Youth taste tests:
• help introduce new foods
• offer repeated exposure to novel foods,
• help establish healthy food preferences,
• create opportunities to explore foods – particularly valuable for households with limited resources,
• shape preferences and increase willingness to try and ask for foods – all positively associated with consumption.

Cooperative Extension programs deliver series-based nutrition education using a variety of age-appropriate, SNAP-Ed approved curricula with taste tests to expand food preferences and reinforce healthy eating. CFHL, UC evaluates the large-scale implementation of classroom food tastings to capture short term outcomes (student preferences/intentions) that help inform future programming.

In 2018-2019, educators administered the Taste Testing Tool (TTT) immediately following 2,291 food tastings with 48,881 K-8th grade students during school and afterschool programming. The large majority (82%) of tastings occurred with K-6th graders.

Foods most commonly tasted were fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes. Typically, they were served raw, paired with a familiar food, or included in a mixed dish.

On average, 47% of students tasted the food before, 93% tried it today, 70% were willing to eat it again, and 65% were willing to ask for it at home. Younger students were less likely to have tasted foods before, whereas older students (7th/8th) were less likely to taste the food today, try it again, or ask for it at home.

For the majority (57%) of target foods (n=118), fewer than half of students had tasted the food before. Only one food (Lima Beans) stood out for having low appeal.

For six target foods, less than half of students were willing to try the food again.

For 12 target foods, less than half of students were willing to ask for the food at home.

Food Tasted % Will Try Again
Cheese 33%
Dates 37%
Milk 42%
Garbanzo Beans 45%
Brussel Sprouts 46%
Beets 47%

For 12 target foods, less than half of students were willing to ask for the food at home.

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