

# Cooking Up Local Food Literacy: Tips for Schools

## Tipsheet #3 in the 2017 Local Food Literacy in Ontario Schools Series

### How can we make it fun and engaging for students to learn about good, healthy, local food?

- **There's no lack of interest!** When you engage students in fun and creative ways they (and teachers too!) are excited to learn about vegetables and fruits and other healthy, local foods.
- Take on the mindset that **food is an excellent tool to teach math, history, literacy, science, geography, art** and other subjects. E.g. you can make salad dressing by teaching that fractions and recipes are often the same thing.
- Encourage students to enjoy different foods by using a subject that they're already familiar with: "we're not trying anything new, we're doing practical math by measuring out ingredients to create a sauce." Once they've created something they'll be more interested in trying it.
- **A great way to get students excited about good, local food is to engage them in their local food system.** The more that students know about how to grow food, where their food comes from, different names for foods, how to explore foods using their senses, the history of foods, and what those foods mean in different cultures, **the more likely they will be to engage with the food (and eat it!)**

*Delicious Math*

SALAD DRESSING  
 \_\_\_ PART ACID  
 \_\_\_ PART OIL

ACID      OIL  
 \_\_\_      \_\_\_  
 4      4

*The Recipe*      \_\_\_ TBSP ACID  
 \_\_\_ TBSP OIL

### E.g. Get to know the TOMATO!

- What climate do tomatoes grow in? (Geography)
- What time of year are they fresh and local? (Geography)
- What plant family does the tomato belong to? (Science)
- If you double a salsa recipe, how many cups of tomatoes will you need? (Math)
- Did you know that the margherita pizza was created in 1889 in honour of Queen Margherita, made to represent the colours of the Italian flag? (History & Art)



# COOKING WITHOUT A KITCHEN

**A basic kitchen “kit” may be all you need to get cooking.**

Here are some ideas and curriculum-linked resources from FoodShare:

- Blender, cups, cutting board, knife = **SMOOTHIES**
  - Consider making or borrowing a **bike blender**
- Tea pot, tea cups, strainer, electric kettle = **TEA**
  - Check out **Herbalicious Poetry** (Gr 3-6)
- Cutting boards, knives, peelers, plates/bowls, forks = **SALADS**
  - Check out **Signature Salads** (Gr 3-8 or Gr 9-12 Careers)
- Hot plate, soup pot, ladle, cutting boards, knives, bowls, spoons = **SOUP**
  - Check out **Stone Soup** (Gr 2-4)
- Small plastic Tupperware, marble, butter knife, plate = **BUTTER**
  - Check out **Animals in our Food System** (JK/SK – Gr 2)
- Food processor, measuring spoons, cups, spatula = **PESTO & DIPS**

All of these resources are available at: <http://foodshare.net/program/educator/>



**There are many ways to involve children in the kitchen:**

- Let students “chop”, peel, stir, pour and knead (small motor skills)
- Point out that you must complete the steps in a recipe in a certain order to get the desired end product (sequencing, pre-math skill)
- Ask open-ended questions (problem solving & critical thinking skills)
- Be sure each child gets a chance to help in the activity (cooperation)
- Let students help with clean-up (encourages independence, self-sufficiency, respect)
- When you’ve finished the recipe, enjoy the food together and congratulate them on their creation (what a delicious celebration!)



## **Idea for Cooking Up Local Food Literacy**

Use the Foodland Ontario Availability Guide and invite students to think of what \_\_\_\_\_ (appetizer/dessert/main course) they could create using ingredients that are available in \_\_\_\_\_ (choose a month). This could lead to an assignment where they actually create and taste the food!

<https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/page/availability-guide>

## Food Safety Considerations:

- Connect with your Public Health Inspector (through your local Public Health Unit) to discuss proper food safety. Do this early – they're there to help you. They can help you figure out if your space is adequate, how to properly store foods, how to keep surfaces clean, and more.
- Proper handwashing is essential! The use of gloves is not a substitute for handwashing. Hand sanitizers are not recommended in the food preparation area.
- View the food safety presentation at <https://vimeo.com/209808495> for more information including how to mix a bleach (chlorine) solution. Pay attention to your Material Safety Data sheets to know what hazards are associated with using these sanitizers.



