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IDEAS FOR SELF-DETERMINED PROJECTS IN FOOD AND NUTRITION

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Exploring food and its role in our lives is exciting. This guide contains the following ideas for a self-determined project.

Food for Athletes

Nutrition during Pregnancy

Wild Edible Plants

Natural Foods

Careers Related to Food and Nutrition

For additional ideas, think about the relationships between 4-H food and nutrition projects and other project areas, and tie together the skills and knowledge you gained in several projects.

For example, the plants and soils project is related to vegetable gardening; gardening usually means that the surplus vegetables must be canned or frozen (food preservation); and finally, the canned and frozen vegetables are used in meals and contribute to family nutrition. What happens if this chain is broken? How does it affect the family food budget and the family members' nutritional health? What if people do not have the knowledge or strength to grow and preserve food? Can anyone help them?

Other examples of related projects are clothing, health, and food. Clothes must fit well to look good. Knowing how to alter a pattern can help you look better in an outfit. Your appearance is also determined partially by how much you eat. Sewing and selecting a balanced diet are two different skills, but they both contribute to your appearance. What happens to people's wardrobes if they lose or gain weight? Can hand-me-downs be altered so that growing children can use them? What does this do to a clothing budget? Can anyone help you alter clothing for growing children or because their sizes have changed?

Your observations of these relationships between projects may give you additional ideas for a self-determined project. If you have been enrolled in foods projects, you may have copies of 4-H project manuals containing ideas that will help you do your own thing. The manuals include information on food buying, safety, science, preparation, how to serve food, and nutrition. If you have not enrolled in any of these projects, you may want to thumb through some of the manuals to see what food and nutrition projects involve.

Planning ahead is very important. Although it takes time, planning helps you know where you are going and when you have arrived. *Branch out into areas that interest you. Take the time to plan and give your plans direction.*

Remember these planning aspects:

1. What do I want to learn?
2. Where can I locate information?
3. How will I do it?
4. When will I do it?
5. How will I measure my accomplishments?

You will want to use one or more of the following references for a self-determined project:

B-79	Do Your Own Thing (member manual)
M-219	Self-Determined Project Planning Guide (single sheet)
M-251	Self-Determined Projects – Some Facts (general guidelines, leaflet)
M-181	Creating an Exciting Self-Determined Project (member workbook)

FOOD FOR ATHLETES

Adult and teenage athletes are aware of the relationship between what they eat and their physical strength and stamina even though they may not call it nutrition. They may want to gain or lose weight. Sometimes athletes feel that certain foods are needed for body building or quick energy. Some of the following questions might interest you:

1. Do athletes need a different diet?
2. Do teenage or high school athletes have different nutritional needs than older athletes?
3. What do athletes eat to gain weight? How do they lose weight?
4. What do athletes eat during training and during competition or games?
5. Do athletes need supplements or special foods?
6. Do athletes in different sports eat differently?
7. If you are an athlete, do your eating habits contribute to your health?

8. Are the eating habits of the athletes you know consistent with good nutrition?
9. What is the relationship between physical fitness, good health, and food for teenagers or adults?

Resources

1. Athletes: men and women; adults and teenagers; baseball, basketball, football and hockey players; swimmers, wrestlers, track and field participants; gymnasts and tumblers, bowlers, tennis players.
2. Coaches and physical education instructors.
3. The doctor for the high school teams.
4. Mothers of teenage athletes.

