

Mindful Eating Activities



This 'Mindful Eating Activities' resource is for kaiako in Early Childhood Education settings as they support children to eat mindfully. The activities align with Te Whāriki (the early childhood curriculum). 'Mindful Eating Activities' consists of:

1. Background notes to support kaiako using 'Mindful Eating Activities'
2. 'Mindful Eating Activities' and links to the Te Whāriki curriculum
3. Activity guidelines to use in introducing mindful eating of foods
4. Mindful Eating colouring in sheets with take home messages for children and their whānau

Background notes to support kaiako using this resource

Mindful eating is about developing awareness of your experiences, physical cues, feelings about, and responses to food. Using it as a tool to enhance food exploration with tamariki, encourages their food literacy and participation, promoting the development of healthy relationships with food and where it comes from. Repeated exposure to new foods in a safe environment is supportive and conducive to tamariki adopting healthy food habits and increasing the variety of foods they eat, both now and into adulthood.

These sessions will work best with 4 year olds, however, any tamariki who wish to engage should be encouraged to do so, at their own level (note choking risks across different ages and stages of development).

As you will be aware when working with young tamariki, the lesson will not necessarily go to your plan, or as scripted in these documents. So long as you have familiarised yourself with an understanding of mindful eating and this guided process, you can allow tamariki to lead the session and let them take it where they want. Their natural curiosity will likely take them through the different steps as shown in these handouts, just not necessarily in the order as given. This is totally fine and you can simply hold the space of guiding and prompting them as required.

Allow them to learn from each other as well. Let a child share their previous experience or knowledge about a food, if they wish. This encourages other tamariki to (begin to) see these foods as safe and acceptable.

Some tamariki will be instantly keen to simply eat the food and will not wait to go through the mindful process, while others will not want to eat, or potentially even touch, the food, at all. Both responses are fine – as well as any reaction or response in between.

For some tamariki, simply sitting at the table with unfamiliar foods in front of them will be a challenge. Food exploration should always feel like a safe and encouraging environment for all, where participation is at the individual's stage and pace. It's important to never force the eating or even the touching of food.

You may have some tamariki who wish to help with things like cutting of the fruit and vegetables, this is fantastic. As kaiako, use your own judgement around the suitability and safety of this, with respect to your equipment and tamariki. However, when possible encourage and allow the tamariki to be as actively involved as they wish.

These resources come complete with suggested topical questions for the tamariki with regards to tastes, sounds, sights etc of the foods. However, please use these as cues to the variety of responses you might be looking to hear, and where possible allow the tamariki to lead this. Prompting them only if required, to avoid asking too many questions of them, which can be overwhelming and take away from the session(s).

Lastly, role modelling is a strong influence on tamariki eating behaviors. As kaiako, the more the tamariki see you actively participating in these activities with them, and further demonstrating mindful eating behaviours, the more likely the tamariki will be to follow suit. Likewise, the use of the whānau tips and colouring resources provided, is designed to support whānau to continue the exploration and role-modelling in the home.



- Remember that the included foods are examples only, this format can be used to carry out this exercise with any food.
- Try and incorporate as many varieties of each food as possible and use equipment to change the texture to see how that impacts flavour — such as grated vs whole apple.
- Be mindful of Ministry of Health guidelines around choking risk(s) when providing food, especially with younger tamariki and do not encourage the eating of fruit pips or stones.
- Foods currently in season work well, as they are not only cheaper to buy but it is easier to show them growing if you have an edible garden on site or can access a local community garden.

- Tamariki love seeing the pictures of different foods growing, such as paddocks of sweetcorn, apple orchards or pumpkin crops etc. You will find that they will automatically begin to, count the fruit they see, highlight different colours or exclaim at the height of plants—especially if you can find pictures that have people in them for scale.
- Allow tamariki the opportunity to tell you what they think first, before you explain to them. Such as do they know what the things inside an apple are (seeds/pips) and what they are for, or do?
- You are not limited to using fruit and vegetables for these sessions. You might also like to try eggs, sandwiches, smoothies, porridge and many more. They can all be used for learning and development.

When considering different foods, think about:

- What is in season or growing in the vegetable garden at this time or what has gone to seed that we can use to show the lifecycle of the plant.
- What we can make or bake in the centre using seasonal ingredients to discover and show preparation and results.
- What might be useful for whānau to learn about for family meal or lunchbox additions
- What can be eaten raw and cooked so tamariki can try different tastes and textures
- What has multiple uses that can be explored – such as sweetcorn: on the cob, baby, creamed, popcorn, polenta, cornflour...
- What other learning and development can be incorporated in to the lessons. This could be skills such as chopping, grating, mixing, spreading, or language such as smooth, rough, hard, soft, crunchy, juicy...
- What else are you learning that it could relate to – such as bone and teeth health.

Other foods you may like to explore include, but are not limited to:

- Eggs
- Avocado
- Pumpkin
- Breads and spreads (caution gluten allergies, including in marmite)
- Berries
- Leafy greens
- Corn
- Beetroot

Note: Always use caution around the risk of allergies and choking for younger tamariki. Prepare foods appropriately to reduce risk of them lodging in the windpipe.

[See the MoH guidelines for more information on choking risk.](#)

‘Mindful Eating Activities’ colouring in sheets for Tamariki and Whānau

The colouring in sheets that are a part of this resource provide a supplementary activity for the children to do after they have had an exploratory session about that food.

They can choose to colour in the picture, or not, and then the page can be taken home for whānau to see and read the accompanying information. In the bullet points on each page are interesting facts about the food, suggestions for use and a simple call to action or discussion point which will hopefully engage whānau to continue the tamariki exposure and learning about that food.

This process will work best if kaiako have communicated with whānau that tamariki are undertaking food exploration whilst at the centre and will be coming home with a resource.

