



## TOOLKIT & ACTIVITY GUIDE

A project of the **American Friends Service Committee, New Mexico Program**

[www.afsc.org/newmexico](http://www.afsc.org/newmexico) 505.842.7343



# ACTIVITY GUIDE

Hello Teachers!

We are excited to share the joy of sweet potato season with your class! These sweet potatoes are grown right here in Bernalillo County by small, local, pesticide-free family farms. **Please encourage the children to try these sweet potatoes by making it a fun challenge and offering a sticker to each child who is “brave enough” to try!** The Teachers’ Activity Guide has fun activities to engage kids in “Sweet Potato Snack” through a variety of early childhood skills such as language, fine motor, gross motor, creativity and play!

Agriculture is an important part of New Mexican culture and makes our community resilient in the connected. We want to encourage children to eat healthy by asking families to taste test local sweet potatoes this harvest season.

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a local nonprofit organization that works to connect farmers and schools to get healthy food to children. If you have any questions, please call our office at 505-842-7343. Follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/afscnm/](http://www.facebook.com/afscnm/)

Sincerely,  
Angelina Lopez-Brody  
Program Assistant, AFSC New Mexico

Sayrah Namaste  
Program Director, AFSC New Mexico

*Note: Introducing new foods can take anywhere from 10–20 tries, this may be a child's first time or subsequent try with a new food!*

*Thank you for connecting farming and local foods to Early Childhood Education in New Mexico!*

# GUIDE FOR PARTNERING WITH KITCHEN STAFF

## 1. Plan ahead

Request to schedule time with kitchen staff to assist with food preparation and food safety standards when preparing food for consumption.

## 2. Assess available utensils

Determine with kitchen staff if there will be enough utensils for the activity.

## 3. Coordinate food preparation

Determine what kinds of food preparation is needed, if any, before doing an activity with children. (e.g. cutting, steaming, blending, etc.)

## 4. Thank You go a long way

Have children make a thank you card for kitchen staff for their help with food activities!



## FOOD DETECTIVES

### SUPPORTED EARLY CHILDHOOD SKILLS

(Language, Sensory, Cognitive, and Communication)

### Equipment

- ✧ knife
- ✧ cutting board



### Materials

- ✧ 1 whole sweet potato (raw)
- ✧ 1 whole sweet potato (baked)
- ✧ taste-testing samples of sweet potato (1 Tbsp. of baked sweet potato, no skin)
- ✧ stickers
- ✧ small plates/paper plates or bowls
- ✧ spoons



### Overview

In this lesson, encourage children to describe what a sweet potato looks like. Children will also share if they like how a sweet potato feels, smells and tastes. While children are exploring a raw sweet potato, cut one in half for children to see the inside.

### Before the Lesson

Select one whole sweet potato for children to closely examine. Prepare one or more samples of sweet potato for the children to taste.

### Introduction

This activity will work well as a circle time activity and at tables, in small groups, for tasting.

### Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce a new food to the children in your classroom. The more times children are exposed to new foods, the more likely they are to eat and enjoy these foods in the future.

### Describing Words to Use

- ✧ sweet potato
- ✧ orange
- ✧ sweet
- ✧ soft
- ✧ squishy
- ✧ wrinkly
- ✧ farmer
- ✧ rough
- ✧ bumpy

### Fun Prompts to Use:

“Sweet potatoes are root vegetables that grow underground and have leaves above ground.”

“Sweet potatoes have a brown skin on the outside.”

“Sweet potatoes are good for our bodies when we eat them.”

# COLORING PAGE

**SUPPORTED EARLY  
CHILDHOOD SKILLS**

**(Fine Motor and Cognitive)**

*(see next page)*

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SWEET POTATO

# FOOD DETECTIVES

## SUPPORTED EARLY CHILDHOOD SKILLS

(Language, Sensory, Cognitive, and Communication)

### Overview

In this lesson, encourage children to describe what a sweet potato looks like under a magnifying glass. Children will also share if they like how a sweet potato feels, smells and tastes.

### Before the Lesson

Select one whole sweet potato for children to closely examine. Prepare one or more samples of sweet potato for the children to taste. While children are exploring a raw sweet potato, cut one in half for children to see the inside..

