

## Module 1: Winning Us Over— Food Marketing & Food Choice

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Students will gain an understanding as to how advertisements and marketing impact food choice, particularly as they relate to processed and fresh foods. Students will also explore motives, given that profits routinely drive what foods companies advertise most and what marketing strategies they apply to influence our choices. Students will be encouraged to think critically about their own dietary choices considering these realities. To help students apply their knowledge, this lesson concludes with a group activity whereby groups will create their own advertisement for healthy fresh food.



**TIME:** 1 hour 5 minutes

Optional additional activities: 40 minutes

### MATERIALS:

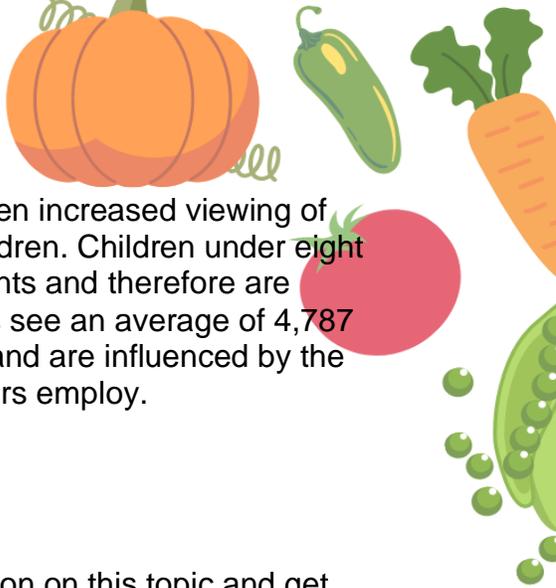
- Module 1 Teacher Print Kit
- Module 1 Student Handouts
- Scissors
- Magazines (at least one per two students)
- Whiteboard and markers (or large sheet of paper and markers)
- Pens or pencils

Optional:

- Array of packaged foods (Activity #1)
- Blank notebook paper (Activity #3)
- Colored markers (Activity #3 and Optional Activity #4)
- Blank white paper (Optional Activity #4)
- Supplies listed on Kitchen Essentials Card (from Bonus Card Deck)
- Nutrition Basics & Recipe Cards (from Bonus Card Deck)

### TEACHER BACKGROUND:

In 2012, \$4.6 billion was spent on advertisements for fast food, but less than 4% of that, just \$116 million,<sup>1</sup> was spent on advertising fruits and vegetables. Companies are motivated to sell processed foods, as they often have much higher profit margins than fresh foods. Unfortunately, the foods that make companies the most money are often



the least healthy. Research shows a strong association between increased viewing of advertisements for unhealthy foods and rates of obesity in children. Children under eight years old do not discern the persuasive nature of advertisements and therefore are likely to view their claims as true. Children in the United States see an average of 4,787 television advertisements for food and beverages each year<sup>2</sup> and are influenced by the celebrities, cartoon characters, and bright colors that advertisers employ.



### OPENING DISCUSSION:

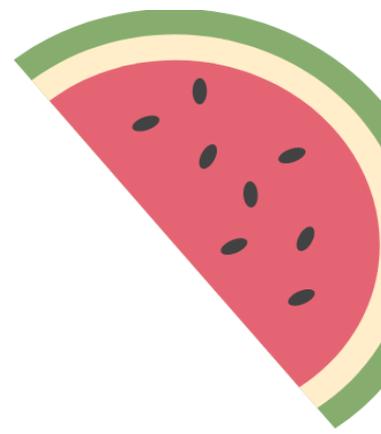
Ask your students the following questions to generate discussion on this topic and get the lesson started.

- *What do you love to eat?*
- *What influences your choices of food when you go to a grocery store?*
- *Who influences our food choices? Is it only family and friends? Are there people we don't know influencing us?*

## ACTIVITY #1: BRAND RECOGNITION



**TIME:** 10 minutes



### MATERIALS:

- Teacher Print Kit
  - Includes: Brand Recognition Answer Key (for Teachers, page 3)
- Student Handouts (print 1 copy per 2 students)
  - Includes: Brand Recognition Image Cards that should be cut out (pages 2-5)
- Scissors