References

1. "Don't Let Your Diet Let You Down: A Guide for High School Athletes." Circular #1044, University of Illinois. Single copies are available to 4-Hers from the Bulletin Room, University of Minnesota, 3 Coffey Hall, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101.
2. "Can Food Make The Difference?" A single copy costs 15¢. Available from the American Medical Association, 535 No. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610.
3. "Food Facts For Young Athletes" Leaflet-164 for boys
   "Food Facts For Young Athletes" Leaflet-167 for girls
   Available from Cooperative Extension Service, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210.
4. "A Boy and His Physique," B10, 36 pages, 30¢
   "A Girl and Her Figure," B87, 40 pages, 30¢
   Available from the National Dairy Council, 111 North Canal Street, Chicago, Illinois 60606.
   If you live in the Twin Cities, copies may be obtained from the Dairy Council of the Twin Cities, Hillsborough Office Building, Suite 220, 235 North Rice Street, St. Paul 55113.
5. *Nutrition for Athletes: A Handbook for Coaches.* Available from American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1201 Sixteenth Street Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20036. 56 pages, 1971. $2.00.

Some Ideas For A Project

1. Throughout the year at monthly intervals, keep a record of your physical activity, calorie intake, and weight to determine your patterns of growth, weight control, and physical fitness.
2. Prepare a survey or interview form so that you can ask people the questions listed above under "Food For Athletes"; summarize your interviews and write an article for the local or school paper.
3. Prepare a display, exhibit, poster, or working demonstration using slides and tape to explain good eating habits to athletes. Use it at a school, 4-H, or community event.

Be creative and develop ideas of your own if these ideas don't appeal to you.

NUTRITION DURING PREGNANCY — Are you curious about the importance of good health and nutrition during pregnancy?

Nutrition is important before, during, and after pregnancy. Some teenagers frequently do not eat nourishing foods. The reason that nutritionists are particularly concerned when teenage girls become pregnant is that the nutritional needs of pregnancy are added to the existing nutritional needs of a teenage girl. It is important to the health of both the teenager and her baby that she select nourishing foods. It is a life-long investment in good health.

A series of seven folders has been written by nutrition specialists about nutritional needs during pregnancy. Talk to your county home economist about getting copies. The folders are called, "Why Not? Stay Healthy While You Are Pregnant." You will need all seven folders (Extension Folders 271 through 277). The folders are written using programmed learning for independent study.

Other Resources

1. Home economics teachers and school nurses.
2. Young mothers.
3. Nurses or dietitians that teach prenatal classes at community hospitals.
4. Local doctors.

Project Ideas

1. Share the "Why Not? Stay Healthy While You Are Pregnant" series with the people listed above.
2. Ask young mothers if they changed their eating habits when they were pregnant. Were the changes consistent with recommended nutrition practices?
3. Find out if animals eat differently when they are pregnant. Can animal and human nutrition during pregnancy be compared?

WILD EDIBLE PLANTS

You might want to plan around the seasonal nature of this project. During the winter months, it would be a good idea to read about wild edible plants and get acquainted with people in the community who do their own thing with wild edible plants.

You will probably want to pursue this project for more than one growing season because the availability of these foods varies with the weather and other conditions. After you are familiar with the plants in your area, you may want to see how they are doing from year to year.

This project will help you become more aware of the environment and some unused food sources. However, you probably will realize that foraging for food requires time and energy and that we can no longer live off the land for long periods of time.

Generalizations, Considerations, and Precautions

1. Be *thoroughly* familiar with plants you intend to eat. *Proper identification and knowledge of which plants are edible is a must.*

2. Many plants are poisonous. Careful separation and sorting of plants are important. Keep all parts of the plant until preparing to eat so that identification can be double checked.
3. One will experience new tastes. Do not expect wild plants to taste like similar cultivated plants.
4. Some plants are common but others are so rare in some localities that they should not be used. Always leave a good supply to replace what you have used. Do not be wasteful.
5. Areas to forage wild edible plants may be limited. Private land and public parks are off limits. Roadsides and railroad rights-of-way are possibilities unless they have been sprayed with weed control chemicals.
6. When trying a new plant, chew a small amount then spit it out. If no burning, itching, or other ill effects occur in 15 minutes, eat a small amount of the plant and wait 30 minutes for ill effects. Increased pulse rate is one danger sign. If no ill effects occur, repeat procedure.
7. It is not wise to eat large amounts of a new plant even if it is known to be edible. Some people may be sensitive to the new food.
8. To reduce exposure to poison ivy and insects, wear a hair covering, a shirt with long sleeves, durable shoes and crew socks, and long pants. All clothing should be washed after each wearing.
9. Use insect repellent and carry it with you for repeated applications.
10. After each excursion, thoroughly wash face, hands and any other exposed skin with soap and water to reduce chances of poison ivy.