## Other Kitchen Classroom Considerations:

- Produce washing requires a separate sink from hand washing.
- Knife safety skills – this is an essential skill to teach with strict supervision and 1-on-1 help.
- Doing dishes and cleaning tasks (involve students to save your sanity). Can use a large bucket filled with soapy water (sanitizing afterwards).
- Waste management (separate compost, garbage, recycling).
- Get your co-workers on board (particularly the caretakers!) – e.g. let them know if there will be any additional recycling or garbage, work through who will do cleaning up afterwards.
- Evaluation and feedback from students to prove your case for cooking at school (and also that students do actually enjoy cooking and eating healthy, local foods). \*\* This is important to think about from the start.

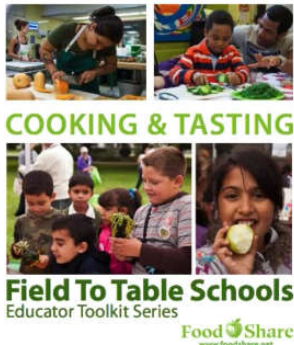


### Idea for Cooking Up Local Food Literacy

- Invest in cooking cutters and Safe Choppers (the model in the picture on the right has a chef's knife handle – students can hold it like a knife and learn the action of cutting).
- Give the students a safe chopper, cookie cutters, and a plate of cut up local vegetables and fruits. Have them cut up the food up into different shapes to make an edible picture with their plate as a canvas. Gather around to share the pictures. The educator can invite everyone to have a bite of anything that's orange, or anything that's a circle. Have fun!

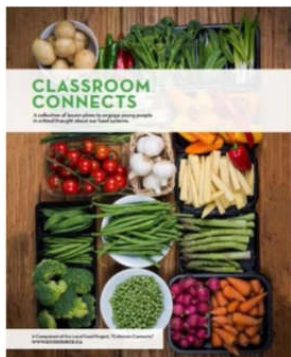


## Spotlight: A Selection of Cooking Up Local Food Literacy Resources



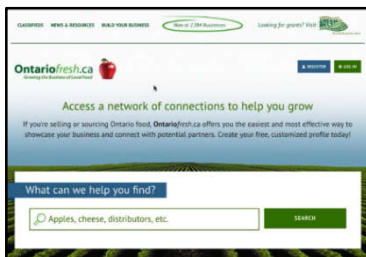
**FoodShare's Cooking and Tasting Toolkit**  
[http://foodshare.net/custom/uploads/2015/10/Toolkit\\_2013\\_Cooking\\_Tasting.pdf](http://foodshare.net/custom/uploads/2015/10/Toolkit_2013_Cooking_Tasting.pdf)

- A comprehensive collection of learned lessons, tips and hints for cooking with children and youth!
- Includes tips and hints for getting younger and older students excited to learn about food.



**Classroom Connects Curriculum Document**  
<http://ecosource.ca/about-us/publications/>

- Provides 15 free lesson plans for high school classes.
- Sample lesson plan: Ontario Fruit – Dessert Cookbook (pg. 116). In this hospitality lesson plan students: learn how to identify local Ontario fruits; select four recipes that highlight a locally grown fruit and create a cookbook; and share their knowledge with the class.



**Ontariofresh.ca**  
<https://ontariofresh.ca/>

- A platform that can help schools across Ontario connect with local farmers and local food.



**Six By Sixteen**  
<http://sixbysixteen.me/>

- A gateway to Canadian resources including how-to cooking videos, recipes and source guides for Ontario-grown food.
- Goal is to teach young people to plan and prepare six nutritious, locally sourced meals by the time they are 16 years old.

This Local Food Literacy Tipsheet has been prepared thanks to:



Possibility grows here.