These pages have been purposely kept simple and clear. As kaiako you are not limited to the examples provided, please feel free to use this template to create more resources for any other foods you choose to explore with your tamariki.

The bullet points on each sheet are designed to support kaiako to use these resources to their full potential and to further develop their own. They may also form conversation starters for kaiako to use with the tamariki in coming days to continue the learning and maintain consistent messaging.

It is useful to also consider the wider learning and development that occurs in these situations, which are all important in child development. You will find that exploratory sessions such as these will incorporate a wide range of learning outcomes across all the strands of Te Whāriki.

Additional Learning Activities

- Collage of food examples using different textured materials.
- Involve tamariki in simple food preparation processes.
- Involve tamariki in gardening activities and relate it back to the food lifecycle – growing-cooking-eating-composting.
- Education connecting food and human growth and health.

Mindful Eating Activities and the Te Whāriki Curriculum

Wellbeing Mana atua

Learning outcomes:

- Know how to keep themselves healthy | **te oranga nui**
- Manage themselves and express their feelings and needs | **te whakahua whakaaro**

Evidence of learning and development:

- Understanding of their bodies, how they function, and how to keep themselves healthy.
- Confidence, independence, and a positive attitude towards self-help and self-care skills relating to food preparation, eating, drinking, toileting, resting, sleeping, washing and dressing.

Belonging Mana whenua

Learning outcomes:

- Make connections between people, places and things in their world | **te waihanga hononga**

Evidence of learning and development:

- Ability to connect their learning in the ECE setting with experiences at home and in familiar cultural communities.
- Ability to play an active part in the running of the programme, take on different roles, and take responsibility for their own actions.

Contribution Mana tangata

Learning outcomes:

- Recognise and appreciate their own ability to learn | **te rangatiratanga**

Evidence of learning and development:

- Ability to use memory, theory of mind and other cognitive strategies for thinking, and ability to make links with the past, present and future.
- A positive learner identity and realistic perception of themselves as able to acquire new interests and capabilities.

Communication Mana reo

Learning outcomes:

- Understand oral language and use it for a range of purposes | **he kōrero-ā-waha.**

Evidence of learning and development:

- Ability to express their feelings and emotions in a range of appropriate non-verbal ways and to respond to the non-verbal requests of others.
- An appreciation of te reo Māori as a living and relevant language.

Exploration Mana aotūroa

Learning outcomes:

- Playing and experimenting | te whakaaro me to tūhurahura I te pūtaiao
- Move confidently and challenge themselves physically | **te wero-ā-tinana**.

Evidence of learning and development:

- An understanding that trying things out, exploration, curiosity, playing with ideas and materials, and collaborating with others are important and valued ways of learning.
- Strategies for active exploration, using all their senses and physical abilities to make sense of the world.

Āporo/Apple



Take a deep breath and notice how hungry you are.

1. Look /titiro What do you notice about the kai? (shape, colour, size)

2. Smell/hongia What does it smell like? (sweet, salty, sour)

3. Touch/whakapā atu Is it smooth, bumpy, rough? Is it cold, hot or warm?

4. Taste/ngaoa Put the kai in your mouth without chewing.

What do you notice about the taste, texture? Slowly chew, what does it sound like? Notice the mouth feel.

5. Swallowing Feel the kai go down your throat

6. Look/titiro Look at where you have taken a bite? How does the inside look?

Reflect on how hungry you are.

What you will need:

- Whole apples—different varieties/colours if possible
- Different forms of the food if available – such as raw, cooked, dried
- Printed pictures of different stages of apples growing/production
- Knife, chopping board, plates, bowls, sieve as appropriate
- Grater or spiralizer etc
- Notepad and camera to record commentary and learning moments as required

Instructions

- After your Centre specific kai protocol (such as wash hands and karakia) have the tamariki seated at a kai suitable table.
 - Get the tamariki to close their eyes, take a deep breath.
 - Ask them how hungry do you feel? Did you feel your tummy/ puku move? Is your puku rumbling?
 - Begin by placing whole apples on the table. How do they react? Do they know what they are? What do they notice or make comment about? (shape, colour, size)
 - Allow tamariki to smell the apples. What does it smell like? (sweet, salty, sour)
 - Tamariki can feel the apple. What does it feel like? smooth, bumpy, cold or hot?
 - Take a whole apple and cut it in quarters. Do tamariki notice or comment on any juice that comes out or the noise it makes?
 - Ask the tamariki if the inside of the apple is different or the same as the outside. How is the texture, smell, colour different?
 - Show them the pips inside of the apple. Take out the seeds and pass these around for tamariki to explore. Do they know what they are and what they are for?
 - Tamariki may take a bite and listen to the noise it makes.
 - If willing let the bite of apple stay in their mouth, without chewing and think about how it feels in their mouth. What can they taste and feel?
 - Tamariki can chew the apple, slowly and mindfully if possible. Ask them to think about how the texture feels and changes. Is it rough, crunchy, or soft? How many different flavours can they taste? What are these flavours?
 - As tamariki swallow the apple, can they feel it go down their throat?
 - Allow tamariki to share any other thoughts or questions about their experience with apple
 - Ask the tamariki to now think about how their tummy feels, if they are hungry or full.
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- Repeat the above with different forms of apples (such as grated, dried or cooked), allowing Tamariki to explore and understand the differences and begin to learn what happened to the apple to make them that way (dried, boiled etc). Do they taste and feel the same?

Panana/Banana



Take a deep breath and notice how hungry you are.

1. Look /titiro What do you notice about the kai? (shape, colour, size)

2. Smell/hongia What does it smell like? (sweet, salty, sour)

3. Touch/whakapā atu Is it smooth, bumpy, rough? Is it cold, hot or warm?

4. Taste/ngaoa Put the kai in your mouth without chewing.

What do you notice about the taste, texture? Slowly chew, what does it sound like? Notice the mouth feel.

