

Lesson Eleven - Vegetables

Vegetables are one of God's blessings to man, providing vitamins, minerals and fiber essential to good health. Unfortunately, for many children, vegetables are their least favorite food. But, with the tasty recipes in this section, even the most finicky eater should find something they enjoy.

Children easily adopt the attitudes of the adults around them. If you present this lesson in a positive, fun way, the girls will be more willing to eat vegetables. I find that when they have prepared the recipe themselves, they are willing to taste it, and most are pleasantly surprised at just how much they enjoy vegetables.

In this lesson, the girls will learn to:

- Identify different vegetables & different ways to cut them
- Cook vegetables in a variety of ways
- Create vegetable "critter" centerpieces

Review

- Food Guide Pyramid – Vegetable Group (Lesson 9)
- Kitchen Safety – Using Sharp Utensils (Lesson 1)

Give each girl a copy of:

- Before I Cook Vegetables
- Fun with Veggies!
- Vegetable Recipes

Read through the entire lesson and decide which recipes the girls will prepare. The squash casserole needs to bake 30 minutes, but the other two recipes only need about 10 minutes, or less, to cook. I encourage you to try at least two of the recipes, and do all three, if possible. I divided my class into three groups and each made a different recipe, then we tasted them all.

The important **focus of this lesson** is to acquaint girls with different vegetables, how they taste, and various ways to prepare them. I discovered that some girls had never peeled a potato; they were familiar only with instant potatoes. Some had tasted only canned vegetables and they enjoyed the raw veggies we prepared.

If possible, prepare a colorful raw **vegetable platter** with the girls. Let them arrange carrot and celery sticks, cucumber slices, green, red and yellow bell pepper slices, broccoli and cauliflower florets. Ranch dressing makes a popular dip and many girls will try vegetables if they can dip them in something they like.

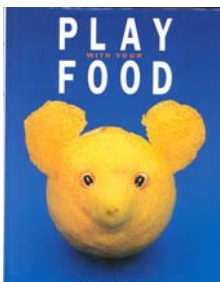


"How did you make that cute duck?"
asks one of the fathers!

Veggies can be fun, as well as
nutritious!

As much as your budget will allow, purchase some other less familiar vegetables and show them to the girls. Eggplant, scallions, beets, kale, artichokes, various types of squash – these are just a few that should be readily available. Consider a field trip to the produce section of a large grocery store, or to a farmer’s market or green grocer. So many children today grow up eating only highly processed foods, and it’s a real education for them to see what the raw product looks like.

Read “**Before I Cook Vegetables**” together. In the kitchen, **demonstrate** how to safely peel and slice vegetables. While a chef can wield a big chef’s knife to slice veggies in a flash, start the girls out with a smaller knife. A paring knife is fine, and I found my steak knives worked well. If time permits, do the “Cut it Up!” activity in the Extending the Lesson section.



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The girls’ favorite activity was “**Fun with Veggies**”. They loved making squash ducks and other critters. Allow plenty of time for this part of the lesson! Radish flowers, carrot tulips, an eggplant vase- you’ll find ideas for these and more in books on garnishing. “Play with Your Food” has a wealth of cute ideas using vegetables and fruit. Check your library, local bookstore or Jessica’s Biscuit – a great place for discount cookbooks, www.ecookbooks.com.

What you’ll need for this lesson:

Ingredients: Follow the ingredient list for each recipe you choose.

