



THE EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD

A program of the Chez Panisse Foundation

Sixth Grade: Corn Lesson

OBJECTIVES

This is a multi-faceted lesson on several topics such as using corn as a staple, plant parts, pollination, tasting, and cooking outdoors. Students will:

- learn about parts of the corn plant: stalk, roots, cob/ear, leaves, tassle, silk, and kernel
- learn how to select a ripe ear of corn, harvest it, and remove the husk properly
- learn about the four different types of corn: flint, dent, pop, and sweet
- compare and contrast two types of corn
- write a process paragraph complete with signal words about how to harvest, prepare, cook, and eat corn

MATERIALS

ripe, sweet corn
grill and fuel (mesquite charcoal)
sharp knife
cutting board
butcher paper and markers
tongs
paper towels

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Get the charcoal started in the grill so the coals will be ready right before class. Select an area to harvest from. Set a wheelbarrow next to the grill area to collect cob scraps. On a table, set up napkins, a cutting board, and a knife for cutting each ear into two pieces. Then draw the following Characteristic Chart on butcher paper, post it, and have a set of markers ready.

PROCEDURE

Separate the whole class into three smaller groups. Each group will spend two thirds of class working on a garden job and the remaining third at the corn station. Rotate the groups about every 20 minutes.

At the corn station students go into the corn field, participate in a mini-lesson about parts of the corn plant, and learn how to select ripe ears. Each student works with a partner to harvest either two different varieties from our garden or one variety from our garden and one from the Farmers' Market. Each student then shucks the corn and puts the husk and silk into the wheelbarrow to be composted. Many cobs have earworms inside which can be removed easily with garden clippers; we usually tell students that the presence of earworms shows that the corn is perfectly sweet and delicious.

Point out the silk, describing that each thread is actually a pollen tube and each kernel is attached to a tube. Also point out that corn is wind-pollinated. Then put the corn onto the grill and while it cooks, talk about the uses of corn and different types. Complete the Characteristic Chart at this time or take it back to the classroom for a follow-up writing lesson on



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comparing and contrasting.

When the corn is ready, have each person carefully remove his or her piece from the grill. Cut each piece in half for students so that pairs can taste the two different types of corn. As they eat, engage students in conversation about which types they prefer and why.

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Work with students to create a “Found Poem” about corn. Have the first student in the circle choose a word about corn, the next student add another word, and so on, until all students have contributed. Students may use the same word more than once.

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

Work with students to create a “Found Poem” about corn. Have the first student in the circle choose a word about corn, the next student add another word, and so on, until all students have contributed. Students may use the same word more than once.

GARDEN FOLLOW-UP

Work with students to create a “Found Poem” about corn. Have the first student in the circle choose a word about corn, the next student add another word, and so on, until all students have contributed. Students may use the same word more than once.

