



Wonderful Wheat

WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Cycles

Enduring Understandings

- We rely on each other and other living things to meet our needs.
- Food comes from nature: from plants and animals.
- People eat different parts of plants.
- Wheat is a plant that has many parts, flour is made from wheat berries.



wheat berries

Objectives

- Children cultivate an understanding of where their food originates.
- Children show interest and curiosity in processing raw food into finished food products.
- Children engage in processing food by demonstrating the use of simple machines to grind wheat.

Directions

1. Lay a sheet or drop cloth on the floor and place the wheat stalks on it. Examine the plants with the children. Challenge them to point out the stalk or stem, leaves, and the wheat head. Have them notice that the stem is hollow. This is called straw. Farmers will save the straw for bedding in their animals' stalls. Is this where the first drinking straw idea came from?
2. Invite the children to break the wheat head off and hold it in their hands. Have them roll the head between their hands to loosen the wheat berries from the chaff. Let all pieces fall to the sheet and have children pick up the loose wheat berries. All the other plant material that is left over is called the chaff.
3. Ask the children try to crush a berry between their fingers. Can they do it? It's a hard berry, not like a blueberry or strawberry. Invite the children to eat a few of the berries, crushing them between their molars. Ask, "What do they taste like?"
4. After exploring the wheat berries, demonstrate how to grind them in a grain mill using some of the wheat berries the children have harvested. Together with the children, look at the new product you have created: flour! Ask the children what flour is used for.
5. Using the bulk wheat berries to supplement your supply, let the children grind them into flour. Save the flour for use at a later time—for baking or to use to make play dough. You can let the children help decide what to make with their flour at a later time.

Did you know?

Early wheat farmers would chew a handful of wheat berries as the first chewing gum!

6. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

Discussion Questions

- What is wheat?
- Where does wheat come from?
- How can we use wheat for food?
- What types of foods are made from wheat?
- How can we harvest the wheat berries to grind into flour?
- How can we use the flour we make?



Gluten-free options

You can grind rice or other grains in the mill to make gluten free flour.

Extensions

- ***Bread Comes to Life: A Garden of Wheat and a Loaf to Eat*** by George Levenson
- ***Sun Bread*** by Elisa Kleven
- ***Bread Is For Eating*** by David Gershator, Phillis Gershator, and Emma Shaw-Smith
- ***BREAD BREAD BREAD*** by Anna Morris
- ***Good Bread: A Book of Thanks*** by Brigitte Weninger
- Grow your own wheat! According to the Organic Consumer Association, a 10'x10' plot of fertile land can harvest enough wheat berries for 10–25 loaves of bread. OCA recommends planting red wheat in late September or early October as this wheat is more nutritious than spring wheat, protects the soil in the winter, and has less competition from weeds. (You can buy wheat berries at a health food store). The wheat may start to grow, be buried in by snow, and come up again in the spring. Harvest in late June when the wheat begins to turn golden but still has a few streaks of green. Tie into bundles and stand them upright, allowing the grain to fully ripen into a golden color. (from OCA, May 28, 2009)
- see “Wheat Life Cycle Cards” and “Wheat to Bread Cards” in Appendix, pp.251 & 253.