

Of colours and seasons

Continuing ideas for exploring the environment in the 2021 International Year of Fruit and Vegetables by Jeanie Clark

Is it pumpkin season where you are? It is here. Each year as winter hits, we have plenty of recently harvested pumpkins to make into lovely hot orange-coloured soups through winter. Once gone, we have no more pumpkin soups until the next harvest!

Likewise, green zucchini is a basis of many meals through summer-autumn, but not in winter-spring. There is seasonality and colours in our garden and foods! Have your children noticed this in their diet too, especially if a garden provides their fruits (F) and vegetables (V)?

This third article for the 2021 International Year of Fruit and Vegetables (IYFV) will explore ideas and freely accessible web resources for learning about the colours and seasons of FVs. There will be a focus on different ways to represent information, of varying levels of difficulty: artwork for logos; tables; and pie charts.

IYFV artwork

Could your children design a logo to convey the diversity of their FV's and their contribution to healthy life? What reasons lie behind choices of colours and shapes in their design? Be sure to display and provide opportunities to explain it!

The second artwork is a kind of jigsaw puzzle. Below are some shapes based on a variety of FVs. (What do your children think they might be?) Copy and enlarge them to make them easy to handle. Cut them out and then work out how they could be assembled to make a 'face', with NO shapes touching any other. Is there a message behind this image?

The third activity is to compare these artworks with the IYFV logo* found on the IYFV website [1]. Did the children's one use shapes in the same places as the IYFV's? Does the IYFV seem to have a 'message'? If so, what is it? Their intended one is:

- general smiling face = health from FV's.
- variety of colours and shapes = all FV's.
- circular shape = each FV works towards IYFV goals. [2]

Discuss whether yours or the IYFV's logo shows FV's values for human health better?

Colour

Did your children notice how colourful the IYFV logos are? How many colours are in it? There are five colour groups of FVs: brown/white; green; orange/yellow; purple/blue; and red. What might they indicate?

These groups are described in the table halfway down the FAO 'Good for you' webpage [3]. Use the FAO table to summarise these health benefits by FV. It could be a table with four columns: colour; health benefit; F; V. Each row could be done with its colour. In the columns, draw (or write) only the FV that are familiar.

When are these known FVs in season? Could a fifth column be added to name this for specific FVs? It might get a bit complicated!

FV seasonal pies

An alternative representation could be to show it as a radiating pie diagram. Draw a big circle. Mark it into four pie-quarters. Label each quarter as a season. Draw and/or write the name of known FV's that are eaten in each season. (This will be used later.)

*The IYFV logo is on page 48.



Are some FV's eaten all year, while others have a more limited time, like our pumpkins and zucchini? What might explain this? Does it have to do with where the FV's come from, e.g. supermarket, backyard, freezer, etc?

Seasonal Eating

Can such a pie 'eating' record reveal times when FVs are freshest? Highlight those sourced from the backyard – freshness is easy to answer for them! But what about those bought at a supermarket? A field trip to your supermarket could look for any information provided to shoppers about the freshness of their FVs. Add anything found to the pie.

Most FVs are seasonal, and go off relatively quickly. Yet, in our modern world, preservation technologies, (e.g. canned, bottled, cold storage, frozen) provide FVs from anywhere (with some added costs) to our supermarkets. How aware are your children of FVs in their diet that are not local, not fresh or have been sourced from far away?

How does show we get our FVs reflect on the IYFV's second objective, i.e. to "promot[e] diversified, balanced, and healthy diets and lifestyles through fruit and vegetable consumption" [4]? To help answer this, create a summary table of costs and benefits for fresh seasonal local FVs compared with non-local anytime FVs from these webpages:

- Environment Victoria 'Eating Green' [5] – several factors within three main sections.
- Nourish by WebMD 'What to Know about Seasonal Eating' [6] - describes 'seasonal eating' with several factors, two webpages.
- Choice 'Buying fresh fruit and veg' [7] – a longer article, but worth reading.
- 'Storage' - part of the last IYFV article in Otherways issue 168 [8].

