



How to run a Chocolate Tasting

Transform your classroom into a chocolate tasting lab and offer a delicious sensorial and educational experience.

How does tasting work?

You can only sense four basic tastes: sweet, salt, sour and bitter.

If students seem to have trouble tasting, suggest they focus only on identifying these four basic tastes as they chew – for example, at first chocolate might taste sweet, then sour or tart (usually felt as a puckering on the sides of your mouth), and then ends with a bitter note (especially in bars with a higher cacao percentage, like dark chocolate).

Aromatics

Anything else you can sense beyond these basic four tastes is “aromatics.” Try this fun trick with your students to test this theory:

- When tasting the mint bar, don't tell your students what type of bar it is. Instead, keep the bowl or plate with the chocolate away from them. (It can smell pretty strong, and you don't want to give away any hints.)
- Ask the students to hold their noses, and keep holding them tightly as you pass out the chocolate. Students can then place the chocolate in their mouth and chew 5 times before unplugging their nose.
- What happens? They should get a rush of cool mint flavor as soon as they unplug their nose. Before that, the chocolate will probably not taste like much, and will be a little gritty because of the mint crystals.

What You Will Need

- Plates or Bowls
- Paper towels
- Equal Exchange Chocolate
- (Optional) Downloadable placemats and pencils at <http://www.equalexchange.coop/media/fundraiser/EEChocPlacemat.pdf>

Set-Up

1. Break up the chocolate bars. Use this trick to break the bars without even touching the chocolate: Remove the outer paper wrapper and while the chocolate is still inside the plastic wrapper, break along the lines. Tear the plastic wrapper open at the perforation and pour onto a plate or bowl. Each bar breaks into 24 bite-sized pieces.
2. Begin tasting following the steps below. Remind students to relax and have fun. Tasting isn't about being right or wrong, we all have our own taste preferences and food memories to draw upon.

Taste Chocolate Like the Experts

1. *Listen.* Before tasting, break your chocolate square in half. This is called the “snap”. Good chocolate will have a loud snap.
2. *Smell your chocolate.* That's right, before you pop it in your mouth, hold the chocolate up to your nose and notice any aromas present in the chocolate. Is it fruity? Nutty? Smokey?
3. *Taste your chocolate.* Now for the good part! Take a bite of your piece of chocolate. Place it on your tongue and let it melt for a second. Slowly chew a few times, moving the chocolate around your mouth. What does it taste like? Do the flavors change as you eat the chocolate? Eat the rest of your piece and see what else you can identify. Think about the texture – smooth, grainy, creamy, or dry? What tastes does it leave in your mouth?
4. *Move on to the next type of chocolate!* It helps to start with the lowest cacao percentage, and build up to the darker chocolates or those with stronger flavors (like the Mint Chocolate), since those strong flavors will overpower the others.

A sample suggested order for tasting chocolate:

1. Organic Milk Chocolate with a Hint of Hazelnut (38%)
2. Organic Dark Chocolate with Almonds (55%)
3. Organic Very Dark Chocolate (71%)
4. Organic Mint Chocolate (67%)