References

This list is for your convenience and does not imply endorsement, nor does failure to mention a title imply criticism.

1. *Free for the Eating* by Bradford Angier. Stackpole Books, Cameron and Kelker Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105. 191 pages, $4.95. More books by the same author and publisher: *Gourmet Cooking for Free* ($4.95), *More Free-For-The Eating Wild Foods* ($4.95).
2. *Field Guide to Edible and Useful Wild Plants of North America* by Myron C. Chase. Nature Study Aids, Inc., Nasco, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin 53538. 1965, 140 pages, $1.75, paperback.
3. *Stalking the Wild Asparagus;* Field Guide Edition by Euell Gibbons. David McKay Company, Inc., New York. 1962, 303 pages, $2.95, paperback. Another book by the same author and publisher: *Stalking the Healthful Herbs* ($2.95).

References Available from County Extension Office or Bulletin Room, Coffey Hall, St. Paul 55101

B-357	Edible Wild Mushrooms
Fact Sheet HE-21	Wild Rice
Fact Sheet HE-34	Mushroom Cookery
Fact Sheet HE-27	Selecting Minnesota Wild Fruits
HN-14	Drying Foods at Home (Arizona reprint)
HN-16	Suggested Ways for Using Minnesota Wild Fruits
HN-18	Tasty Preserve Recipes

Project Ideas

1. Identify and prepare several wild plants (fruits and vegetables). Find recipes that suit your taste preferences, and ask others to share in the experience of trying these new foods.
2. Prepare jams and jellies from wild fruits for your family or to use as gifts. You may already be familiar with these fruits.

NATURAL FOODS

"Natural foods" have been promoted recently by people interested in avoiding food additives and antibiotic or pesticide residues. Sometimes information about health foods or growing food by so-called organic methods is included.

If you select a project in this area, select your resources very carefully. There is a lot of misinformation. The following characteristics of reliable sources of information may help you determine whether or not you can depend upon the accuracy of your sources.

1. The writer does not claim exclusive knowledge. No secrets or mysterious, magic methods are claimed.
2. Frequently the writer will gather ideas from many authorities, compare the ideas, and offer a consensus or conclusion.
3. The writer respects differing opinions.
4. The writer does not attack others or accuse agencies or organizations of persecuting him.
5. The writer's education and experience are identifiable.

You can learn about an author by reading book reviews, the book jacket, or the foreword or preface of a book. Talk to your librarian. Remember that best sellers do not always contain reliable information.

Resources Available from the County Extension Office or Bulletin Room, Coffey Hall, St. Paul 55101

F-280	Natural, Organic and Health Foods
B-377	Organic Gardening
Fact Sheet Soils No. 12	Building a Compost Heap
Fact Sheet Soils No. 15	Lawn and Garden Fertilizer and Pollution Problems
Fact Sheet Soils No. 19	Fertilizers – Facts vs. Opinion
Fact Sheet Soils No. 21	Organic Farming and Gardening

Ask your county extension staff to order slide set #870, "Natural Foods: Good, Bad, Different?"

Other Resources

The New York Times Natural Foods Cookbook by Jean Hewitt, paperback, $1.95. Published by Avon Books, a division of the Hearst Corporation, 959 Eighth Avenue, New York, 10019.

Food Additives: What They Are/How They Are Used prepared by Manufacturing Chemists Association. Single copies available from Mary Darling, Extension Nutritionist, North Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul 55101.

