Intermediate (11 to 12 years old – Year 6 to 7)
Health and Nutrition

Creating a Balanced Potato Meal

Instructions

Materials Needed:

- Pictures or flashcards of various food items (e.g., fruits, vegetables, proteins, grains)
- Paper and pens for drawing or writing
- Nutritional information about potatoes and other foods (optional)
- Plate or food model templates (for visual presentation)

Setup:

1. Provide each student with a sheet of paper and access to pictures or flashcards of various foods.
2. Introduce basic food groups: vegetables, fruits, proteins, dairy, and grains.
3. Review the nutritional benefits of potatoes (e.g., carbohydrates, fibre, vitamins, and minerals) and discuss how potatoes can fit into a balanced meal.

Activity Instructions:

1. **Introduction to Balanced Meals**: Begin the activity by discussing what makes a meal balanced. Explain the importance of including foods from different food groups (carbohydrates, proteins, vegetables, fruits, and dairy) to ensure a variety of nutrients.
2. **Challenge**: Ask students to create a balanced meal that includes potatoes. They can choose from the available pictures or flashcards to select a variety of foods to accompany their potato dish. Encourage them to consider the nutritional value of the foods they select (e.g., pairing potatoes with lean protein, healthy fats, and colourful vegetables).
3. **Meal Design**: Students can design their meal on paper or use food model templates to visually present their meal. They should label the different components of their meal and explain why they chose each food, highlighting how it contributes to a balanced diet.
4. **Presentations**: After designing their meals, each student presents their meal to the class, explaining their choices in terms of nutritional value and balance. They can also discuss how potatoes contribute to the overall meal.
5. **Reflection**: After the presentations, lead a class discussion about the different meals created. Ask students to reflect on what makes a meal balanced and how they can incorporate potatoes into a healthy diet.

Safety Note:

- Ensure that all students handle food-related materials (like pictures and flashcards) safely and hygienically, especially if they are working with actual food.
- Remind students to be considerate of any food allergies or dietary restrictions.

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Learning Outcomes:

- **Understanding Nutrition**: Students will learn about the importance of balanced meals and the role that different food groups play in maintaining health.
- **Meal Planning and Design**: Students will develop the skills to create a balanced meal that includes potatoes and other nutritious foods.
- **Critical Thinking**: Students will practice decision-making as they select foods that complement each other nutritionally.
- **Presentation Skills**: Students will have the opportunity to present their meal designs to the class, improving their communication skills.

Creating a Balanced Potato Meal teaches students how to plan healthy meals that include potatoes, encouraging them to consider nutrition, variety, and the importance of balance in their diets.

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Analysing Potato Nutrition Labels

Instructions

Materials Needed:

- Nutrition labels from various potato products (e.g., frozen fries, potato chips, hash browns, baked potatoes)
- Calculators (optional)
- Paper and pens for note-taking
- Markers or coloured pens for highlighting

Setup:

1. Collect a variety of potato product labels from different brands (e.g., frozen fries, chips, hash browns, and baked potatoes).
2. Provide each student with a copy of the nutrition labels.
3. Introduce basic nutrition concepts: calories, fats, carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, and minerals.

Activity Instructions:

1. **Introduction to Nutrition Labels**: Start by explaining how to read a nutrition label. Discuss key components like serving size, calories, fat content, carbohydrates, and micronutrients (e.g., vitamins and minerals).
2. **Product Comparison**: Provide students with different types of potato product labels (e.g., fries, chips, hash browns) and ask them to compare the nutrition facts. They can note differences in calories, fat, and nutrient content.
3. **Cooking Methods Discussion**: Discuss how different cooking methods (e.g., frying, baking, boiling) affect the nutritional content of potatoes. For instance, fried potatoes tend to have more calories and fat compared to baked or boiled potatoes. Ask students to consider how different ingredients (like oils or seasonings) might also change the nutritional value.
4. **Label Analysis**: Ask students to highlight the nutritional differences between products, focusing on:
    - Calories (how many calories per serving)
    - Fat content (total fat, saturated fat, and trans fat)
    - Sodium (salt content)
    - Fibre, sugars, and protein
    - Vitamins and minerals (e.g., vitamin C, potassium)
5. **Group Discussion**: Have students share their findings with the class. Discuss which products are the healthiest and why, focusing on factors like the amount of fat and calories. Encourage students to think about how making healthier cooking choices (e.g., baking instead of frying) can affect the nutritional profile of potatoes.
6. **Reflection**: As a class, reflect on the impact of different potato products on diet and health. Ask students to suggest healthier ways to prepare potatoes while still enjoying their flavour and versatility.