*(Optional)* Cut sweet potato into different shapes and bake in the oven:

- ✧ slices/medallions
- ✧ cubes
- ✧ wedges
- ✧ thin strips



### Equipment

- ✧ knife
- ✧ cutting board



### Materials

- ✧ 1 whole sweet potato (raw)
- ✧ 1 whole sweet potato (baked, without seasoning), use additional sweet potatoes for baking into different shapes
- ✧ taste-testing samples of sweet potato (1 Tbsp. of baked sweet potato, no skin)
- ✧ stickers
- ✧ small plates/paper plates or bowls
- ✧ spoons or forks
- ✧ 1 large piece of butcher paper
- ✧ sticky notes

### Introduction

This activity will work well as a circle time activity and at tables, in small groups, for tasting. When children are describing the sweet potato, write their responses on sticky notes and ask them to add them to a large piece of butcher paper. Label the butcher paper “What is a Sweet Potato?”

### Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce a new food to the children in your classroom. The more times children are exposed to new foods, the more likely they are to eat and enjoy these foods in the future.

### Describing Words to Use

- ✧ sweet potato
- ✧ earthy
- ✧ orange
- ✧ wrinkly
- ✧ sweet
- ✧ farmer
- ✧ soft
- ✧ rough
- ✧ squishy
- ✧ bumpy
- ✧ mushy

### Fun Prompts to Use:

“Sweet potatoes are root vegetables that grow underground and have leaves above ground.”

“Sweet potatoes have a brown skin on the outside that is peeled off before it is cooked.”

“Sweet potatoes are good for our bodies when we eat them. They have nutrients that are good for our eyes and our tummies”

# SWEET POTATO MASH

**SUPPORTED EARLY  
CHILDHOOD SKILLS**

(Cognitive and Sensory)

## Equipment Required

- ✧ cutting board
- ✧ knife

## Materials

- ✧ baked sweet potato
- ✧ small bowls
- ✧ forks
- ✧ salt
- ✧ cinnamon

## Overview

In this activity, children will be encouraged to make mashed sweet potatoes. Children will compare how mashed sweet potato tastes when adding salt and cinnamon.

## Before the Lesson

Select whole sweet potatoes and prepare by baking with outer skin still attached. Poke sweet potato twice with fork and wrap whole in foil. Place on baking sheet at 400 degrees for 45-60 minutes. Allow 30 minutes to completely cool before unwrapping foil and serving. Prepare salt and cinnamon in small bowls for children.

## Introduction

This activity will work well at tables, in small groups.

## Activity Steps:

1. Cut whole, baked, sweet potato into  $\frac{1}{4}$  and place 1 piece into 1 bowl for each child. Each child should have 1 small fork.
2. Prompt children to peel skin off of baked sweet potato, if still on, and set aside.
3. Demonstrate and encourage children to mash sweet potato gently with fork.
4. Once their piece of sweet potato is completely mashed, invite children to add a PINCH of salt and cinnamon.
5. Prompt children to mix seasonings into their mashed sweet potato and taste.
6. Encourage children to describe how their seasoned mashed sweet potato tastes!



# SWEET POTATO SCAVENGER HUNT

**SUPPORTED EARLY CHILDHOOD SKILLS** (Cognitive, Gross Motor, and Communication)

## Materials

- ✧ paper bags
- ✧ markers
- ✧ orange construction paper
- ✧ plastic tray (optional)

## Overview

In this activity, encourage children to explore outside and find items on their scavenger hunt activity page.