5. Swallowing Feel the kai go down your throat

6. Look/titiro Look at where you have taken a bite? How does the inside look?

Reflect on how hungry you are.

What you will need:

- Fresh bananas—variety of ripeness
- Different forms of the food if available – such as semi dried and chips
- Printed pictures of different stages of bananas growing/production/transport
- Knife, chopping board, plates, bowls, blender as appropriate.
- Notepad and camera to record commentary and learning moments as required

Instructions

- After your Centre specific kai protocol (such as wash hands and karakia) have the tamariki seated at a kai suitable table
 - Get the tamariki to close their eyes, take a deep breath.
 - Ask them how hungry do you feel? Did you feel your tummy/ puku move? Is your tummy rumbling?
 - Begin by placing whole bananas on the table. How do they react? Do they know what they are? What do they notice or make comment about the food/ kai? (shape, colour, size)
 - Allow tamariki to smell the bananas. What does it smell like? (sweet, salty, sour)
 - Tamariki can feel the banana. What does it feel like? smooth, bumpy, cold or hot?
 - Tamariki may peel the bananas. What do they notice or comment on as they do this?
 - Ask the tamariki if the inside of the banana is different or the same as the outside.
 - How is the texture, smell, colour different?
 - Tamariki may take a bite and listen for any noise it makes.
 - If willing let the bite of banana stay in their mouth, without chewing and think about how it feels in their mouth. What can they taste and feel?
 - Tamariki can chew the banana, slowly and mindfully, if possible. Ask them to think about how the texture feels and changes. Is it rough, crunchy, or soft? How many different flavours can they taste? What are these flavours?
 - As tamariki swallow the banana, can they feel it go down their throat?
 - Allow tamariki to share any other thoughts or questions about their experience with banana
 - Ask the tamariki to now think about how their tummy feels, if they are hungry or full.
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- Repeat the above with different forms of banana (such as dried or blended), allowing Tamariki to explore and understand the differences and begin to learn what happened to the banana to make them that way (like drying etc). Do they taste and feel the same?

Additional Banana Topics

- Do Tamariki know where bananas come from? Consider having a globe and learning the journey from plantation to lunchbox.
- What can we do with the peels?

Tōmato/Tomato



Take a deep breath and notice how hungry you are.

1. Look /titiro What do you notice about the kai? (shape, colour, size)

2. Smell/hongia What does it smell like? (sweet, salty, sour)

3. Touch/whakapā atu Is it smooth, bumpy, rough? Is it cold, hot or warm?

4. Taste/ngaoa Put the kai in your mouth without chewing.

What do you notice about the taste, texture? Slowly chew, what does it sound like? Notice the mouth feel.

5. Swallowing Feel the kai go down your throat

6. Look/titiro Look at where you have taken a bite? How does the inside look?

Reflect on how hungry you are.

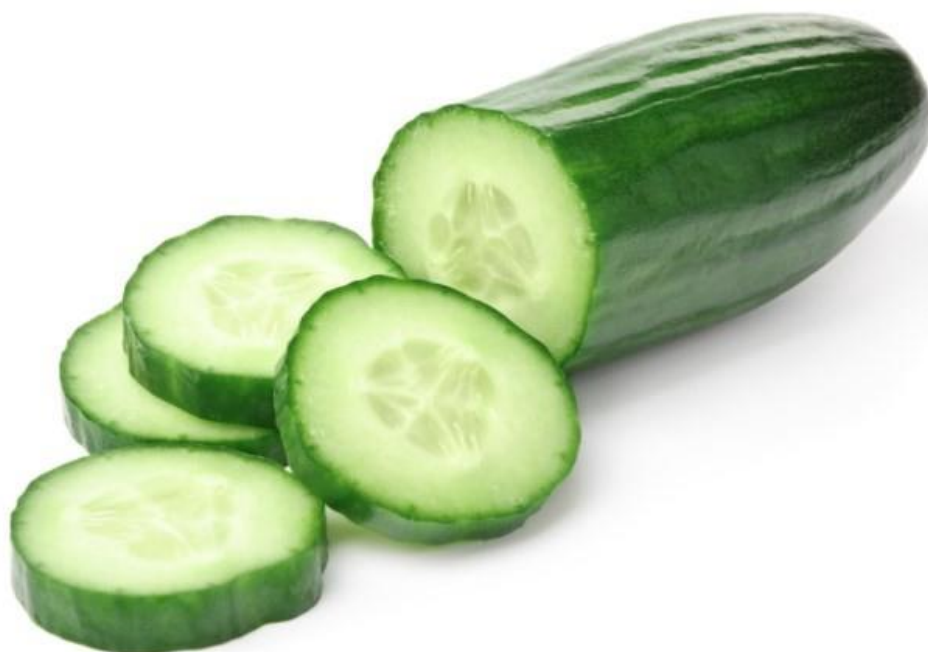
What you will need:

- Fresh tomatoes—variety of sizes and colours if possible
- Different forms of the food if available – such as canned and tomato paste
- Printed pictures of different varieties of tomatoes
- Knife, chopping board, plates, bowls, can opener, sieve as appropriate
- Notepad and camera to record commentary and learning moments as required

