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# Leave 'em Star Struck: A Fruits and Vegetables Demonstration Activity for Farmers Markets

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## Introduction

A good demonstration can motivate others to try new fruits and vegetables, eat more servings of them, and prepare them more nutritionally. Before you present a farmers market demonstration, check with the local market manager and/or health department for current regulations.

Next, pull out the old razzle-dazzle and leave your audience so star struck, they will come back to the farmers market for more! This demonstration activity can be used by adults and older youth.

## Prepare to Meet Your Audience

There are several things you need to do and questions you need to ask yourself before you decide what your presentation will be about.

1. If you are volunteering with the Master Food Volunteer Program, consult with your supervising Extension Agent for preauthorization procedures if you are proposing an activity idea that is not already offered by Virginia Cooperative Extension.
2. If you are volunteering with the Food and Nutrition Program (FNP), consult your SNAP-Ed family and consumer sciences Extension agent, and/or FNP program assistant.
3. Contact the manager of the farmers market and/or the vendor you will work with to make sure you comply with the market's policies and procedures.
4. Contact the local Virginia Department of Health to determine if you are required to apply for a permit to conduct your food demonstration. Be ready to describe your demonstration plan, i.e., what you will be demonstrating, whether you plan to share samples, etc.

After you have answered the following questions, you can begin to develop your idea.

- **Determine your audience.** Who will most likely be at the market? Who would you like to see at the market? Will you need to limit audience participation? What type of activity will attract your audience? Do you have space for audience participation?
- **Choose a topic.** What are the main ingredients you want to highlight or the cooking techniques you want to demonstrate?
- **Set a time limit.** How much time do you need for the demonstration? Keep the presentation time between 10 and 15 minutes. Can you complete certain preparation steps in advance to save time? If you are allowed to offer taste testing, will you have enough time and will the food be easy to share with the audience?
- **Choose a recipe or an activity.** The recipe should be simple, healthy, and inexpensive to prepare; effective in highlighting your main ingredients and/or cooking techniques; and appealing to the audience. What other information will you include while demonstrating the recipe? What nutrition facts can you share? If you are working with an FNP program, the recipe will be predetermined.
- **Consider other questions.** Will you have a theme? Do you need a guest chef, local celebrity, specific vendor, or audience helper? Will you advertise? Will you have a specific spot for weekly demonstrations, or is this a one-time activity?
- **Use a catchy title.** A catchy title will attract more people. For example, if you are demonstrating a recipe with spinach, you might use “Popeye’s Best.”
- **Determine the equipment you need to bring.** What do you need to support your message? Do you know how to use the equipment properly? Do you need refrigeration or electricity? Do you have adequate space to stay organized? Is there a place for running water, cleanup, and waste disposal? Will you need someone to help you?
- **Prepare an evaluation.** Evaluations let you know how successful your ideas were. Work with your supervising FCS agent to prepare an appropriate evaluation or consult with your FNP program assistant to obtain the proper evaluation for the specific program.

In addition to the demonstration itself, the demonstrator’s appearance is very important. Wear a clean apron, gloves, and a hat to contain your hair when preparing food. Keep the focus on the demonstration, not on you. Be poised by speaking slowly and loudly, while enunciating clearly and with enthusiasm.

Basic food safety principles are a must. Review the tips listed in the Food Safety Guidelines section of this handout.

## Prepare Your Script

Once you have decided what to demonstrate and determined that you have the necessary workspace, ingredients, and equipment at your disposal, you can make a shopping list of ingredients, supplies, equipment, and helpers.

But before you purchase anything, it’s time to write the script for the demonstration. This is not to say that you will read a script or repeat it word for word, but that you will have in mind the key points you want to make and any additional information you want to share. You should be prepared with written information and be ready to ad lib on your chosen topic. Practicing will make you more at ease and will also prepare you to deal with the unexpected. The script should have three parts — the introduction, body, and summary.

### Introduction

The introduction should get the audience’s attention. Provide the goals of the demonstration and let the audience know how they can use the information you will share. Make sure to introduce yourself and mention why you are there. Your enthusiasm will make the audience want to listen. Remember to say that you are a volunteer for Virginia Cooperative Extension.

### Body

The body of the script is the focus of your demonstration. You will need to combine talking with doing. Use a step-by-step procedure technique, but it may not be necessary to show each step. For example, you may want to demonstrate how to chop an onion correctly, but you may not need to show how to measure 2 cups of onions. Or, you may have all the ingredients already measured in clear cups for ease of recognition, but you

may want to show how to peel a garlic clove or deseed a hot pepper correctly.

It may not be important to entirely cook the product, but you must have a finished product to display. Present your neat, attractive final product as the star of the show.

## Summary

Finally, you will want to summarize the presentation by choosing three to five important facts you want the audience to remember. Always have recipes available for the audience to take home, complete with nutritional analysis and preparation tips.

If someone asks a question, restate the question so the rest of the audience can hear it and then answer it completely and to the best of your knowledge. If you do not know the answer, tell the group or individual that you will consult with your local VCE office to get the answer for them. For this purpose, bring a clipboard with a blank sheet of paper for people to write down their question and contact information. Provide business cards to anyone who wishes to contact the local office.

## Presentation Tips

A food demonstration of any kind requires a thoroughly organized workspace! Your work area should be clean and free of clutter so the audience can see what you are doing. Keep items hidden until you need them. Trays and an extra pair of hands help to keep you organized. Cleanup towels and an out-of-sight trash bag for easy disposal of trash are a must.