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Safety Note:

- Remind students to wash their hands before handling any materials.
- Ensure that all food products being analysed are safely consumed according to their packaging instructions.

Learning Outcomes:

- **Nutrition Literacy**: Students will learn how to read and interpret nutrition labels, focusing on key components like calories, fats, and nutrients.
- **Critical Thinking**: Students will develop the ability to compare and analyse the nutritional value of different potato products.
- **Understanding Cooking Methods**: Students will understand how various cooking techniques impact the nutritional content of potatoes and the overall healthfulness of meals.
- **Healthy Eating Choices**: Students will consider how small changes in cooking methods (e.g., baking instead of frying) can contribute to a healthier diet.

By analysing potato nutrition labels, students will gain a deeper understanding of how cooking methods and ingredients affect the nutritional profile of foods, helping them make more informed and healthier choices.

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Exploring Cooking with Potatoes

Instructions

Materials Needed:

- Potatoes (e.g., baking potatoes, baby potatoes, or any variety)
- Toppings and ingredients (e.g., vegetables, cheese, sour cream, olive oil, herbs)
- Cooking utensils (e.g., knives, peelers, graters)
- Bowls for mixing
- Cooking equipment (oven, stove, or microwave)
- Recipe cards or instructions (optional)
- Paper and pens for writing recipes

Setup:

1. Prepare the necessary cooking space with cooking equipment and materials.
2. Select a few simple, healthy potato-based recipes that highlight the versatility of potatoes (e.g., baked potato with vegetable toppings, potato soup, roasted potatoes).
3. Organize the ingredients and cooking tools into workstations or groups, depending on the number of students.

Activity Instructions:

1. **Introduction to Potatoes in Cooking**: Start by discussing the different types of potatoes (e.g., russet, sweet potatoes, baby potatoes) and their uses in various dishes. Explain how potatoes are a nutritious and versatile base for many recipes.
2. **Recipe Demonstration**: Introduce one or two recipes that showcase potatoes as the main ingredient. For example:
    - **Baked Potatoes with Vegetable Toppings**: Teach students how to bake potatoes and top them with healthy vegetables (e.g., spinach, broccoli, peppers) and other nutritious toppings like plain yogurt or low-fat cheese.
    - **Potato Soup**: Show how to make a simple potato soup by cooking potatoes with stock and adding vegetables and seasonings.
    - **Roasted Potatoes**: Teach students how to roast potatoes with olive oil, herbs, and spices for a healthy, tasty side dish.
3. **Cooking Process**: Have students work in small groups to prepare the dishes. They will need to follow simple steps like:
    - Washing, peeling, or chopping potatoes.
    - Cooking the potatoes (baking, boiling, or roasting).
    - Preparing toppings, garnishes, or ingredients for soups or other dishes.
4. **Tasting and Discussion**: Once the dishes are prepared, allow students to taste their creations. Discuss the flavours, textures, and how different ingredients can complement the natural taste of potatoes.
5. **Creative Twist**: Encourage students to come up with their own unique recipes by brainstorming healthy toppings or combinations (e.g., potato salad with healthy dressings, mashed potatoes with herbs).

6. **Reflection and Recipe Sharing**: Ask students to reflect on their experience and what they learned about using potatoes in cooking. Have each group share their recipe and what they think makes it a healthy and delicious choice.

Safety Note:

- Ensure students are supervised when using knives, peelers, or any cooking equipment.
- Remind students to wash their hands before handling any food, especially after touching raw potatoes.
- Be cautious with hot equipment like ovens or stoves.