Instructions

- After your Centre specific kai protocol (such as wash hands and karakia) have the tamariki seated at a kai suitable table
 - Get the tamariki to close their eyes, take a deep breath.
 - Ask them how hungry do you feel? Did you feel your tummy/ puku move? Is your puku rumbling?
 - Begin by placing whole tomatoes on the table. How do they react? Do they know what they are? What do they notice or make comment about? (shapes, colours, sizes)
 - Allow tamariki to smell the tomatoes. What does it smell like? (sweet, salty, sour)
 - Tamariki can feel the tomatoes. What does it feel like? smooth, bumpy, cold or hot?
 - Do they different varieties of tomatoes look, feel or smell any different?
 - Take a whole tomato and cut it? Do tamariki notice or comment on any juice that comes out?
 - Ask the tamariki if the inside of the tomato is different or the same as the outside. How is the texture, smell, colour different?
 - Show them the seeds inside of the tomato. Take out the seeds and pass these around for tamariki to explore. Do they know what they are and what they are for?
 - Tamariki may taste some tomatoes.
 - If willing let the bite of tomato stay in their mouth, without chewing and think about how it feels in their mouth. What can they taste and feel?
 - Tamariki can chew the tomato, slowly and mindfully if possible. Ask them to think about how the texture feels and changes. Is it rough, crunchy, or soft? How many different flavours can they taste? What are these flavours?
 - As tamariki swallow the tomato, can they feel it go down their throat?
 - Allow tamariki to share any other thoughts or questions about their experience with tomato
 - Ask the tamariki to now think about how their tummy feels, if they are hungry or full.
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- Repeat the above with different forms of tomatoes (such as canned, paste), allowing tamariki to explore and understand the differences and begin to learn what happened to the fresh tomatoes to make them that way (dried, boiled etc). Do they taste and feel the same as a fresh tomato?

Kūkama/Cucumber



Take a deep breath and notice how hungry you are.

1. Look /titiro What do you notice about the kai? (shape, colour, size)

2. Smell/hongia What does it smell like? (sweet, salty, sour)

3. Touch/whakapā atu Is it smooth, bumpy, rough? Is it cold, hot or warm?

4. Taste/ngaoa Put the kai in your mouth without chewing.

What do you notice about the taste, texture? Slowly chew, what does it sound like? Notice the mouth feel.

5. Swallowing Feel the kai go down your throat

6. Look/titiro Look at where you have taken a bite? How does the inside look?

Reflect on how hungry you are.

What you will need:

- Fresh cucumbers, variety of sizes
- Different forms of the food if available – such as gherkins and zucchini*
- Printed pictures of different cucumbers growing, including flowers
- Knife, chopping board, plates, bowls, sieve as appropriate
- Notepad and camera to record commentary and learning moments as required

Note: Cucumber and zucchini are from the same family (gourd). Consider including a zucchini to see if tamariki can spot the difference and can tell you which is which.

Instructions

- After your Centre specific kai protocol (such as wash hands and karakia) have the tamariki seated at a kai suitable table
 - Get the tamariki to close their eyes, take a deep breath.
 - Ask them how hungry do you feel? Did you feel your tummy/ puku move? Is your puku rumbling?
 - Begin by placing whole cucumbers on the table. How do they react? Do they know what they are? What do they notice or make comment about? (shape, colour, size)
 - If using the zucchini do they spot the odd one out?
 - Allow tamariki to smell the cucumbers. What does it smell like? (sweet, salty, sour)
 - Tamariki can feel the cucumber. What does it feel like? smooth, bumpy, cold or hot?
 - Take a whole cucumber and cut it in quarters. Do tamariki notice or comment on any juice that comes out or the noise it makes?
 - Ask the tamariki if the inside of the cucumber is different or the same as the outside.
 - How is the texture, smell, colour different?
 - Show them the seeds inside of the cucumber. Take out the seeds and pass these around for tamariki to explore. Do they know what they are and what they are for?
 - Tamariki may take a bite and listen to the noise it makes.
 - If willing let the bite of cucumber stay in their mouth, without chewing and think about how it feels in their mouth. What can they taste and feel?
 - Tamariki can chew the cucumber, slowly and mindfully if possible. Ask them to think about how the texture feels and changes. Is it rough, crunchy, or soft? How many different flavours can they taste? What are these flavours?
 - As tamariki swallow the cucumber, can they feel it go down their throat?
 - Allow tamariki to share any other thoughts or questions about their experience with cucumber.
 - Ask the tamariki to now think about how their tummy feels, if they are hungry or full.
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- Repeat the above with different forms of cucumbers (such as grated or gherkins), allowing tamariki to explore and understand the difference texture makes and begin to learn what happened to the cucumber to make them that way (pickled etc). Do they taste and feel the same?