Does it really make a difference to taste? Your children could plan and try a taste test of one F or V, comparing fresh, canned, supermarket not freshly picked, and possibly frozen samples. Which do your children prefer and why? Do they agree with the view that fresher FV taste and look better?

Seasonal sources

It will be easy to know and source the seasonal foods from your garden, but what about those of the local town / suburb? Visit a farmers market to see what is local. To find them near you, enter your locality onto a website like "Local harvest".

At the state level, what FVs can we eat that are locally fresh? Tables show this at:

- Environment Victoria [5] - a detailed list of FVs by each season. Note, squash = pumpkins.

- Sustainable Table [9] - the Victorian list is in the 'resources' section. There is also a general Australian guide with clear tables for each season by F, V and herbs.
- Seasonal Food Guide Australia [10] - This has a different guide for each capital city.

What about on the global scale? Are locally seasonal FVs here similar or different to other countries, especially compared with the northern hemisphere? Some examples of seasonality by pie diagrams, to compare with your one, are:

- Washington DC - Farm to School Networks 'What's growing around here?' [11] - months are the wheel spokes; length shows the number of different FVs.

If a pie diagram was made earlier, could it now be modified, or redone, to show length by the number of FV fresh types?

- United Kingdom - Eat Seasonably 'Calendar' [12] - months are the wheel spokes; width shows the number of FVs.

It is a greater challenge to work with fractions to make a pie chart this way, suited for those more advanced in their use of fractions.

Which of these three ways of showing how many FV types are available in a season works best to convey information? Why?

Compare which FVs are in season on the above charts. Another more complex, detailed pie chart format by Cooksmart may make this comparison easier. Its Fs/Vs radiate out by months with winter at the centre. It has for 'Fruits by Month in Australia' [13], the USA [14], and for Vs for both [15]. Questions that could help compare a pair of these F or V charts are:

- How many Fs or Vs are there in each?
- Which months is an F/V in season?
- Which F/V season is the shortest/longest?

Putting this together, are there FVs which Australia does not grow that could come from the USA, or vice versa? Are there months when something is available in one country, but not the other? How does this lead to long distance movements of FVs?

Sustainability links

Adopting more seasonality in diet is one of the IYFVs aims. What do your children think about the value of varying diet due to season, rather than being able to have anything from anywhere at any time? How is this a sustainability issue? What practical IYFV action could follow? Knowledge of FVs seasonality could help your children plan for FVs from the garden or purchases that are closer to 'home'. This could aid personal health, and support local farmers and sustainability globally.

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Direct links to webpages in this article

- [1] http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/faoweb/IYFV-2021/IYFV_EN.png
- [2] <http://www.fao.org/3/cb1913en/cb1913en.pdf> pp5-6
- [3] <http://www.fao.org/3/cb2395en/online/src/html/good-for-you.html>
- [4] <http://www.fao.org/fruits-vegetables-2021/about/en/>
- [5] <https://environmentvictoria.org.au/resource/eating-green-guide-seasonal-food/>
- [6] <https://www.webmd.com/diet/what-to-know-seasonal-eating#1>
and the next page <https://www.webmd.com/diet/what-to-know-seasonal-eating#2>
- [7] <https://www.choice.com.au/food-and-drink/groceries/fruit-and-vegetables/articles/buying-fruit-and-veg-in-season>
- [8] Clark, J. "Apples as a food system" in *Otherways*, issue 168, see pp 46-48
- [9] <https://sustainabletable.org.au/all-things-ethical-eating/seasonal-produce-guide/>
- [10] <http://seasonalfoodguide.com/>
- [11] <http://www.naymandesign.com/seasonality/6k1i7huxriyrkpuecgyy6o7a5aew7e>
- [12] <http://www.finerminds.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Seasonal-Food.png>
- [13] https://1m8t7f33dnra3sfk6v2rjurs-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/FruitsByMonth_Australia_Screen_D1-01.png
- [14] https://1m8t7f33dnra3sfk6v2rjurs-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FruitsByMonth_Screen-695x900.png
- [15] <https://www.cooksmarts.com/articles/vegetables-month-infographic-eatmoreveggies/>



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