

ABUNDANT CALIFORNIA

CREATING ASPARAGUS ADS

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students conduct a taste test of fresh and cooked asparagus, and develop ads to promote the benefits of asparagus and to entice other children to try it. In doing so, they learn some persuasive techniques used in marketing and also come to appreciate this unique vegetable.

GRADE LEVEL: 3-5





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CALIFORNIA FOOD FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS® downloadable resource

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CALIFORNIA FOOD
FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS®

CREATING ASPARAGUS ADS

LESSON OVERVIEW

Asparagus is the quintessential spring vegetable. Its bright-green spears shoot up from an underground stem as the temperatures start to warm. The beautiful appearance and indescribable flavor of asparagus make it a favorite among many vegetable lovers.

In this lesson, students conduct a taste test of fresh and cooked asparagus, and develop ads to promote the benefits of asparagus and to entice other children to try it. In doing so, they learn some persuasive techniques used in marketing and also come to appreciate this unique vegetable.

Plan to conduct this lesson in the spring, when California-grown asparagus is readily available. You may purchase asparagus from a local farmers market or produce market, or use asparagus from the school garden or home garden.

FOOD SYSTEM EMPHASIS

Marketing

GRADE LEVEL

3-5

LENGTH

One to two 50-minute periods

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Recognize the unique qualities of asparagus.

- Compare the tastes and textures of raw and cooked asparagus grown in California.
- Develop advertisements for promoting asparagus and enticing others to try it.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS

- 3-5-ETS1-1. Define a simple design problem reflecting a need or want that includes specified criteria for success and constraints on materials, time, or cost.

Science and Engineering Practices

- Planning and Carrying Out Investigations – Make observations and/or measurements to produce data to serve as the basis for evidence for an explanation of a phenomenon or test a design solution.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS-ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- W.3.2, W.4.2, W.5.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- W.3.7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic. W.4.7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic. W.5.7. Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

VOCABULARY

- **Advertise** – to give information about a product or service you want to sell
- **Advertisement (or ad)** – a notice calling attention to a product, service, or event
- **Catchphrase** – a set of words or a slogan meant to attract attention
- **Fulfill** – to satisfy or meet

- **Marketing** – the business of promoting products or services
- **Perennial** – a plant that lives and flowers for more than two years
- **Persuade** – to cause a person to do or to believe something by giving the person good reasons
- **Rhizome** – a thick, underground stem
- **Spear** – a long, edible plant shoot

MATERIALS

- Copies of “10 Facts about Asparagus” and “Designing Your Asparagus Ad” student handouts
- Copies of “Taste Test” and “Fruit and Vegetable Adjectives” student handouts from *Savoring California: A Comparative Tasting of California Fruits and Vegetables* (<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/CEL-CA-Thursdays-Tasting-Lesson.pdf>)

For Taste Test

- Asparagus (see Preparation)
- Sharp knife
- Paper towels
- Microwave oven
- Tongs
- Serving trays
- Toothpicks
- Napkins

For Designing Ads

- Samples of different ads (see Preparation)
- Construction paper

- Colored pencils or crayons and other art materials (such as scissors, glue, paper scraps, and magazine pages)
- Optional: digital camera or electronic tablet, and access to video-editing app

PREPARATION

- Make copies of the student handouts. For the “Fruit and Vegetable Adjectives” student handout, you may make one copy for each small group or table, or project it onto a screen for the whole class to see.

For Taste Test

- Purchase California-grown asparagus, or use produce from your school garden. Medium- or thin-stemmed spears are best for the taste test. Depending on the size of your class, you will need one to two pounds of spears. If you have enough spears, you may plan for students to compare the spear tips to the middles and ends. If available, you may also test different varieties (such as purple asparagus).
- Cut or snap off the woody ends of the asparagus, and wash with cool water. Divide into two equal groups.
- Dry one group of asparagus. Leaving one spear whole, cut the other dry spears into bite-size pieces.
- For the other group of asparagus, wet four layers of paper towels with 1/4 cup of water. Place the asparagus onto the paper towels and roll into a bundle. Cook in a microwave oven for 3–4 minutes or until just tender. Carefully remove the bundle with tongs. Leave one spear whole and cut the others into bite-size pieces.
- Place the whole asparagus and pieces onto serving trays. Provide toothpicks for picking up samples.
- Read over the *Savoring California: A Comparative Tasting of California Fruits and Vegetables* lesson (<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/CEL-CA-Thursdays-Tasting-Lesson.pdf>).

For Designing Ads

- Collect a variety of different print or digital ads to share with students.
- If possible, find a good example of an ad for each of the following elements: an enticing picture or symbol, an interesting catchphrase, compelling information about the product, and an incentive to try the product.