Diet for a Small Planet by Frances Moore Lappe', paperback, $1.25. A Friends of the Earth/Ballantine Book, 101 Fifth Avenue, New York 10003. 1971.

From Wheat to Flour – the story of man . . . in a grain of wheat. Available from Wheat Flour Institute, 14 East Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60604 for 50¢.

Project Ideas

1. Visit stores or merchants in your area often that promote products on the basis of being natural, organic or health foods. How much business do they do? What types of people are shopping in the stores? What attracts the people to such stores? Read some of the labels, free literature, or advertisements. Is the information accurate?
2. Select new foods and learn how to prepare them. Share your recipes with friends at a tasting party.
3. Study the process of milling wheat or another grain. Prepare several different cereals, breads, or baked goods using whole grains.
4. Visit food processing plants in your area. Contact food technologists or plant managers, and arrange a tour for your 4-H club to one of the plants. Ask about the USDA or public health regulations that safeguard our food supply.

CAREERS RELATED TO FOOD AND NUTRITION

Every community has a network of people employed in careers related to food and nutrition. A project in this area will: (1) increase your understanding of how food is produced, processed, and distributed and (2) introduce you to the jobs available, the skills, experience and education needed, and the working conditions of the various jobs.

People you might want to talk to about their careers in your community are:

1. Farmers who produce food for human consumption
2. School lunch managers and cooks
3. Restaurant owners and managers
4. Waitresses
5. Drive-in owners and managers
6. Cooks in restaurants, hospitals, nursing homes, etc.
7. Grocery store employees: butchers, clerks, stockmen, etc.
8. Salesmen for food companies
9. Retail grocery store owner/managers
10. Truckers who deliver perishable products (milk, bread, frozen foods, meat, etc.) to warehouses, processing plants, and grocery stores
11. Food technologists in food processing plants (dairy, canning, meat, etc.)
12. Inspectors from the Minnesota Department of Health or Department of Agriculture
13. Home economists: teachers, utility companies, extension, grocery store chains, business
14. Dietitians in community hospitals and clinics
15. Pharmacists, doctors, or nurses (who are asked questions about taking vitamin pills or therapeutic diets)
16. Food brokers
17. Advertising agents who handle accounts for food industry
18. Journalists who write newspaper or magazine articles about food
19. Newspaper people or printers who print food advertising
20. Social workers or welfare case workers who advise people on the use of food stamps, commodity foods, and handling the food budget
21. Agriculture educators: extension agricultural agents, vocational teachers

Project Ideas

1. Use the library to study career opportunities.
2. If you are in senior high, you may like to participate in Youthpower. Ask your county extension staff for more information. It is listed in the 4-H Program and Project Development Guide. Your high school or vocational school home economics, agriculture, or distributive education teachers receive information about Youthpower each fall from the Minnesota Department of Education. Youthpower objectives include promoting careers related to food.
3. Record and compare information about the jobs you and your friends have. Ask employers about part-time and summer job opportunities that will prepare teenagers for food related careers. Share the information with others.
4. Interview people who have jobs that you would consider for your future employment. The following form might be filled out at each interview so that you can gather the same information from each person. When completing the form, remember that your interpretation is as important as the information the person being interviewed may give you.

Job Characteristics Interview

1. Are job responsibilities and pressures . . . high medium low
   Is the job important? Why?
2. Are the skills needed to do the work . . . high medium low
   What skills are needed?
   How do you get the skills?
3. What level of education is required?
4. Are the benefits available . . . high medium low
   Health insurance
   Social security
   Retirement
   Workmen's compensation
   Vacation
   Union membership
5. Is the salary . . . high medium low
   Is it in line with the income you desire?
6. Working conditions are . . . good fair poor
   Inside or outside work
   Traveling job
   Active or sedentary work
   Hours per week
   Weekend or night shifts
7. Are the opportunities for advancement . . . high medium low
8. If machinery or transportation is needed, who pays for it or who maintains it?

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