Consider using visual aids such as posters, flip charts, flannel boards, or objects to pass among the audience to reinforce your key points. Visuals should be simple, colorful, readable, sturdy, and large enough for everyone to see. Ask your FCS agent for a VCE tablecloth.

## Food Safety Guidelines

### Before the Demonstration

- First and foremost, any one involved in the demonstration who is sick (symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or other gastrointestinal upset) should be excluded from preparing food or demonstrating.

- Persons with cuts, burns, skin infections, or sores should have them bandaged and protected with gloves or other barriers sufficient to prevent contamination of food or surfaces that contact food.
- Wear an apron when working directly with food. Take off your apron before leaving the demonstration table to use the restroom, take a break, etc.
- Clean all surfaces and utensils with hot water and soap, including cutting boards, peelers, and knives that will touch fresh fruits and vegetables before and after food preparation. After cleaning, sanitize these areas and implements.
  1. It can be placed in spray bottles. Spray the solution onto surfaces and allow them to air-dry. If used in spray bottles, the solution must be made fresh daily to prevent a loss of strength due to evaporation of the bleach.
  2. It can be used as a soak. After washing and rinsing to remove soap, place the items to be sanitized in the chlorine bleach solution and allow them to sit for at least one minute. Allow the items to air-dry.
  3. It can be applied to surfaces using paper towels or clean cloth towels. Allow the solution to air-dry or wait at least one minute and dry the surface with clean paper towels.
- Anyone handling food must wash their hands before handling food products; after eating, smoking, or using the restroom; and after touching the nose, face, hair, or any other possible contaminant.
- Wash your hands with warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw fruits and vegetables. If drinkable water is not available, bring bottled water and liquid soap as a substitute. Be sure to include a plastic basin or container to catch the “gray water” as you wash and rinse your hands, etc. Dispose of gray water afterward in an area away from the classroom or facility.

- Hand sanitizer should be used in addition to hand-washing but not as a substitute.
- Check to make sure the fruits and vegetables you prepare are not bruised or damaged.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water. Never use detergent or bleach to wash fruits and vegetables. These cleaners are not intended for consumption. Use a clean paper towel to dry fruits and vegetables.
- Precut fruits and vegetables should be kept in a refrigerator or a cooler with ice, ready for use during the demonstration. Only take out what is needed and keep the refrigerator or cooler door closed.
- Print and copy the Partnership for Food Safety Education's brochure, "FightBac! Like a Produce Pro" (PFSE 2015), for distribution to participants (see the Reference section at the end of this publication to download).

### During the Demonstration

- Minimize contact of your bare hands with ready-to-eat food or samples. You can use tongs, tissue paper, or toothpicks to handle individual servings. Also, check with your local Virginia Department of Health to determine any local regulations regarding handwashing and the use of gloves for such demonstrations.
- Cut food samples should be kept covered to prevent contamination from flies and other insects.
- If you do not have access to a cooler or refrigerator, label or record the time the samples were prepared, and discard them after they have been sitting out for two hours (or one hour if the temperature is above 90° F).
- Keep equipment clean, especially between multiple demonstrations. Any dish, countertop, utensil, or item that comes in contact with food must be clean and sanitized.
- If food will be sampled, keep it at recommended temperatures to prevent microbial growth.
  - Thoroughly cook hot samples to approved temperatures and keep them above 135° F when serving.
  - Cut produce samples should be held at 41° F or colder, or on ice. Alternatively, they can be labeled with the time they were prepared, and disposed of after two hours (or one hour if the surround temperature exceeds 90° F).

### After the Demonstration

- Cut fruits and vegetables should not be left unrefrigerated for more than two hours (no more than one hour in temperatures above 90° F).
- After two hours (or one hour, if applicable), dispose of leftovers.
- Any precut produce left in the cooler can be consumed, assuming it has been stored in the cooler the entire time (Boyer, Zehnder, and Harrison 2012).

Demonstrations should be fun and should support the products available at your local farmers market. Now it's up to you to leave 'em star struck!

### Teaching Kit With Suggested Checklist of Items to Have On Hand

Keep these items in a plastic container with lid for easy carrying. Work with your supervising FCS agent or FNP program assistant for additional items you will need.

- First-aid kit.
- Clean apron.
- Gloves for food preparation.
- Tongs, toothpicks, and/or tissue paper for handling food samples.
- Paper towels.
- Garbage bags.
- Bottled water.
- Liquid hand soap.
- Hand sanitizer.

- Food thermometer.
- Plastic bins for soaking utensils, etc., in sanitizing solution (if applicable).
- Spray bottle with premixed sanitizing solution. Discard after use and air-dry spray bottle before returning to the plastic container for the next demonstration. (See instructions for sanitizing solution in the During the Demonstration section of this publication.)
- Plastic basin to catch wastewater from handwashing. (Make sure you dispose of the wastewater away from food preparation areas and vendor tables.)
- Extension cord.
- Virginia Cooperative Extension tablecloth.
- Handouts to be distributed.
- Cooler with ice.
- Other items as needed (consult with your supervising FCS agent or FNP program assistant).

## Resource for Further Reading

Boyer, R. 2009. *Wash Hands: Fight Disease-Causing Germs*. Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 348-965. [http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/348/348-965/348-965\\_pdf.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/348/348-965/348-965_pdf.pdf).

## References

Bastin, S., and T. Ford. 2007. *Leave 'em Star Struck – A Demonstration Activity for Farmers Markets*. University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. Super Star Chef Series.

PFSE (Partnership for Food Safety Education). 2015. *FightBac! Produce Like a Produce Pro*. [http://www.fightbac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ConsumerFact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.fightbac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ConsumerFact_Sheet.pdf).

## Revised and Adapted with Permission

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