



Culinary and garden adventures in  
the school classroom

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Date

Dear School Name Families:

Your Name, an educator from the Midwest Food Connection, will be visiting our classroom a total of four times this winter to teach a series of lessons entitled "Climate Conscious Cuisine." Sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_, this unit gives your children the unique opportunity to study a wide variety of foods along with kitchen, shopping, and growing practices that keep both our health and the health of the environment in mind. Here is a brief description of the lessons your child will receive:

1. Through song, art, and cooking, **Savoring Seaweed** will familiarize students with an array of edible sea vegetables that have been nutritional mainstays in coastal cultures for centuries. A Japanese seaweed salad will be tasted, and a few key scientific findings will illustrate how seaweed keeps our oceans hospitable for the many wonderful sea creatures that call it home.
2. Studies say one-third of our food goes uneaten. Acknowledging that this is a problem to solve, we engage kids in **Conserving Food Creatively** through presentations and activities that show how making smoothies with brown bananas, giving a thumbs-up to misshapen produce, saving small amounts of snacks for later, and composting carrot peels (or not peeling at all!) are examples of simple, everyday ways we can all make a difference. Food tasting included.
3. *Organic* food is increasingly popular. Why? In **What is Organic?** we will explore the methods some farmers use to grow their food that keep the health of our soil, water, and air at the center of their answer to this question. Discovery-based discussion, theater and play, and fresh food samples bring these ideas to life.
4. In **Local Long Ago**, students discover the native foods and sustainable harvesting methods employed by the people of Minnesota in the past. An oral tale in the primary grades illuminates the traditional Ojibwe maple syrup harvest, while older students will make a useful tool they can bring to the grocery store to help identify which foods are local and in season. A maple treat closes out the lesson.

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Below are review questions we suggest for conversation starters with your children while at the grocery store, at home in the kitchen, or eating a meal together.

1. What are four edible seaweeds? What does seaweed produce that we all breathe? What does seaweed absorb (intermediate)?
2. What's another word for *conserve*? What are some foods that we can *save* in small amounts to eat or use in a creative way later? What can go in a compost pile?
3. What organic foods did you taste (or prepare – intermediate) in class? What is one way organic farmers handle pests? Weeds? Feeding their plants? Raising animals?
4. Let's list some foods that people enjoyed in Minnesota long ago. What did they gather? Grow? Hunt? Fish? How does eating local food help our environment?