**PREP:** Cut out Brand Recognition Image Cards from the Student Handouts and sort into decks.

### LESSON:

1. Hand out brand recognition cards to groups of 2-3 students. Give students two minutes to identify as many brands as they can. Have students sort cards into unrecognized and recognized brands.
2. Discuss:
  - *Where do you see these brands and how often?*
  - *How do you think branding affects your food choices?*
  - *Which brand was the easiest to recognize? Why?*



## ACTIVITY #2: INVESTIGATING THE AD DOLLAR



**TIME:** 15 minutes

### MATERIALS:

- Teacher Print Kit
- Student Handouts (print 1 copy per 2 students)
  - Includes: Investigating the Ad Dollar (pages 6-9), which can also be projected if desired

Optional:

- Projector

### TEACHER BACKGROUND ( OPTIONAL )

Read this short article from the American Psychological Association: [The Impact of Food Advertising on Childhood Obesity](#)

### LESSON:

1. Show the students the first two slides under Activity #2 in the Teacher Print Kit. Then discuss:
  - *What categories of food do advertisers spend the most on? What category do they spend the least on?*
  - *Why do you think advertisers spend more on the foods that they do?*
  - *How do you think food spending affects our choices in food?*
  - *How do you think advertising affects our health?*
2. Next, observe the third slide under Activity #2 in the Teacher Print Kit as a group and consider:
  - *Why do you think advertisers spend money on children?*

Example:

Children do not have a “media filter.” Establishing brand loyalty at a young age increases profits for companies throughout that child’s lifetime.

## ACTIVITY #3: STRATEGY SLEUTHS



**TIME:** 30-40 minutes

### MATERIALS:

- Magazines (have 1-3 magazines per 2 students) or food packages
- Whiteboard and markers (or large sheet of paper)
- Blank notebook paper (optional for students to use)
- Pens or pencils

Optional:

- Strategy Sleuths Discussion Questions from the Teacher Print Kit or Student Handouts

### LESSON:

1. Show the group a representative ad from one of the magazines. Discuss the below questions together. (Note: these questions are also included at the end of the Teacher Print Kit to be shown as a visual aid if desired.)
  - *Who is this ad intended for?*
  - *What strategies are the advertisers using to appeal to their audience?*  
[Write the list on the whiteboard. Try to come up with a list of 20-30 simple strategies.]  
Examples: Celebrity endorsement, bright colors, positive information, giveaways, emotional appeal, narrative, humor, brand recognition
  - *How effective do you think the ad is in selling the product? Why?*
2. Next, have students break into pairs.
3. Hand out 1-3 magazines to each pair.
4. Ask each group pick out a food advertisement from their magazine.
5. Have students think about, draw out, or write out the answers to the above discussion questions for their newly selected adds. You can post the questions on the board, project them, or hand out printed copies (see the Strategy Sleuths page 10 in both the Student Handouts and the Teacher Print Kit).



6. Next, ask each pair to present their findings to the class. If you'd like, each group can also ask the rest of the class to come up with more strategies that the advertiser used.
7. Optional: You may want to end this lesson by reflecting on how advertisement strategies are intended to incentivize people to buy things or adopt certain behaviors. This is certainly true with food advertisements. Ask the groups to reflect on the overall impact that such strategies may be having on consumers, farmers, businesses.

## CONNECTING TO THE GARDEN



**TIME:** variable, 15+ minutes

### MATERIALS:

Optional:

- Recipe Cards (from Bonus Card Deck)
- Nutrition Basics Cards (from Bonus Card Deck)

Please Note: Optional Activity #4 (“Create Your Own Ad!”) outlined below connects directly to your work in the garden through this short “Connecting to the Garden” exercise. Before beginning Activity #4, consider taking a walk through the garden with students and doing the following:

1. Point out crops that are ready for harvest—students may use these in their marketing campaigns in Activity #4. Use the **Recipe Cards** (found in the Bonus Card Deck) to help students brainstorm a few ideas of how they might combine ingredients in the garden to make them more marketable. Use the **Nutrition Basics Cards** (also in the Bonus Card Deck) to point out beneficial aspects of produce in the garden that students can use in their advertisements. You might follow the below script.
  - *Food advertising may seem distant from farming or gardening itself, but it isn't. How food is produced, harvested, and processed is influenced by business decision making, including marketing.*
2. As you walk the garden, consider these questions with students:
  - *Which products might be harder to market? What can you do, as an advertiser or marketer, to make them more appealing?*

Example: Winter squash is not very appealing eaten raw. We might **process** foods like squash to make them ready to eat by roasting or pureeing them, for example.

