

Welcome to Seed to Plate



Seed to Plate is an interdisciplinary, standards-aligned 5th and 6th grade curriculum addressing the need to teach New York City school children about our food system, including where food comes from and why that matters. This curriculum is designed in collaboration with the Center for Food and the Environment at Teachers College Columbia University, and operated by Greenmarket, a program of the non-profit environmental organization GrowNYC. Utilizing fun, interactive learning experiences, *Seed to Plate* aims to introduce students to why healthful, mindful eating is important for their personal health and ecological sustainability and to help them learn how to incorporate more whole, locally produced plant-based foods into their food choices.

Taught by Greenmarket Educators, students learn about agriculture, nutrition, farmers markets, and cooking. The lessons include two field trips, two guest visits inside the classroom, film viewings, sensory tastings and hands-on preparation of delicious, diverse, and healthy local food.

Designed to be a comprehensive, flexible and replicable curriculum used in self-contained upper elementary and middle school classrooms, or in middle-school social science, science, health, or English classes, *Seed to Plate* helps tell the story of local food in a way that will motivate greater behavioral change.

Tastings

Throughout the course of *Seed to Plate*, students will participate in activities that involve tasting produce or locally made products. Prior to the start of the program, any student allergies will be recorded and observed. We believe the experiential act of tasting and cooking seasonal, local foods is essential to the students' complete comprehension and appreciation for the concepts we are covering in *Seed to Plate*. Additionally, experiences tasting healthful foods are an essential part of changing eating behavior.

Lesson Description and Schedule

The following lessons are designed to be co-taught by the classroom teacher and Greenmarket educator weekly, or twice weekly. The curriculum is best suited for instruction in early fall or late spring.

Lesson 1 – Welcome to *Seed to Plate*!

Lesson 2 – Field Trip: Welcome to the Greenmarket!

Lesson 3 – Local & Seasonal Foods: Exploring Farms of the Northeast

Lesson 4 – Eat a Rainbow!

Lesson 5 – Sustainable vs. Industrial Farming

Lesson 6 – Meet Your Farmer Classroom Visit

Lesson 7 – What's the Story of Food?

Lesson 8 – Field Trip: A Day on the Farm at Queens County Farm Museum

Lesson 9 – Now We're Cooking! Farm Fresh Cooking with a Local Chef

Lesson 10 – Students Taking Action: Think Globally Eat Locally

Lesson 1 – Welcome to *Seed to Plate!*

This lesson is an introduction to Greenmarket’s *Seed to Plate* curriculum. The Greenmarket Educator will provide an overview of the classroom lessons, guest visits, and field trips to get them excited about the curriculum. The Greenmarket Educator will introduce students to the concept of the food system, and will lead the class in a group brainstorming activity to encourage them to critically think about the steps we make to transform our food from seeds to the food on our plates (or in our cups). Students will investigate the steps taken to produce New York State apple cider, followed by a class tasting of apple cider purchased from a local Greenmarket. Students will also complete a short survey to evaluate their existing knowledge related to agriculture, food production and sourcing, nutrition, cooking, and their current food choices. The lesson ends with the preparation for their first field trip to a local Greenmarket.

Lesson 2 – Field Trip: Welcome to the Greenmarket!

In this lesson, students will visit a local Greenmarket farmers market. During this experiential trip, the group will participate in hands-on activities, seasonal product tastings, farmer interviews, and a tour of the market. As they explore the market, students will have the opportunity to interact with farmers, market managers and Greenmarket educators to help deepen their understanding of the food system, the importance of farmers and local farms, as well as the mission of Greenmarket’s mission to support regional agriculture and provide New Yorkers with access to fresh healthy food. Students will have the opportunity to purchase a food item to enjoy as a group during their tour and will trace the seed to plate steps of their Greenmarket snack.