## Before the Lesson

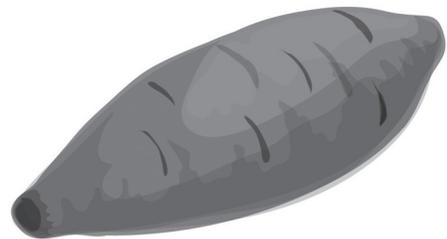
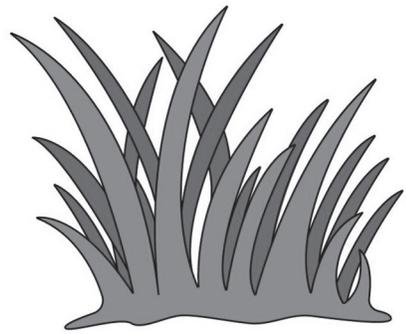
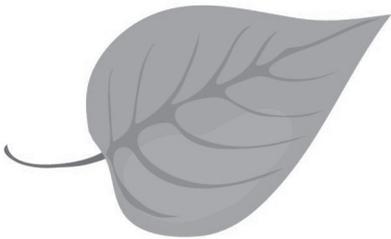
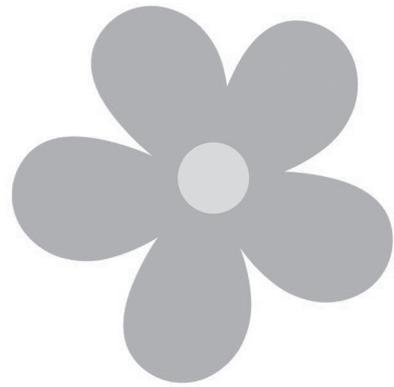
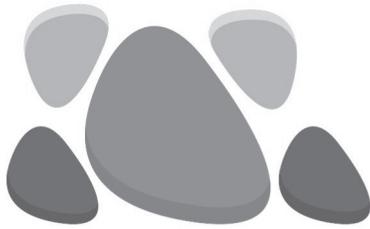
Use the sweet potato outline to cut sweet potato shapes from orange construction paper. Make sure there is one sweet potato cut out per child. Place/stick cutouts outside where children can get to them easily. Review the list of items for children to find and modify as needed.

## Introduction

This activity work well outside on a sunny day. This activity can also be done in teams of two. Prompt children to find as many items on the scavenger hunt list. Provide markers to mark off what they find. Gather in a large circle and have children describe what they found and place items in a large tray. Display tray as a classroom project.



# SWEET POTATO SCAVENGER HUNT



## HOT POTATO GAME

### SUPPORTED EARLY CHILDHOOD SKILLS

(Gross Motor, Language and Cognitive)

### Equipment

- ✧ A device to play music

### Overview

In this interactive game children are encouraged to play Hot Potato to music.

### Materials

- ✧ 1 whole sweet potato/ball/bean bag
- ✧ music



### Introduction

This activity will work well indoors sitting on the floor or sitting on chairs.

### The Rules of Hot “Sweet” Potato

1. Children sit in a circle.
2. Prompt children to pass a ball/beanbag/sweet potato around the circle while music plays in the background.
3. When the music stops, the person holding the “hot/sweet potato” is out.
4. The last person is the winner!

### Hot Potato Song

Youtube - Hot Potato by Kerslapt!  
<https://youtu.be/kpmzJyh9ODI>.

## SWEET POTATO SLIPS

**SUPPORTED EARLY  
CHILDHOOD SKILLS**

(Cognitive)

### Overview

In this activity, children will be introduced on how sweet potato slips are made. Demonstrate to children how more sweet potatoes are made. When done properly, leaves should appear in about 4-6 weeks.

### Materials

- ✧ raw sweet potato cut in half (this can be the half pieces used during the food detectives activity)
- ✧ medium clear container/glass jar
- ✧ toothpicks
- ✧ water

### Introduction

This activity will work well at tables, in small groups.

### Activity Steps

1. Determine which end is the pointy end of the sweet potato. The pointy end will go in the container of water. If you are using half of a sweet potato, you will want the end that was pointy to touch the water.
2. Use toothpicks to suspend half the sweet potato in a container of water. The pointy end should be in the jar and the round end sticking out of the container. Fill your container with water.
3. You want the bottom (rooting) half to be immersed in water and the top (sprouting) half above the jar. Roots will form in the water, and sprouts will form in the top part of the potato.
4. Provide warmth and light to your sweet potato.
5. Ask children to help keep the water level up in the jar and keep the water fresh by replacing it every week or so. Within a few weeks, you can show children how roots will develop first, and then sprouts (leaves) will start to form on the suspended potato.