More ideas to explore



Kiwifruit

huakiwi



Citrus fruit

Mandarin Manarini

Orange ārani

Lemon/Lime rēmana

Grapefruit kerepe- whurutu



Beetroot

rengakura

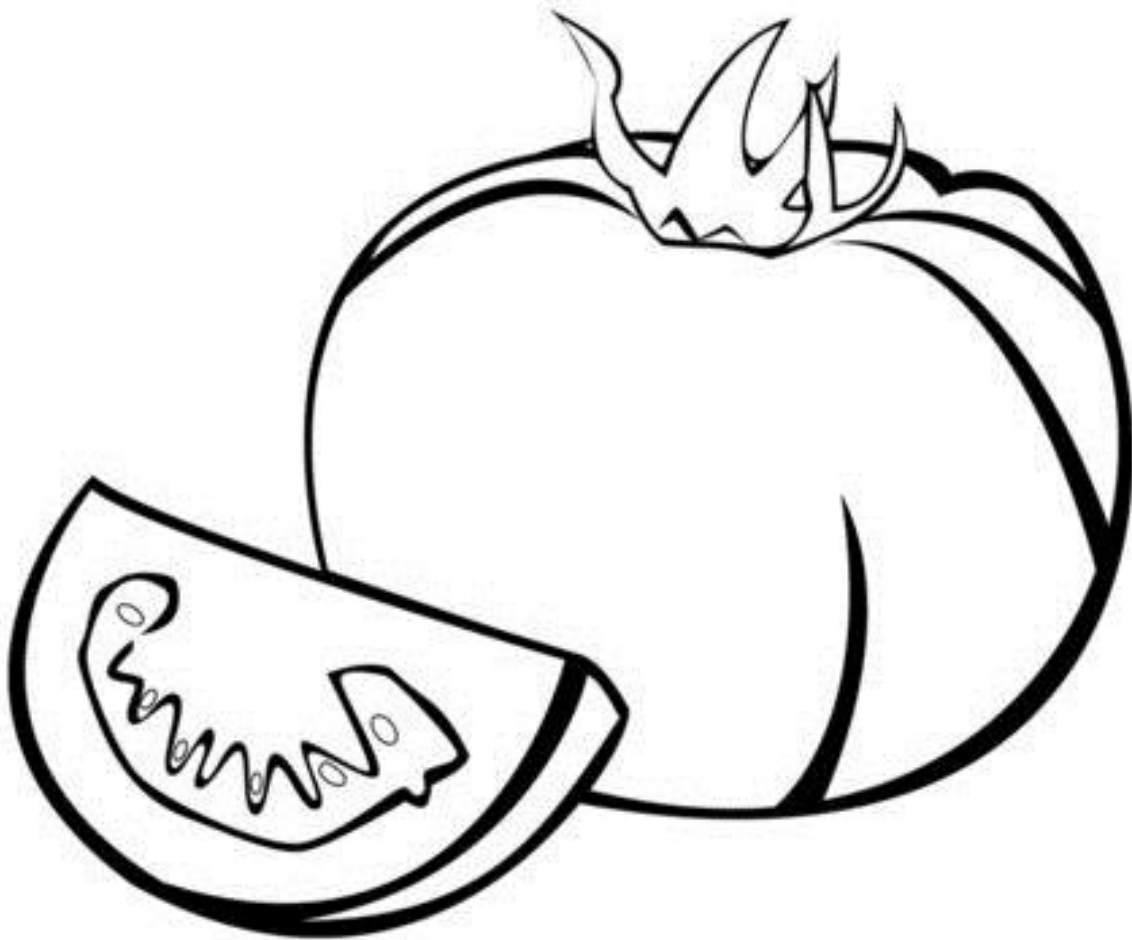
kūkama / Cucumber



Information for whānau:

- Great in sandwiches.
 - Refreshing and hydrating as a cool summer snack.
 - A great addition to salads.
 - Try dipping slices in hummus for an easy snack idea.
 - Gherkins are a small variety of cucumbers.
- Have you tried gherkins?

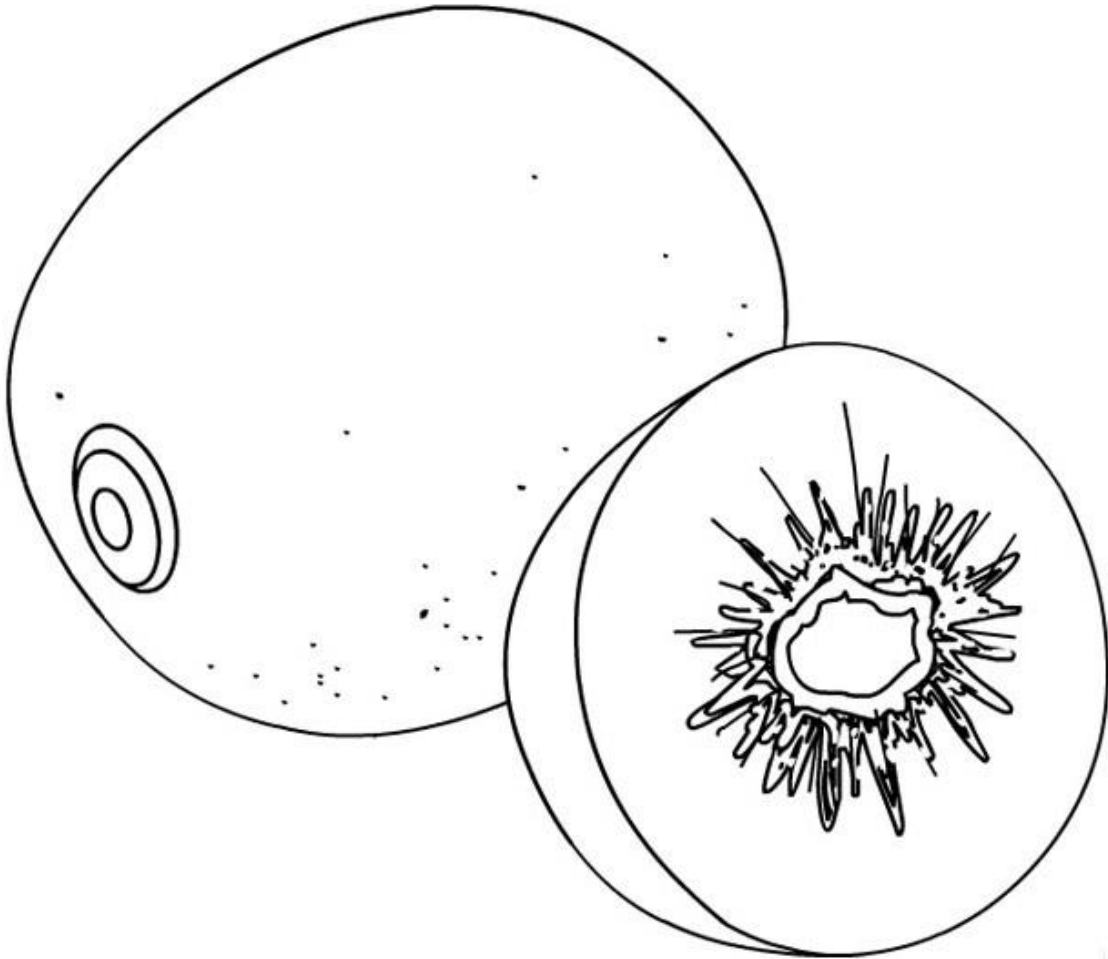
Tōmato / Tomato



Information for whānau:

- Tomatoes are tastiest when in season over the warmer months.
- Great in sandwiches.
- Cherry tomatoes are a fabulous snack or lunchbox idea.
- Can be eaten raw or cooked in sauces and casseroles.
- Tomatoes are quite easy to grow over summer. Have you tried growing them at home?