SAFETY NOTE

Have students wash their hands thoroughly before doing the taste test.

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Take a quick poll, asking the class, “Who’s eaten asparagus before?”
- 2 Have students imagine that they have been selected by the California Asparagus Council to create an ad to get more kids to try asparagus. Ask students how they might go about creating their ads.
- 3 Direct students to read the “10 Facts about Asparagus” student handout. Invite students to share any additional facts they know about asparagus, starting a class list on the board.
- 4 Conduct a comparison tasting of raw and cooked asparagus, following the suggestions in *Savoring California: A Comparative Tasting of California Fruits and Vegetables* lesson (<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/CEL-CA-Thursdays-Tasting-Lesson.pdf>). Encourage students to use descriptive terms to compare the taste and texture of the asparagus, with the “Fruit and Vegetable Adjectives” student handout as a guide. Add the terms to the class list on the board.
- 5 Ask students to think about ads they’ve seen and to name some of the elements that ads usually have. Encourage them to think about the images and words that are often included in ads. Introduce the four common ad elements—picture or symbol, catchphrase, information, and incentive—by sharing ads with students that exemplify each element.

- 6 Give small groups of students copies of the “Designing Your Asparagus Ad” student page and several sample ads. Invite groups to examine their sample ads to look for the four elements, completing Part A of the student page. Ask groups to share their findings with the class.
- 7 Point out that ads often try to persuade people to buy a product or service by showing how it might meet a need or want. Explain that sometimes the need or want is obvious, but sometimes it is only suggested. For example, an ad showing friends playing a board game together suggests that the game will make you popular.
- 8 Challenge students to look at the sample ads and identify the needs or wants they address, completing Part B of the student page. Ask groups to share their findings with the class.
- 9 Lead a discussion about what students might include in their ads for asparagus, given what they now know about asparagus and about effective ad techniques. How might their ads entice kids to try asparagus? Which need or want might they try to address? What words and information from the class list in steps 3 and 4 might they use? What other information would they want to include?
- 10 Have students plan their ad designs by completing Part C of the student page.
- 11 Distribute construction paper, colored pencils, and other art materials (or digital cameras or tablets). Ask students to work independently or with a partner to write and design an ad for asparagus, following the steps and guidelines in on the student page.
- 12 Conduct a class discussion by studying each student-created ad and determining how well the students followed the guidelines.

EXTENDED LEARNING

- Share the asparagus ads with other classes in the school. Poll those students about which ads are most likely to persuade them to try asparagus.

- Use Harvest of the Month materials to explore other aspects of asparagus (see Resources).
- Invite a representative from a local ad agency or marketing firm to talk with your students about techniques they use in their work.
- Visit a local farm or farmers market to learn more about how asparagus is grown in your area. (See Resources to locate a farmers market near you.)

RESOURCES

- *Harvest of the Month: Asparagus*. http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/documents/Spring/Asparagus/Asparagus%20-%20Educator%27s%20Newsletter_Final.pdf
- *National Farmers Market Directory*. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets>

ASSESSMENT

Invite students to reflect on their work. Ask them to write their responses to questions, such as:

- What is the most important thing you learned from this project? Why is this important?
- What surprised you the most about this project? Why did it surprise you?
- What aspect of your own ad are you most proud of?
- What aspect could use some additional work?
- What questions do you still have about asparagus, or about how advertisers persuade consumers?

Use students' ads and their reflections to assess their learning.

BACKGROUND

The first tender spears of asparagus at the market have long been a sign that spring has arrived. This nutritious vegetable may be enjoyed fresh or lightly cooked, and is always a treat.

THE HISTORY OF ASPARAGUS

Asparagus is native to Asia Minor, which roughly corresponds to modern-day Turkey, and has long been used by people as a vegetable and medicine. Wild asparagus has very thin, tough spears. Through selective breeding and improved growing techniques, asparagus developed a thicker stem with more edible flesh.

The earliest historical reference to asparagus is an Egyptian frieze from 3000 BCE that depicts it as an offering to the gods. Ancient Greeks and Romans ate asparagus fresh in season, and dried the spears for use in winter. Romans even froze it high in the Alps for the annual Feast of Epicurus.

The English word *asparagus* is from the ancient Greek “aspharagos.” It originates from the Persian “asparag,” meaning sprout or shoot.

The popularity of the asparagus spread through Europe in the 16th century. Louis XIV of France was so fond of it that he had special greenhouses built so he could enjoy asparagus year-round. As Europeans began to colonize the New World, they brought with them their prized asparagus plants. Asparagus was first planted in California in the 1850s.

Botanists used to classify asparagus as a member of the lily family, along with onions, chives, and garlic. But they recently split asparagus into a separate family, Asparagaceae, which includes more than 200 species of plants.