Example: A tomato with bulges or splits may not be appealing to a customer. We could **process** this tomato into a more marketable product like salsa, or we could start an **ad campaign** that celebrates “ugly” produce.

Example: Tomatoes stay good for only a few days after harvest, making them hard to market. We might process them into a **shelf stable** spaghetti



sauce so we can sell to people in the winter as well as the summer, doubling our time in the market!

- *If you were an advertiser working for a processor, what foods might you focus on advertising? If you worked for a farmer, which would you focus on?*

Example: Watermelons are appealing right off the vine. They don't need any processing to be appealing, and are a fairly easy, low-cost crop to grow. If you worked for a farmer, you might advertise melons. If you worked for the processor, you might advertise the squash, as more of the money will be put into processing before arriving at the consumer's table.

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY #4: CREATE YOUR OWN AD!



**TIME:** 40 minutes

### MATERIALS:

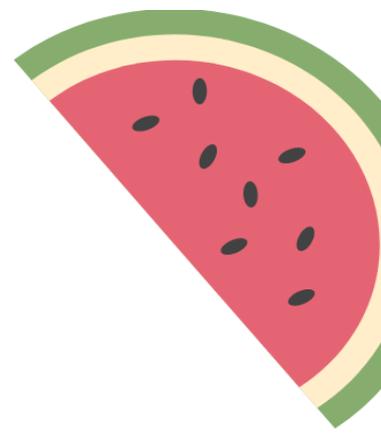
- Blank Paper
- Markers

Optional:

- Nutrition Basics Cards (from Bonus Card Deck)
- Recipe Cards (from Bonus Card Deck)
- Supplies listed on Kitchen Essentials Card (from Bonus Card Deck) if you decide to cook or make any recipes

### LESSON:

1. Have students break into groups of 2-4.
2. Ask each group to harvest (or identify) one healthy food from the garden that they would like to advertise. Students should think about how they could market this crop. Would they process it by cooking, drying, or using it in a recipe? Would they package it in a unique way? What language might they use to describe the food? Note: If time and resources allow, students can look at the Recipe Cards (found in the Bonus Card Deck) as inspiration for their own new creation. Feel free to help them conceptualize and discuss their ideas, or even cook up their creation for everyone to taste!
3. Next, help each group determine the TYPE of ad they will create (ex. print, TV, radio, billboard, package, etc.), their target audience, and at least five STRATEGIES they will use from Activity #3 above to make their advertisement effective.
4. Give students time to create their advertisement. They can look at the Nutrition Basics Cards (found in the Bonus Card Deck) to help spark ideas on the value(s) of their product. They will need markers and paper for print ads, or they might write a script for a radio ad, etc.
5. Lastly, have each group present their advertisement to the rest of the class. After the brief presentation, discuss together the target audience for the ad, its effectiveness, and the strategies applied in each. [Optional: Ask the class to vote for the most effective and creative advertisement.]





## CLOSING DISCUSSION:

You may wish to help the students connect the dots in this lesson using a brief closing comment, such as the one below.

- *There are many factors that influence our decisions as to what foods go into our body. Two of these factors are marketing and advertising. Often, the foods that make companies the most profit are also those highest in unhealthy ingredients and subjected to extensive processing. We can honor our bodies and our health by being aware of the messages and advertisements we see. We should aim to listen to and be most influenced by credible sources (evidence-based) and people who have our health and wellbeing in mind.*

Lastly, discuss the following.

- *Who decides what you eat?*
- *Could we design a system where companies are incentivized to increase health? How would advertising change?*
- *How does knowing how money affects what is advertised change how you see advertisements?*
- *What power do you have to influence others' eating habits?*



## REFERENCES:

### Teacher Background:

1. Harris et al., 2013. [Fast Food Facts: Measuring Progress in Nutrition and Marketing to Children and Teens](#). Report from the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.
2. The American Psychological Association, 2010. [The Impact of Food Advertising on Childhood Obesity](#).

### Activity 1:

Adapted from Lesson 11: [Marketing Under the Influence](#) from the *Foodspan* curriculum created by the John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (2020)

### Activity 2:

Adapted from [The Media Does Not Have My Mind](#) from Soul Fire Farm

### Activity 3:

Adapted from Lesson 11: [Marketing Under the Influence](#) from the *Foodspan* curriculum created by the John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (2020)