

Play with your food!



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Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Potato cress heads	Pages 4-5
Planting in packets	Pages 6-7
Strawberry decoys	Page 8
Videos	Page 9
Garden in a glove	Pages 10-11
Mini scarecrows	Pages 12-13
Potato obstacle course	Page 14
More ideas	Page 15
LEAF Education	Page 16

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Introduction

Food is something we all need and something all of us interact with every day.

It's good to help children understand where their food comes from originally and the important role that farmers play in its production. So try to involve your children in activities that stimulate discussion about food origins.

There are some excellent video clips available that introduce farmers who tell us about what they grow and care for. Links to some are included in this booklet (see page 9) but if you use Twitter do keep an eye out for farmers tweeting about their activities.

This booklet encourages you to get “hands on” with your children to try out some fun food activities.

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Potato cress heads

Resources required: One large potato per child.
Cotton wool pad, cress seeds, sharpie pens, wobbly eyes (not essential but can be ordered online.)

Instructions Trim the base of the potato so it will stand up. Scoop the top out of the potato to form a dish for the cotton wool.
(Younger children may need help with this part.)

Dry the potato with a paper towel and draw on a face with the sharpie pens and add the wobbly eyes.

Place a damp cotton wool pad in the dish shape and sprinkle the cress seed on top. Wait for it to grow! You can then give your potato head a haircut and use the cress in an egg and cress sandwich.



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Potato cress heads

To extend this activity, how about making the potato head a self-portrait – choose a potato with a similar shape to your own head, maybe add glasses etc as appropriate.

Older children might like to use the internet to look at the work of artists:

Ginou Choueiri



Giuseppe Arcimboldo



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Planting in packets

Resources required: Food boxes and packets big enough to plant seeds in.
Compost
Seeds

Instructions: Choose a food packet. Cut drainage holes if required. Fill with compost and plant the appropriate seed.

A few suggestions:

Oven chip bag, large crisps packet = potato

Tin tomatoes = tomato

Frozen peas bag = peas

Salad bag = salad

Oat cakes, porridge = Oats

Don't forget to water your crops and plant out when they have outgrown the containers.

Wash hands after handling soil/compost

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Strawberry decoys

Resources required: Stones
 Acrylic paint
 Varnish (clear nail varnish will work)

Instructions: Find some roughly strawberry shaped stones.

 Clean the stones and apply red paint. You may need 3 or 4 coats so some patience is needed!

 Add green leaves.

 Use a cocktail stick to apply yellow/brown dots for seeds.

 Varnish to seal the paint and weatherproof your fake strawberry.

Place your decoys by your strawberry plants a few weeks before the actual strawberries appear. The idea is that the birds try to eat the stones and quickly learn that your strawberry patch doesn't taste nice!



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Videos

There are some excellent short videos available explaining where our food comes from.

Try those on the Why Farming Matters pages which have videos of farmers who produce milk, cereal crops, and strawberries.

<http://www.whyfarmingmatters.co.uk/using-the-videos>

Dairy

Why Farming Matters Teaching Series: Dairy

Emma Harrison

Dairy Farmer
Greystone Farm

00:14-00:27 What must happen for a cow to produce milk?

00:27-00:37 How much milk does a cow produce?

00:40-00:58 What happens in the milking parlour?

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Garden in a glove

Resources required: Clear plastic glove
Selection of seeds
Cotton wool
Twist tie
Permanent marker

Instructions: Make cotton wool balls to fit in each finger of your glove.
Wet the balls and squeeze out excess water.

Label the fingers of the glove with a seed type. (See example on next page).

With large seeds push the cotton wool into the finger and then add the seed. With small seeds it's easier to add the seeds to the cotton wool first and slide the whole lot down the finger.

For large seeds use only one seed per finger; for smaller seeds use a few more.

Blow into the bag to enrich the carbon dioxide and make space for the seeds to germinate.

Seal the top of the glove with a bag tie and hang in a window or put on windowsill.

When your seeds germinate you can cut the fingers off your glove and plant the cotton wool and seedling on into small pots.

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Mini scarecrows

Resources required:

Large lolly stick or similar stick
Scarecrow base cut out in card
Coloured paper to make clothes
Dry grass
Glue
Buttons, wobbly eyes, felt tips etc for decorating

Instructions:

Cut out your scarecrow's body and attach to the lolly stick.

Decorate your scarecrow using clothes cut from coloured paper, old magazines etc.

Use the templates if you like or make up your own designs.

Add some chopped up grass at the cuffs and legs to look like straw stuffing. Add buttons and eyes and other details.

Put your scarecrow in a flowerpot.

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Potato obstacle course

Resources required	Sprouting potato for each child Shoe box with lid Scissors Pieces of cardboard
Instructions	<p>Cut a small hole in one end of the shoe box (young children may need help with this or an adult can cut the hole).</p> <p>Put a sprouting potato at one end of the box.</p> <p>Place cardboard “barriers” inside the box to create an obstacle course for the potato shoot.</p> <p>Replace the lid and make sure there is light from a window or other source at the end where the hole is cut.</p> <p>Occasionally remove the lid to see which way the sprout has grown to find the light.</p>

A good learning point for children to understand the plant’s need for light.

A more detailed explanation of this experiment can be found here:

<http://www.planet-science.com/categories/experiments/biology/2011/06/make-a-plant-obstacle-course!.aspx>

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More ideas!

There are many more ideas for food related activities and information for a wide variety of ages . Choose one suitable for the age and ability of your children.

Visit other activity booklets for home educators from LEAF Education and other Countryside Classroom partners:

<https://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/home-education>

Particular thanks to LEAF East Midlands Regional Education Consultant Bobbie Harvey and other members of the LEAF Education team for the activities in this booklet.

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LEAF Education

LEAF Education (formerly Farming and Countryside Education) works with school communities to help children and young adults understand the connection between farming and their daily lives.

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