Supplies:

For Potato Chip Casserole:

- 8”-9” pan or casserole dish
- Microwave-safe dish with cover to partially cook squash
- Large Spoon
- Zipper freezer bag (to crush the potato chips)
- Measuring Cup
- Rolling Pin (to crush the chips, or use hands)
- Rubber spatula (for inside of soup can)

For Peachy Carrots:

- Microwave-safe dish with cover, 2-3 quart size
- Peeler
- Measuring Cup
- Measuring Spoons
- Large Mixing Spoon

For Green Beans Italiano:

- 2-quart microwave-safe casserole with cover
- Measuring Cup
- Measuring Spoons
- Large Mixing Spoon

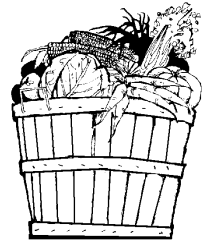
**For all veggie recipes,
you will need:**

- Cutting boards
- Paring knives or steak knives
- Hot pads
- Fork to test for doneness

Name:

Before I Cook Vegetables

“Vegetables are good for you.” I’m sure you’ve heard that many times. But why are they so good for us? God has created a great variety of vegetables in an array of colors. Veggies are loaded with vitamins, minerals and fiber, which help keep us healthy. Researchers have even found substances in vegetables that they believe help protect us from cancer and other diseases.



Consider the many types of vegetables:

- Leafy: Different kinds of lettuce, spinach, greens, cabbage
- Root: Carrots, beets, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, radishes
- Legumes: Black-eyed peas, lentils, garbanzo beans, black beans, peanuts
- Stalk: Celery, broccoli, bamboo shoots
- Vegetables that develop from flowers: Tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, squash
- Others: Mushrooms, artichokes, Brussels sprouts

Your Notes

Fresh, **raw vegetables** provide us with the most nutrients. To prepare them, you only need to wash them thoroughly. Place small veggies in a colander and run cold water over them. Larger vegetables should be gently scrubbed under running water with a vegetable brush. Raw veggies, arranged attractively on a plate, make a colorful centerpiece. You can add a dish of your favorite salad dressing for a dip.

Vegetables can also be purchased **frozen** or **canned**. Canned vegetables have already been cooked and only need to be heated. Generally, they are not as crisp or colorful as fresh or frozen veggies. Most contain a lot of salt. Choose low salt varieties or, use fresh or frozen vegetables. **Frozen** vegetables are as colorful as fresh veggies. They will keep 8 – 12 months when stored at 0 degrees F. or lower, but are best if used within a few months to avoid freezer burn.

The way we cook vegetables is very important. Valuable nutrients are lost by improper cooking. Also, their color fades and veggies turn mushy when overcooked. Fresh and frozen vegetables retain more nutrients when cooked just to the “**crisp-tender**” stage – just enough to be tender but still a little crispy.

The longer vegetables are cooked, the more nutrients are destroyed. And, the more liquid they are cooked in, the more nutrients are lost into the water. A good **rule of thumb for cooking vegetables** is: Cook them in as little liquid and for as short a time as possible.

Microwave cooking is one of the best ways to cook vegetables because little water is needed and they can be cooked quickly. Put veggies in a microwave-safe container with just 2 – 3 Tablespoons of water. Cover and microwave on High 2 - 3 minutes. Stir and microwave 1 - 2 more minutes, if needed. Keep covered for 5 minutes. Vegetables continue cooking from the steam inside the dish. Open carefully – the steam will be hot! Check with a fork.

Steaming is also a good way to cook vegetables. You will need a steamer basket set inside a pan with a cover. Water is added in the bottom of the pan, where it doesn't touch the vegetables. As the water simmers, the steam cooks the vegetables. This method takes longer than the microwave and the cooking time will vary depending on the type and size of the veggies.

Boiling is probably the most common method of cooking vegetables. It requires the most liquid and it's easy to overcook the veggies. Use only enough water to barely cover the veggies, and simmer just until they are crisp-tender.

Oven roasting works especially well with root vegetables like potatoes and carrots. Often, when cooking a roast, we put vegetables in the roasting pan, but they can be roasted separately. Cut the vegetables into wedges or slices, coat with a little oil and bake at 400 degrees till crisp-tender. For great flavor, sprinkle an herb seasoning mixture on the veggies before baking. This is especially tasty on zucchini and yellow squash.