Lesson 3 – Local & Seasonal Foods: Exploring Farms of the Northeast

This lesson begins with a review of their trip to Greenmarket, followed by a discussion about the different types of farms and farmers operating in the northeastern United States. Students will be asked to think about their own favorite foods and the types of farms those foods come from. The teacher will then lead a visual aid-guided discussion about fruit orchards and vegetable, livestock, and dairy farms. The lesson also elaborates on seasonal eating and introduces the concept of local food using a short clip from the film *What’s on Your Plate?*. Class work involves interpreting a chart of produce availability throughout the seasons in New York State.

Lesson 4 – Eat a Rainbow!

In this lesson, students are introduced to the nutritional benefits of farm fresh food. Students will learn about basic nutrition and the health advantages of eating a colorful variety of fresh fruits and vegetables every day. Visual aids will guide students as they learn about the specific nutrients found in different colored fruits and vegetables, helping them understand the vital role each nutrient plays to keep our bodies functioning well. The importance of eating fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as easy-to-follow rules for good health will also be covered. The lesson continues with the Greenmarket Educator assembling a healthy, colorful and seasonal Greenmarket snack for the class.

Lesson 5 – Sustainable vs. Industrial Farming

Building on what students have already learned about farmers and farming practices, this lesson uses short video presentations to teach students more about the concepts and primary differences between sustainable and industrial farming. Films viewed will highlight the nutritional, environmental and communal benefits of sustainable farming. Students will sharpen their critical thinking skills during in-class discussions and homework activities in which they reflect on the films.

In preparation for the upcoming farmer's visit, students will discuss the particular type of farm their visiting farmer works on, and brainstorm relevant questions to ask during the interview. By the end of this lesson students should be excited about their farmer's visit and prepared to engage in a substantive conversation with them.

Lesson 6 – Meet Your Farmer Classroom Visit

In this lesson, students are visited in the classroom by a local farmer. Through an informal discussion with the farmer, students will learn about farm operations, life on a farm throughout the seasons, and the importance of the Greenmarket to their business. Students will gain further understanding of why eating food from local farms is healthy for their bodies, good for the environment and good for our regional community. Students will also have the opportunity to ask the questions they prepared in the previous lesson and will be provided with a taste of the farmer's products. As a homework assignment, students will write thoughtful thank you letters to the visiting farmer.

Lesson 7 – What’s the Story of Food?

In order to reinforce what students have learned thus far, this lesson focuses on the story of food from seed to plate, and beyond. In class, they will work together to investigate several types of food and drinks they are familiar with to understand more about the whole and processed foods we eat. Students will compare the products and work to decide as a class whether it is whole, minimally processed, or heavily processed, followed by a class discussion about the nutritional implications of eating processed foods versus farm-fresh fruits, vegetables and other products.

Lesson 8 – Field Trip: A Day on the Farm at Queens County Farm Museum

In this lesson, students will go on a tour of Queens County Farm Museum. This outdoor tour of a local, sustainable farm operating within New York City will highlight the roles of people and animals on the farm, planting and harvesting of crops during the spring season, and the importance of supporting small farms in business. The trip will conclude with a lunch break on the farm featuring some freshly harvested snacks.

Lesson 9 – Now We’re Cooking! Farm Fresh Cooking with a Local Chef

This lesson is centered on a simple cooking experience led by a local chef and is designed to empower students to prepare and eat local, seasonal produce on their own and to learn the importance of these foods from a chef’s perspective. Students will learn basic food safety and knife skills, and will work in groups to prepare a dish from seasonal, locally sourced ingredients. While sharing in a communal meal, students will reflect on the benefits of cooking your own food – cooking is fun, delicious and good for you! For homework students will write thank you letters to the guest chef.

Lesson 10 – Students Taking Action: Think Globally, Eat Locally

Seed to Plate concludes with students reviewing the program’s main concepts and share their experiences throughout the past five weeks. While enjoying a final seasonal snack, students will formally evaluate the program.