

Who told you this and is it true? Facts, Folklore, Fallacies & Fibs

Teachers' Notes

Introduction

This set of 10 cartoons was originally developed as posters for the British Meat Education Service's exhibition stand. Numerous requests from teachers for these to be available for classroom use has led to the development of this downloadable resource on bmesonline.

The cartoons can be used as stimulus material with groups of different ages and ability levels, to prompt students into new ways of thinking about food. They feature many well-known 'facts, folklore, fallacies and fibs' about food and each saying is illustrated by a comic image.

The notes provided here are intended to be outline suggestions of how the resource can be used to introduce new topics, trigger debate and add a little fun and humour to some difficult subjects.

Cartoon 1 Preparing Food 'Too many cooks spoil the broth'

An often-used saying applied to a variety of circumstances. Ask students to consider its meaning. Discuss the importance of each ingredient in a recipe and how some recipes need to be followed carefully, while others don't need to be so accurate. Are there safety and hygiene messages in this cartoon as well? Brainstorm safety issues when working in a kitchen - the dangers of crowding around the food area, untidy workspaces, not paying attention and so on. What could happen in a school situation?

Cartoon 2 Eating Food 'Eating crusts makes your hair curl' and Cartoon 3 Cooking Food 'Only eat pork when there is an 'r' in the month'

Are these 'old wives tales'? Do your students know what an 'old wives tale' is and can they think of any others? Ask your students to think about where these sayings originate from and whether there is any truth in them. What is the purpose of this kind of 'food folklore'? Can your students invent 'new' myths about food?

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Cartoon 4 Choosing Food 'Eat meat - it's got iron in it'

Students could undertake their own research into the major sources of iron in the diet. Why is iron important to our well being? What contribution to our iron intake is provided by meat? If we don't eat meat, what other foods should we eat to make sure we have sufficient for our needs? This cartoon can also be used to start thinking about written instructions, such as recipe or appliance instructions. How are they written? Are they always meant to be taken literally? Students can think of examples of the written word which are intended to be taken literally.

Cartoon 5 Storing Food 'Always store cooked and raw meat separately' and Cartoon 6 Packaging Food 'Always obey the 'use by' date on food packaging

Are students aware of the dangers of cross contamination if cooked and raw foods are not stored correctly? What micro-organism can be spread through this form of contamination? What are the symptoms of food poisoning? Do students understand the difference between 'best before' dates and 'sell-by/use-by' dates on food packaging? Why should we observe 'sell-by' or 'use-by' dates? Which foods would a 'sell-by/use-by' date be used on and are there any foods which are exempt from date marking? Ask students to think about what consumers did before the introduction of these dates. Some food may be unfit to eat even if it is not past its 'use-by' date. How can you tell and what can you do about it?

Cartoon 7 Buying Food 'Never buy food in dented cans'

Is this true and is it OK to buy cans which have been reduced because they are dented? Where should cans of food be stored? This cartoon can also be used as a starting point for work on preserving food. Why does food in cans keep for a long time and how has the food been preserved? What metal(s) are food cans made from and why? Can students explain why canned food looks and tastes different from fresh food, using examples like meat, peaches, milk or salmon?

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Cartoon 8 Manufacturing Food 'HACCP' (see MVM edition 3 Systems and Control and Cy-Burger activities on bmesonline)

This cartoon can be used in a variety of ways. First, the scenario of the 'roadside café' is an amusing and attention-grabbing visual device to introduce students to HACCP, environmental health and food safety legislation. Second, this depiction of a café (admittedly a very bad one!) highlights the differences between a commercial kitchen and a domestic kitchen, in terms of ergonomic design, food handling practices, menu planning, costing and portion control. Third, the cartoon can trigger discussion of the great variety of 'eating out' places now available, from 'greasy spoon' cafés to exclusive restaurants. Yet, all food outlets are bound by the same food safety legislation.

Cartoon 9 Teaching Food 'A balanced diet is a healthy diet' (see MVM edition 5 Healthy Eating)

This cartoon introduces work on healthy eating. What is meant by a 'balanced diet' and why is this considered to be healthy? Is there such a thing as unhealthy food? Students can research the main food groups and identify what benefits each group provides to our bodies. Are people more or less healthy now and why have people's diets changed in the last 50 years? As well as healthy eating, why is physical activity important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle?

Cartoon 10 Presenting Food 'Nobody makes food look so mouth watering as the French do'

Do students think this is true? If so, why? What do they know, or think they know, about French cuisine and cooking in other parts of Europe and the world? What identifies recipes or meals as being typically 'French', or typically English, Welsh, Scottish or British? Is curry now a British dish? As well as being used to introduce work on food around the world, this cartoon can prompt students to consider why it is important to make food look attractive. What makes food look tempting? Consider the photographs of food in advertisements and on product packaging.