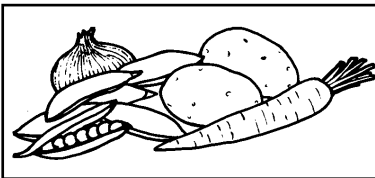
Vegetables can be **grilled** on the barbecue, with oil and seasoning as used in oven roasting. Wrap veggies in foil, place on kabob skewers, or cook on a special barbecue rack or basket.

Unused cooked vegetables can be refrigerated up to 3 days. Store them in a covered plastic or glass container.

Whether you cook them or eat them raw, the **Food Guide Pyramid recommends we eat 3 – 5 servings of vegetables** every day.

One serving equals:

- 1 Cup raw leafy, vegetables
- 1/2 Cup of cooked or chopped raw veggies
- 3/4 Cup vegetable juice



Look for a variety of vegetable recipes in cookbooks. Don't forget, many casseroles contain veggies. You may find new recipes that will soon become your favorite way of eating your vegetables every day!

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Name:

Peachy Carrots

Ingredients:

1 pound fresh carrots, peeled and sliced
1/3 Cup peach preserves
1 Tablespoon margarine, melted
Pinch of salt, optional



The girls slice carrots as they prepare Peachy Carrots.

Method:

Yield: Serves 6

1. Cook the **carrots**. The easiest way is to microwave them on High in a covered, microwave-safe dish for 4-5 minutes or until fork tender. **Watch out for steam** when you uncover the dish!
2. Combine **cooked carrots** with **peach preserves** and **margarine**. Stir well to thoroughly coat the carrots. Add **salt**, if desired and stir.
3. Cook on the stovetop over low heat until carrots are heated thoroughly. Or, heat one minute in the microwave on High.

Note: Garnish with a few sprigs of parsley to add color.

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www.FourIngredientCookbook.com



Green Beans Italiano

Ingredients:

- 1 (16 oz.) bag frozen green beans
- 1/4 Cup water
- 1 (2 oz.) jar chopped pimiento, drained
- 1/4 Cup chopped pepperoni
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder, optional

Method:

Yield: Serves 4 – 6

1. In a 2 qt. microwave-safe casserole, combine **green beans** and **water**. Cover.
2. Microwave on High 7-8 minutes or till crisp-tender. Halfway through the cooking time, stir once.
3. Drain water carefully; it will be hot and steamy! Open the dish so the steam escapes away from you.
4. Add **all remaining ingredients**. Stir well.
5. Microwave on High 1-2 minutes or until heated through. Test with a fork for doneness.

Notes:

- **Pimiento** is a sweet-flavored type of a pepper; it is not spicy. It is used in many recipes to add color.
- Any mild oil may be used if you do not have **olive oil** on hand. However, olive oil lends a traditional Italian flavor.

Name:

Potato Chip Squash Casserole

Ingredients:

- 4 – 6 medium yellow squash, washed
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup (regular or reduced fat)
- 1 Cup crushed potato chips, Ranch flavor **
- 1 Cup grated American cheese (regular or reduced fat)



With crunchy potato chips and a cheesy topping, this casserole was a hit!

Method:

Yield: 4 - 5 servings

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 2-3 qt. casserole or 9" pan.
2. On a cutting board, slice the **squash** into slices about 1/4 – 1/2" thick.
3. Partially cook the **squash** until it's slightly soft. The easiest way is to microwave the squash with 2T. water, covered in a microwave-safe dish for about 4-5 minutes. Let sit, covered, for 3-4 minutes.
4. In the greased casserole, use a big spoon to layer half of the **squash, soup (undiluted), and crushed potato chips**. Be careful; the squash will be hot!
5. Repeat the layer and top with **grated cheese**.
6. Bake 30 minutes, uncovered, or until bubbly.

You can use plain **potato chips, or any other flavor you prefer. To crush, put potato chips into a zipper freezer bag. Seal and crush with hands or a rolling pin.

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Fun with Veggies!



Make a cute duck or pelican with yellow squash and carrots!

Be very careful when working with knives and other sharp tools!

