Goodies from the Garden

Background Information
Autumn is a wonderful opportunity to see and experience where your food comes from in a very hands-on way. Vibrant pumpkin patches and apple orchards abundant with juicy fruits attract countless visitors with signs for “U Pick” produce. This week, we’ll learn a little more about some of the delicious garden offerings enjoyed this time of year, as well as the prevalence of plants in foods we eat all the time.

RELATED HOLIDAYS THIS MONTH
World Vegetarian Day ~ October 1st
World Food Day ~ October 16th
World Planting Day ~ October 22nd

What Are You Really Eating?
We eat various parts of different plants, from the roots (such as carrots), modified stems, or tubers (potatoes), to seeds (beans, nuts), leaves (lettuce), and flowers (broccoli). Not all parts of plants are edible though, and some can even be poisonous for us or other animals; make sure you know if something is okay to eat before you eat it.

Fall is often referred to as “pumpkin time”, and many people look forward to the various pumpkin-flavored treats that are common in October and November, but what part(s) of a pumpkin do we actually eat?

If you’ve gone pumpkin picking at a “pumpkin patch”, you may have seen a scene like the one pictured above, in which the pumpkins are sitting in the field, not actually attached to anything. That’s because the farmer has already gone through and separated the pumpkins from the vines they grew on to make it easier for people to select the one that they want. Before they’re detached, pumpkins grow on vines as shown to the right, with big leaves to collect sunlight and turn it into natural sugars.
Before pumpkins ripen and turn orange (or white or red), they begin as little green balls at the base of a fertilized flower. This means that pumpkins are technically a fruit! (See the image to the left.) Fruits contain or grow from the seed-bearing part of a plant. Other examples include grapes, raspberries, and tomatoes!

Technically, the flowers and leaves of a pumpkin plant are edible as well, and are cooked and eaten in various parts of the world.

This month, visit a pumpkin patch and see if you can identify the different parts of a pumpkin. Then, you can go home and carve or design the pumpkin in a fun way. The seeds are delicious when roasted, and any inner parts that you scrape out can be cooked/eaten, composted, or fed to chickens! If pumpkin decorating/carving is something you enjoy, you should enter our monthly contest! (See the square/link at the end of the document.)

What Are You Really Drinking?
We all know that we should eat fruits and vegetables, but often we don’t realize that what we drink contributes to our diet as well, and some drinks - especially sodas, but even fruit juices or teas if they have added sugars, can contain ingredients that aren’t good for you, and lead to health problems such as diabetes.

Check out this video to learn more about the added sugars in soda & other drinks and why too much sugar is unhealthy.

CRAFT: Veggie Rhythms, AKA Playing Your Food
Can you make a musical instrument out of fruits and vegetables? See if you can design a pumpkin or pepper, cucumber, or carrot, in such a way that it will make interesting sounds when you play it - enlist an adult to help you if you need to use a knife or other cutting tool. You can experiment with pitch (higher and lower sounds). How does the sound of a short cucumber kazoo compare with a longer one? What impact does hollowing out a fruit such as a watermelon have on the tone/type of sound you can produce?

You can share a picture with us of what you make! (You can have your parent/guardian email the photo to ryan@umpquawatersheds.org.)

Check out this video of the Viennese Vegetable Orchestra to see how they make and play their instruments. Here’s a more recent video of a song performed by the orchestra.
The Science Behind It:
Typically, smaller instruments and shorter strings operate at a higher frequency, or shorter wavelength, and have a higher pitch (think of a piccolo or small bird). Larger, bigger instruments tend to produce sounds with a lower pitch because they produce longer wavelengths/operate at a lower frequency.

This video explains the concept of pitch a bit more, using multiple types of instruments.

It is important to note that Vienna’s Vegetable Orchestra cooks all of their instruments into a soup when they’re done.

As a parent or grandparent might say: “don’t just play with your food - eat it!” Be sure to cook/eat your fruits and vegetables when you’re done with your musical explorations.

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RECIPE: Homemade Applesauce
*Have an adult help you with this*

**Ingredients Needed:**
❖ Fresh apples (perhaps ones you’ve picked yourself!)
❖ Cinnamon
❖ Water
❖ Butter

**Directions:**

1) Peel the apples and coarsely chop them (this means it’s okay if they’re in large pieces); compost the peels and cores or feed them to farm animals if you have them.
2) Put the chopped apples into a large pot with an inch or two of water and two tablespoons of butter. Add a few dashes of cinnamon.
3) Heat on medium heat until the apples soften and break down easily when stirred with a spoon.
4) Enjoy!

Note: Apples are naturally sweet because they already contain sugars. That’s why you don’t need to add any additional sugar for this recipe - it tastes delicious without it, and is healthier that way too!
**Helping Your Community:**

Perhaps for World Food Day (October 16th) you can share food with people who don’t have enough. There are many ways you can do this - you could pick up canned and boxed food to donate to a local food pantry or soup kitchen, give others food from your garden, participate in an “Empty Bowls” event, donate money to an organization which combats hunger worldwide, or come up with your own creative way to help.

**Lessons & Activities For This Week Adapted from the Following Books:**

Hands Around the World: 365 Ways to Build Cultural Awareness & Global Respect  
Project Learning Tree  
Teaching Green, The Middle Years: Hands-on Learning in Grades 6-8

**Website to Check Out:** [Global Grocery](#)

Click this link to find out more about the plants in the foods we love, and discover where some of these foods come from!

**Other Opportunities to Get Involved with Umpqua Watersheds this Month:**

Thanks for joining me for this week’s Home Explorer activities from the Umpqua Watersheds Education Program. There will be new lessons, projects, crafts (and more) posted weekly!

With smiles :)  
~ Miss Ryan