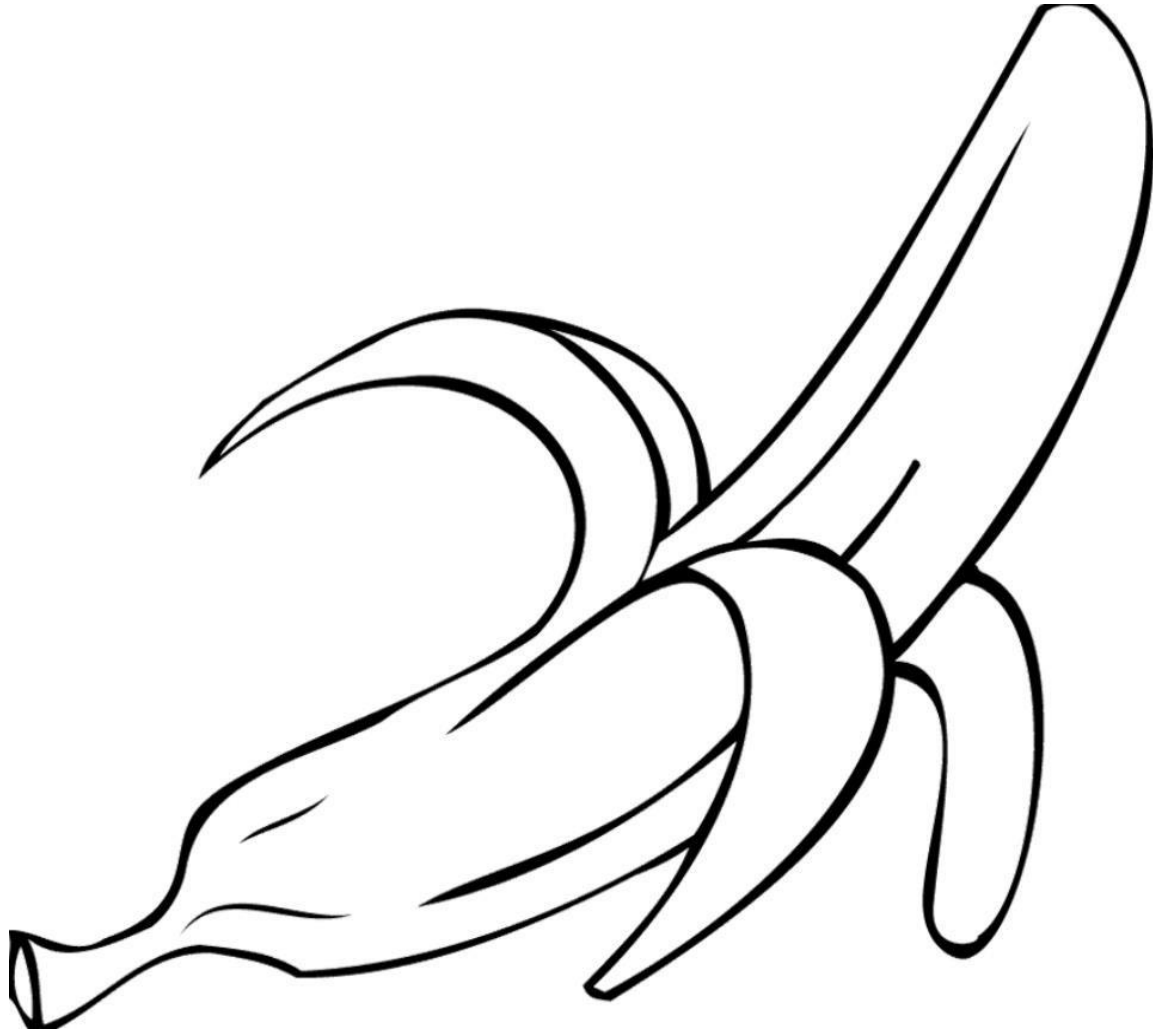
Huakiwi / Kiwifruit



Information for whānau:

- Kiwifruits are a great fruit and packed with fibre and vitamin C.
- Great as a snack or in smoothies.
- Can be added to fruit salads for a zesty taste.
- Come in green and golden varieties and harvested in NZ from May to November.
- Did you know they grow on vines – not trees?

