

In January, we explore opposites, and HOT and COLD can be a great place to start that play! Hot Cocoa, Hershey Kiss, Oatmeal, oatmeal cookie



Food can be a comfort for many. Food is challenging for others as it has different textures and requires more effort to chew or move around your mouth. Getting our children to try new things and experience different textures and flavors can feel like a daily struggle. One way to help with this is to PLAY with food. Make a game, be silly, try a few foods together (maybe all green foods – green Jell-O, green apples, celery, avocado, green grapes, green fruit snacks).

Materials Needed: Hot/Cold Taste Test Play

- **Tray/Muffin Tin** is something to put the foods to the test and serve.
- **Hot Items** – **Nothing must be too hot** – you could do hot cocoa, cooked oatmeal, melted cheese, etc.
- **Cold Items** – **Nothing must be too cold**, but a contrast to the hot items – chocolate chips, oatmeal cookie, cheese, yogurt, ice cream
- **No Thank You Bowl** –so when your child tastes something and does not like it, they have a place to put it. You can take it away when they are done with it.

How-to: Cut pieces, so they are safe to eat (grapes in half, hot dogs in small pieces, meat in small bites, cheese in small chunks). Do this together as a caregiver and me activity or have the whole family do this together. You will want to model using all your senses – smell, sight, hearing, touch, and taste! Use simple words (adjectives, verbs) and describe the food – Brrr, cold, crunch, lick, bite, chew-chew, hot, soft, etc. Some children like to dip items into a sauce or dressing, such as Ranch Dressing or Ketchup. Feel free to have that handy on the side if it supports your child trying a new food item.

Developmentally this activity encourages language development by giving you opportunities to use descriptive language, action words, and silly sounds. Eye/hand coordination and fine motor development are encouraged with picking up the small food items, looking at them, smelling them, exploring them. Allow for exploring the food – does it roll, can it stand up, can you squish it, poke it, lick it? Having your child see your playing and exploring will try to imitate you, and then you can imitate them; This supports self-confidence as you show your child that you believe they are someone to follow. This supports your child initiating and engagement skills as they can invite you to interact with them, copying each other with actions and sounds while expanding their ability to stay engaged in an activity for a more extended period. Expanding on the length of engagement allows for more time to explore, play, and play is how children learn.



Remember – *when we model and imitate, that is the beginning of understanding communication. When we imitate our children, we tell them their powerful ideas and choices encourage them to want to do more.*

Again – use your imagination, plan for what works best for your family and child and HAVE FUN!

Link below has examples of how to set up for this activity:

[Green Food Taste Testing for Picky Eaters + FREE Chart \(b-inspiredmama.com\)](#)

[Simple Ideas for Picky Eaters - Toddler Approved](#)

Lesson Plan developed by AnnMarie Adams, Educator

Link and photo credit: AnnMarie Adams, daughter 15 months old (ranch and berry smoothie) [Green Food Taste Testing for Picky Eaters + FREE Chart \(b-inspiredmama.com\)](#),

[Simple Ideas for Picky Eaters - Toddler Approved](#)

An OT made two videos to support food exploring with your children. These are examples of some ideas on exploring food with your child(ren).

[5 ways to play with food! - YouTube](#)

[5 ways to play with food - Round 2! - YouTube](#)