Learning Outcomes:

- **Cooking Skills**: Students will learn basic cooking techniques such as baking, boiling, and roasting potatoes.
- **Nutritional Awareness**: Students will explore how potatoes can be used in healthy meals by adding nutrient-rich toppings and ingredients.
- **Creativity in Cooking**: Students will have the opportunity to develop their own potato-based recipes, encouraging creativity in the kitchen.
- **Versatility of Potatoes**: Students will understand the versatility of potatoes and how they can be prepared in various ways to suit different tastes and dietary needs.

Exploring cooking with potatoes will not only teach students valuable cooking skills but also show them how potatoes can be part of a balanced, nutritious diet.

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Potato Chip Tasting and Cooking

Instructions

Materials Needed:

- Different types of potatoes (e.g., white, sweet potatoes, or purple potatoes)
- Cooking equipment (e.g., mandolin slicer or knife for slicing)
- Frying pan or deep fryer
- Olive oil or vegetable oil for frying
- Salt and other seasonings (e.g., paprika, garlic powder, rosemary, pepper)
- Paper towels for draining
- Bowls for serving
- Plates or trays for tasting
- Napkins or wipes for cleaning hands
- Recipe cards (optional)

Setup:

1. Set up a cooking station with all the necessary ingredients and equipment.
2. Prepare potatoes by washing and peeling them (optional). Slice them into thin rounds using a mandolin slicer or knife.
3. Prepare bowls with a variety of seasonings to choose from (e.g., salt, paprika, garlic powder, or herbs).
4. Ensure that frying equipment is ready for use, with safety precautions in place.

Activity Instructions:

1. **Introduction to Potato Chips**: Begin by discussing different types of potatoes and how they can affect the taste and texture of the chips. For example, russet potatoes tend to create crispier chips, while sweet potatoes offer a slightly sweeter flavour.
2. **Slicing the Potatoes**: Have students slice potatoes into thin rounds. Explain that the thinner the slice, the crispier the chip will be. Allow them to practise their slicing skills while being mindful of safety.
3. **Frying the Chips**: Once the potatoes are sliced, heat oil in a frying pan or deep fryer to around 180°C (350°F). Carefully place small batches of potato slices into the oil and fry them until golden and crispy, usually for 2-4 minutes. If using a deep fryer, ensure that students are supervised closely. Use tongs or a slotted spoon to remove the chips and place them on paper towels to drain excess oil.
4. **Seasoning the Chips**: Once the chips are cooked, have students choose different seasonings to sprinkle on their chips. You can offer a variety of flavours like classic sea salt, paprika, garlic powder, or even fresh herbs. Encourage students to experiment with different combinations.
5. **Tasting and Comparison**: After the chips are seasoned, allow students to taste the different varieties and compare the textures and flavours. Ask questions like:
    - How do the chips made from russet potatoes compare to those made from sweet potatoes?
    - What's the difference in flavour when different seasonings are used?
    - Which seasoning is their favourite and why?

6. **Reflection**: Ask students to reflect on what they learned about how different potatoes and seasonings affect the chips' taste and texture. They can also create their own potato chip recipes by suggesting new seasonings or ingredients they would like to try.
7. **Creative Twist**: As an optional activity, students can experiment with making baked chips by brushing the slices with a little oil and baking them in the oven for a healthier alternative.

Safety Note:

- Ensure students are supervised when using knives, slicers, or handling hot oil.
- Only adults should handle the hot oil or use the deep fryer.
- Be cautious of oil splashes and ensure that there are no open flames near the cooking area.

Learning Outcomes:

- **Cooking Skills**: Students will learn how to slice, fry, and season potatoes to create homemade chips.
- **Sensory Exploration**: Students will use their senses to compare textures and flavours of chips made from different types of potatoes and seasonings.
- **Creativity in Cooking**: Students will have the opportunity to experiment with different seasonings and flavours, fostering creativity in the kitchen.
- **Health Awareness**: Students will learn about the difference between fried and baked chips and discuss healthier alternatives for making potato snacks.

Potato chip tasting and cooking helps students appreciate the versatility of potatoes while honing basic cooking skills and expanding their understanding of food preparation and flavour combinations.