Panana / Banana



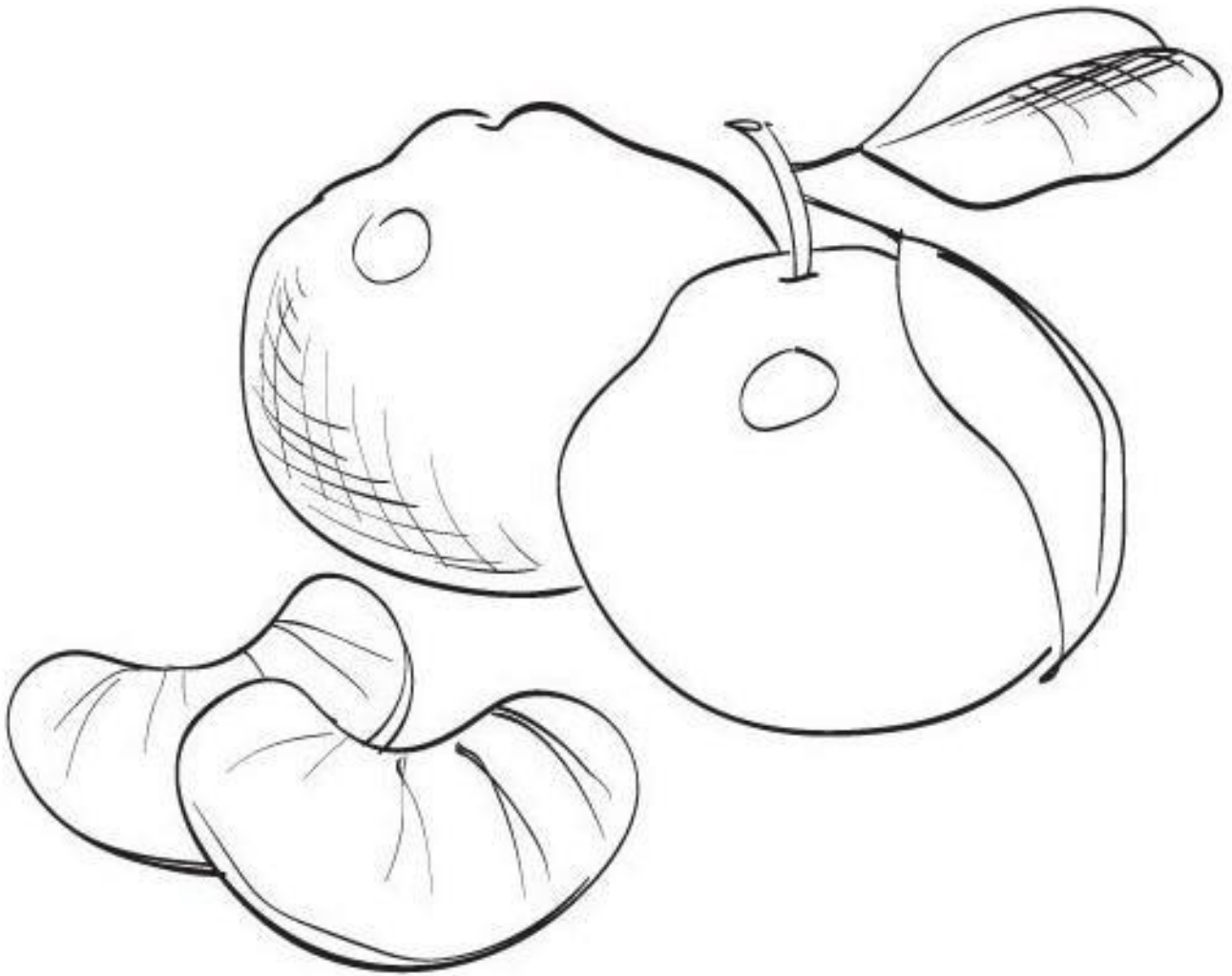
Information for whānau:

- A good filling energy source.
- Good snack in lunchboxes or at pick up time.
- Great in smoothies to give a creamy texture.
- The bananas we buy in NZ come from Philippines, South America or Mexico.
- Did you know a bunch of bananas is called a hand and a single banana a finger?

Try making some 3 ingredient pancakes! Mix it all together and cook in a frypan.

- ¼ cup oats
- 2 ripe bananas
- 1 egg

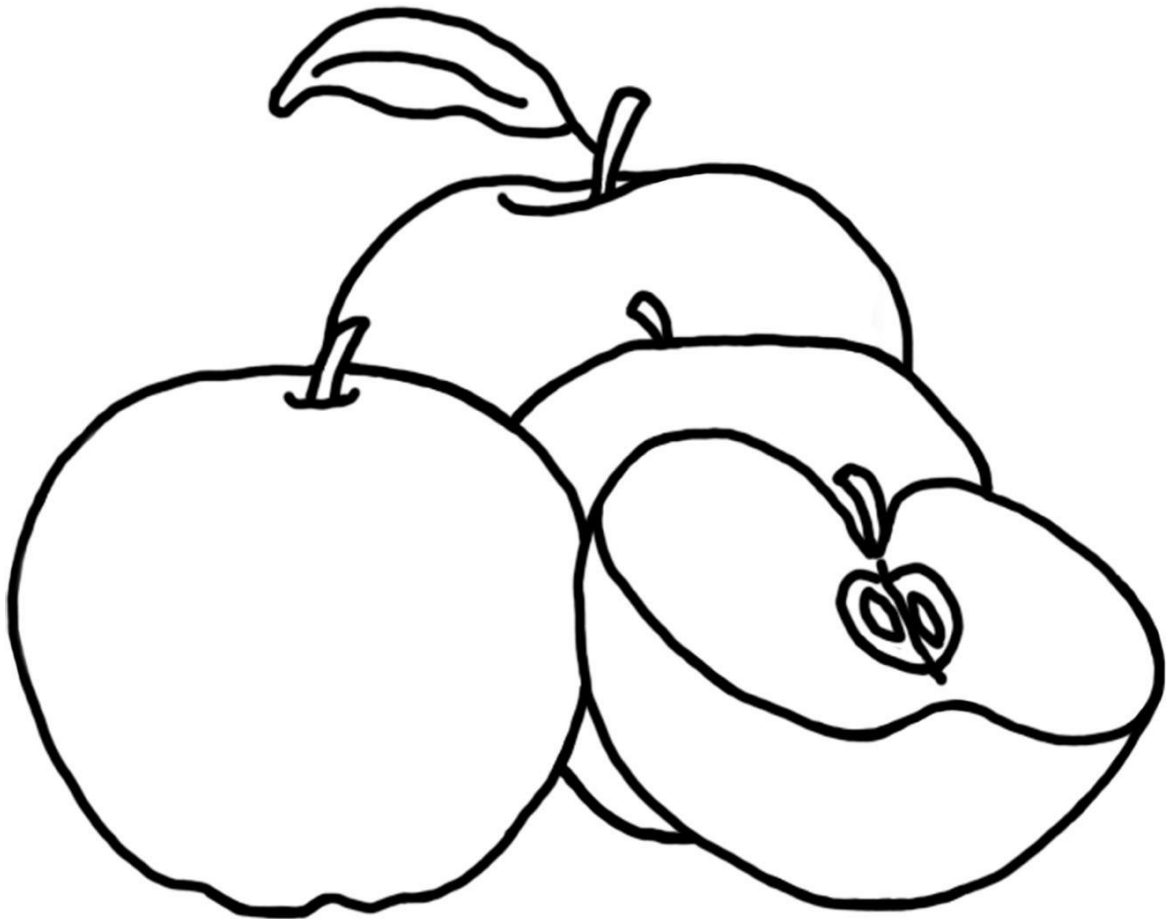
Manarini / Mandarin



Information for whānau:

