to how the food is going to be when students go see it in the grocery stores. Also discuss how much processing has to be done for the Alaska Grown products to be shipped to the stores.

Make a bar graph of each product comparison. Have the students choose which of the products they would choose to eat of the 3 pairs; Alaska Grown or Shipped produce.

Discuss the benefits of having Alaska Grown produce and how it is an opportunity to get fresh produce in Alaska. Discuss how other countries get their foods if they cannot grow plants.

Conclusion

Have the students go home and collect information on what types of Alaska Grown produce they have. Give them information on where to find local farmers' markets. Have them bring in a veggie or fruit to make a community made veggie soup. Invite the local farmers' market organizer to your class to assist in the soup process and to explain the farmers' markets.

Extensions

- Have the children take a field trip to a local farmers' market or local farm to see first hand what goes into collecting produce for the community.
- Talk with a local farmer to set up a field trip where the kids can harvest the local produce on their own and bring some home.
- Build your own fruit/veggie planting boxes for students to start their own Alaska Grown school community garden.

Related Lessons from Alaska AITC

Farmers' Markets

Apples in Alaska

What's on Your Plate?

Websites

<http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/ag/index.htm>

<http://www.southanchoragefarmersmarket.com>

<http://www.tvfmarket.com>

<http://states.farmersmarket.com/category/ak>

<http://www.localharvest.org/csa>