

Which Season?

Summary:

Students will learn about food seasonality in Alabama.

Learning Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of food seasonality
- To learn what vegetables and fruits are grown in Alabama
- To locate farms and/or where fruits and vegetables are grown on a Alabama map

Materials:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables that are grown during different seasons (you may also choose to use artificial fruits/vegetables or some sort of artistic representation, like construction cut-outs)

Background:

Explain to students that in the old days, there were many more limitations in terms of the food that was available to us. People didn't have the choices that they have now at the supermarket, and only ate fruits and vegetables that were in season in their particular area. Now, we are able to get different types of produce pretty much any time of the year. Food is trucked in from all over the country or brought in by rail, boat, or plane from other parts of the world. Fruits and vegetables grow during specific seasons. The time frame during which certain fruits and vegetables grow depends on where you are. In Alabama, we have a mild climate, so we are able to grow many things for a lot longer than a state with a harsh winter, say for example Wyoming. So a lot of fruit and vegetables may overlap seasons in Alabama. But even if something isn't in season in Alabama, chances are it is in season somewhere else.

Activity:

1. Divide students into groups. Give each group a number of vegetables or fruits and ask them to identify the season(s) that each is grown in. Students may use a table similar to the one below to write down their answers. The table below gives examples of produce seasonality in Alabama. You may modify this activity for younger grades, by having students organize their produce into piles according to season.

Some Examples:

Vegetables

Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
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Winter squash	Kale	Tomatoes	Lettuce
Collard greens	Lettuce	Okra	Carrots
	Beets	Eggplant	Beets
	Carrots	Peppers	Turnips
	Cabbage	Corn	Broccoli
	Collard greens	Peas	Kale
	Sweet potatoes	Cucumbers	Collard greens
		Basil	Winter squash, Pumpkins
		Potatoes	Radishes
		Wheat	Sweet potatoes
			Cabbage

Fruits

Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Satsumas	strawberries	Blackberries	Apples
		Blueberries	Pears
		Peaches	Muscadines

		Watermelon	Persimmons
		Cantaloupe	Figs
		Figs	Satsumas
			Pomegranates

- After students have completed their tables, have them complete the map activity provided below. Students will locate the cities or counties where certain fruits and/or vegetables are being grown, as well as a few small farms.

Discussion:

Ask students to call out their answers. Which were identified correctly? Incorrectly? Ask students why they chose a particular season for a given fruit or vegetable. Were they basing their answers on availability at the grocery store? Before you go into your discussion you might ask students to brainstorm ways we get summer produce, like tomatoes or peppers, during the winter.

- Greenhouses:* During the winter, some vegetables like tomatoes, lettuce, and cucumbers are grown in greenhouses. Greenhouses are able to trap heat from the sun, keeping it warm inside the building for continued plant growth during the colder months.
- Milder climates:* We might receive produce from countries/areas of the U.S. with milder climates and thus different growing seasons than Alabama (e.g. tomatoes, avocados from Mexico; avocados, asparagus, bananas from South America; lots of vegetables from Southern California). It might also be worth noting that S. America is in the Southern Hemisphere, so its seasons are flip-flopped.

Use their answers as a way to explain how we are able to get out-of-season fruits and vegetables, and even fruits and vegetables that can't be grown in Alabama, year-round. You might mention that some produce only grows in certain climates. For example, tropical fruits like coconut, bananas, mangos, and pineapple prefer tropical climates and grow in places like Hawaii, or countries near the equator. We get most of our citrus from Florida because of its climate (warm most of the year, less prone to frosts and freezes). If you choose to include vegetables/fruits that might be unfamiliar to the students (e.g. satsumas, kale), you could also use this time to talk about those.

Extra: Ask students how they might cook or eat the vegetable or fruit.

Which Season?

See if you can locate where some of Alabama's produce is being grown on the map below.

1. **Satsumas** can be found in South Alabama. Circle the city of Fairhope, where these citrus fruits are currently being grown. Which county is Fairhope in?
2. Chilton County, Alabama is famous for its **peaches**. The city of Clanton has many peach growers and during the summer you can even stop and pick your own right off the tree! Color Chilton County pink and write "peaches" somewhere inside the boundaries.
3. Snow's Bend Farm is located in Tuscaloosa County in the town of Coker, AL. They grow all sorts of different **vegetables** like tomatoes, eggplant, squash, carrots, and turnip greens. Mark an X just west of the town of Northport, AL along HWY 82 to show the location of their farm.
4. Jack O' Lantern Farm in Muscle Shoals, AL grows **lettuce** in a greenhouse all year long! Find Muscle Shoals on the map and circle it to show the location of this farm. Which county is it in?
5. Waterberry Farm in Slocomb, AL grows **strawberries**. Mark an X just west of Dothan in the "arm" of Houston County to show the location of this farm.