- Great as a snack.
 - Peeling mandarins helps develop fine motor skills.
 - Can be used in salads to give a zesty flavour.
 - Available in winter and contain vitamin C.
 - Part of the citrus family
- What other citrus fruit do you know? Which is your favourite?

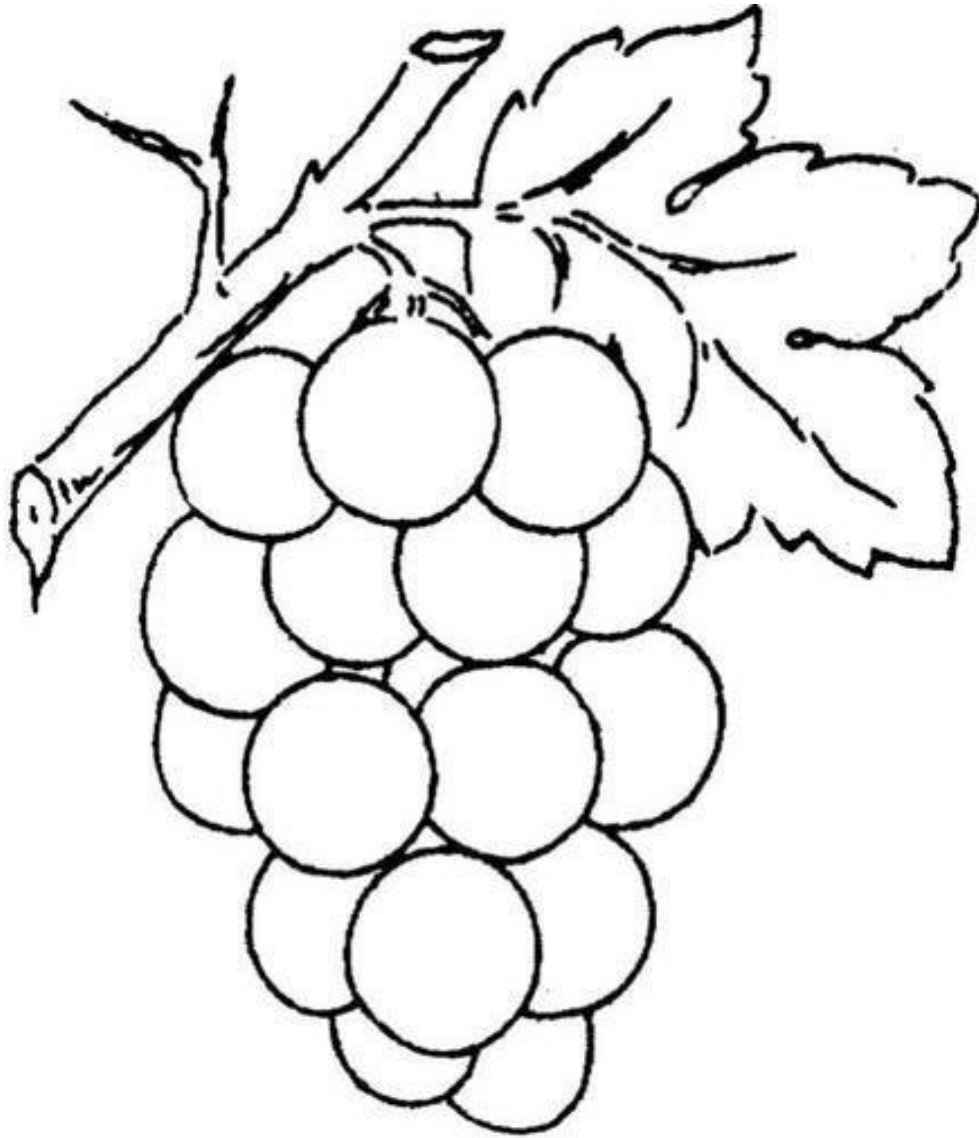
Āporo / Apple



Information for whanau:

- Easy snack and can be eaten raw or cooked. Try making an apple crumble.
 - For young children serve them peeled, grated, chopped small and or cooked, to avoid choking risk.
 - Stewed apples freeze well and defrosted are delicious with breakfast.
 - Several varieties are available with different colours, tastes and uses.
- Which apple is your family favourite?

Kerepe / Grapes



Information for whānau:

- A good lunchbox or snack idea.
- Cut grapes into smaller pieces to reduce choking risk in young children.
- Contain fibre to support healthy bowels.
- A lot of the grapes available in NZ are imported.
- Did you know that dried black grapes are raisins and dried green grapes are sultanas?

Pīni / Bean



Information for whānau:

- There are a large variety of different beans and we can eat the entire pod when young or save the seeds to dry and use separately.
- Cooked bean seeds – like kidney, black or baked beans – are perfect to add to mince dishes to make meat go further.
- Fresh green beans can go off quickly, making frozen green beans a great option to reduce food waste.
- Did you know that the white beans used to make baked beans are called Navy Beans and they grow in a green pod?