HOW ASPARAGUS GROWS

The asparagus is an unusual vegetable because it is perennial, meaning that the same plants grow in the field or garden year after year. The spears that we enjoy as a vegetable are the new shoots that emerge in spring. After the spring harvest,

asparagus plants grow tall, fern-like foliage through summer. In early fall, they begin to die back. They are dormant in winter.

While asparagus can be grown from seed, many home gardeners get a jump start by planting “crowns,” the rhizome and root system of a one-year-old plant. Asparagus plants need to mature for at least three years before spears can be harvested. Once they begin producing, the same plants can be productive for 15–20 years.

Asparagus plants are dioecious, which means there are separate male and female plants. The female plants typically yield less and have thinner spears than male plants because they channel energy into producing seed. They also produce small, red fruits that are toxic to people.

CALIFORNIA ASPARAGUS CROP

California is the leading producer of asparagus in the United States—growing 70 percent of all domestic asparagus. Its climate is ideal for asparagus; the mild temperatures help to spur spear development and to prevent tips from opening prematurely. Most California asparagus is grown in the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta, the Central Coast, and the San Joaquin Valley.

Asparagus is a perennial plant that takes three years after planting to produce the first crop. That means that farmers must spend time and money maintaining plots before they yield any asparagus, and they aren’t able to grow any other crops in those plots. In addition, asparagus is a labor-intensive crop that must be hand-picked and then washed and trimmed in the packing house. Higher wages make it harder for California growers to compete with producers with lower labor costs. As a result, California’s asparagus production has been declining over the last two decades.

Be sure to use California-grown asparagus for this lesson. Not only is it sweeter and fresher than imported asparagus, buying California produce also helps keep California asparagus farmers in business.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF ASPARAGUS

Asparagus is a good source of vitamin K, folate, vitamin A, and vitamin C, among other nutrients. Lightly cooking asparagus breaks down the spears' fibrous cells, making it easier for our bodies to absorb more of these nutrients.

SELECTING ASPARAGUS

California asparagus is readily available between March and June. A one-pound bunch of asparagus contains about 12-15 spears. When possible, use fresh, locally grown asparagus from farmers markets, school or home gardens, or your local grocer.

Look for bright-green, blemish-free stems with closed, compact tips. Select bunches with similar-sized spears so that they cook at the same rate.

10 FACTS about asparagus



1. Asparagus spears can grow as quickly as 6 inches in one day!

2. Asparagus is a **perennial plant**. After planting, it takes three years to produce the first crop.

3. Asparagus is high in vitamin K, folate, and vitamin C, which our bodies need to grow and develop. It is also low in calories.

4. An asparagus plant may be **female or male**.

5. Asparagus was popular in ancient times. The asparagus bunches in this mosaic are Roman, dating from around 350 AD.



6. California is the **top grower** of asparagus in the country.

7. Asparagus grows from a root system attached to an underground stem—called a **rhizome**—that produces the spears we eat.



8. Female asparagus plants produce a **small red berry** that is toxic to humans.

9. Asparagus contains a **sulfur compound** that can make your pee smell funny.



10. One asparagus plant can produce spears for **15 to 20 years**.



DESIGNING YOUR AD

Ads are more than just about selling stuff. They can also attract attention, provide information, stir up feelings, and change how people think or behave

Part A: What's in an Ad?

Most ads include one or more of the following elements. Look at different ads to find an example of each. Complete the chart below.

Element	Describe Element in an Ad	What the Ad is Selling
A picture or symbol to catch your eye		
A funny or intriguing catchphrase		
Interesting information about the product		
A reason to try the product		





Part B: You Get What You Want (or Need)

Ads persuade us by showing how to get something we need or want. Look for ads that highlight the following needs or wants. Complete the chart.

Need or Want	What the Ad is Selling	How the Ad Addresses Need or Want
To be healthy		
To save money		
To save time		
To care for your family		
To do well in school		
To enjoy life		
To enjoy food		
To protect the environment		
To look good		
To have lots of friends		



Part C: Planning Your Asparagus Ad

Design an ad to encourage other kids to try asparagus. Your ad should include:

- A picture or symbol
- A catchphrase to attract attention
- Accurate information about asparagus
- A reason to try asparagus

1 How will you persuade kids to try asparagus? _____

2 What characteristics of asparagus will you highlight? _____

3 What need or want will your ad address? _____

4 How will your ad address this need or want? _____

5 What elements will your ad include? _____

o Picture or symbol: _____

o Catchphrase to attract attention: _____

o Accurate information about asparagus: _____

o Reason to try asparagus: _____

Create your ad with paper, colored pencils, and other art materials, or with a digital camera and video-editing app. Share your ad with your classmates.



ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ECOLITERACY

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