

Activity: Food/Cooking Goal: Sensory Populations: All

## TH Activity Plan – Veggie Dips to Tempt the Senses

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Photo by The Produce Moms



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will make yogurt dips to introduce and increase fruit and veggie intake, improve nutrition & expand food literacy.

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Expand food & nutrition literacy; expand knowledge & abilities for food preparation

**Physical:** Encourage independent feeding skills; strengthen hand-eye coordination; practice hand & finger movement

**Psychological/Emotional:** Consider what foods are being consumed & their health benefits; consider food choices more thoroughly

**Sensory:** Expand sensory experiences eating healthy food; increase tactile skills for people with visual impairments; stimulate memory through smells

**Social:** Practice verbal communication skills describing foods to others; work cooperatively with others

### Materials

Mixing bowls, spoons, spatulas, measuring cups & measuring spoons, anti-slip place mats

Yogurt, ingredients specific to each dip  
(see recipes below)

Assorted fruits, veggies, plates, napkins, wipes

Disposable gloves, aprons  
(can be old shirts for fun)

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Prepare ahead of session the fruits & veggies for dipping. Sanitize work area in preparation for food handling & food making.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing TH activity – making food dips to tempt the senses (or version of this appropriate for age & cognitive abilities). Have colorful fruit & vegetables on display (these need to be washed if touched by participants before using in food).
3. Food handling protocols should be covered, presenting these appropriately for age & cognitive abilities. Participants put on disposable gloves for food handling & aprons.
4. Delivering the session using sequential steps, can accommodate varying abilities, and ensure that all people accomplish each step in a group format.
5. Gather materials, or distribute materials like bowls, or spoons. Facilitator might group people together or have individuals work on their own.
6. Facilitator has a large recipe on the board or individually printed recipes (or writing/copying the recipe to take home can be part of the session). Begin by measuring out the yogurt from a larger container using measuring spoons & cups. Practice using kitchen tools (spoons, spatula, measuring cup).
7. Participants measure other ingredients depending on recipe, sharing ingredients, following safe food handling rules.
8. Stir all ingredients. Discussion of each ingredient can occur throughout session (nutrition facts, storage facts, local availability of fruits, veggies, what does it smell like, have they used it before).

9. Prepare fruits & veggies for dipping as part of the session, or have these prepared by facilitator ahead of time. Distribute plates, napkins, wipes. Enjoy... and discuss the sensory attributes of the dips & veggies.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** A *Shared Vision*, a pediatric blindness and visual impairment organization shared an online article “Five Delicious Dips” with a focus on sensory stimulation for children, with or without visual challenges. It has been adapted here and is appropriate for all populations (see safety considerations below). As they suggest, engaging people with visual, tactile, olfactory and gustatory sensory experiences with food can address wide-ranging health goals. These can include encouraging people to taste, eat and prepare food, especially nutritious food. Some populations, including seniors, children, people with specific medical conditions like gastrointestinal issues, or dental problems, may be reluctant to eat and/or minimize their nutrition intake.

Another therapeutic goal might focus on expanding nutrition literacy working with some of the same populations or individuals just mentioned. Students and youth, people with food insecurity and newcomers to a new country can also benefit - they may not be as informed about nutrition, plant-based nutrition, and edible plants available in local communities. This type of TH activity, where nutritional info and hands-on activity can provide an introduction to good examples can be shared with family members when participants talk about or make dips at home. Recipes should be sent home with each person in some format.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Prior identification of food and latex (glove) allergies, swallowing or contraindications with medication must be done for all participants. If possible, substitute ingredients for people with allergies (example - use WOW butter instead of peanut butter, omit bananas or kiwi, use pineapple or blackberries if these are not allergens). Contain their exposure to peanut butter for example, or exclude it entirely.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** It may be appropriate for some groups to cut and prepare the fruit and veggies that will be used for dipping. Safety rules and precautions should be in place for this and for use of veggies peelers, knives or other sharp utensils. These tasks can work on hand skills, hand-eye coordination and food prep life skills, important for people with developmental disabilities, eating disorders, mental health challenges.

Recommended fruit and veggies for dipping, based on strong nutrient density: carrots, broccoli, cooked brussels sprouts, and bell peppers along with strawberries, oranges, blackberries, bananas, pineapple, apples and blueberries.

**Cream Cheese Dip**

½ cup plain yogurt  
½ cup softened cream cheese  
1 Tbsp honey  
¼ tsp vanilla

**Chocolate Dip**

½ cup plain yogurt  
1 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder  
1 tsp honey  
¼ tsp vanilla

**Pumpkin Pie Dip**

½ cup plain yogurt  
¼ cup pumpkin puree  
1 tsp honey  
¼ tsp pumpkin pie spice

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

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Ellis, E. (2022). [Teaching kids to cook](https://www.academyofnutritionanddietetics.com/teaching-kids-to-cook). *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.  
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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.