Not only are vegetables good for you, but they're also fun to use for centerpieces and garnishes. A garnish is a decorative touch and can be as simple as a sprig of parsley to add color to a plate, or as elaborate as carved vegetables or fruit.

To make a squash duck or pelican, you will need:
Yellow crookneck squash, a large carrot, whole cloves
Paring knife, cutting board, toothpicks

Choose firm yellow squash that are as free from blemishes as possible. Look for squash with a bend in the neck. You can use different sizes and make a duck family if you wish.

Peel the carrot. Cut off 3" of the largest end of the carrot, then cut this piece into thick rectangular slices. With the point of a small knife, cut wedges out of one piece of carrot to make it look like the duck's feet.

Wash and dry the squash. Slice off about 1/4" slice from the large end of the squash so it will have a flat end to stand on.

On each side of the squash, slice off a thin oval piece about 2" long for the wings. Cut a few notches out of the ends for the "feathers".

Stick a toothpick into the carrot "foot"; then stick the other end of the toothpick into the bottom of the duck so it will stand. You may have to carve the carrot a little more to make it flat enough to stand.

Cut off 1-2" of the small end of a carrot and carve it to a point to look like a duckbill. Notch the middle to create the mouth. For the pelican, cut a flat piece of carrot to fit the curve of the squash and round off the bottom end to form the "bill". Stick a toothpick into the carrot first, then into the squash. You may break the toothpick in half if it's too long.

With half a toothpick, insert the wings. Press cloves in for eyes.



Radish mouse used with permission
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Radish Mice

You will need radishes that still have the root attached (this is the tail). Wash the radishes gently. Cut off a thin slice on one side so the radish can rest on this end. Keep the piece you cut off. Cut it in half and make 2 little ears. On each side of the top of the radish, cut 2 small slits.

Put the ears into the slits. With the point of a small knife, make 2 tiny indentations for the eyes. This may be enough, or you can press a peppercorn or whole clove into each hole.

Extending The Lesson... *Cut It Up!*

Dice, chop, mince, cube... There are many ways to cut up food. These terms, and others, are often encountered when preparing fresh vegetables, and it is important for the girls to know what they mean.

Use a potato or other easy-to-cut vegetable to demonstrate some common cooking terms the girls need to learn. Peel the potato, then cut it in half. Use a cutting board. We'll work from largest to smallest size pieces.

With one half of the potato do the following:

Slice two pieces about $\frac{1}{4}$ " **thick**. Sliced potatoes are used in au gratin and scalloped potato recipes. Set slices aside.

Cube the rest of the piece of the potato. Cubed pieces are usually about $\frac{1}{2}$ " on all sides.

Dice the cubed pieces. Diced pieces are about $\frac{1}{4}$ " on each side.

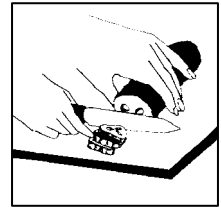
Mince the diced pieces by chopping them until they are tiny. They will be irregular in shape. Most often, we use minced garlic or onion, but the potato will be more pleasant to cut! A garlic press can be used to mince garlic.

With the other half of the potato, slice two slices, then:

Julienne the slices. With one slice on top of the other, cut the potato into thin matchsticks, about **2-3" long** and $\frac{1}{4}$ " **thick**. Fine restaurants often serve julienne cut vegetables.

Chop the remaining piece of potato. When a recipe calls for chopped ingredients, it refers to medium-sized pieces of irregular shape.

Give each girl a potato to peel and cut. Be sure to stress the safe way to use a knife: cut away from yourself on a clean cutting board. Many girls have never used a potato peeler. Show them how to peel away from themselves and watch the fingers holding the potato! A large knife is difficult for the girls to control and use safely. Start them out with a steak knife or paring knife. You may need to cut the potato in half, or into manageable pieces for them, then let them cube, dice, and mince.



Slice vegetables on a cutting board.

