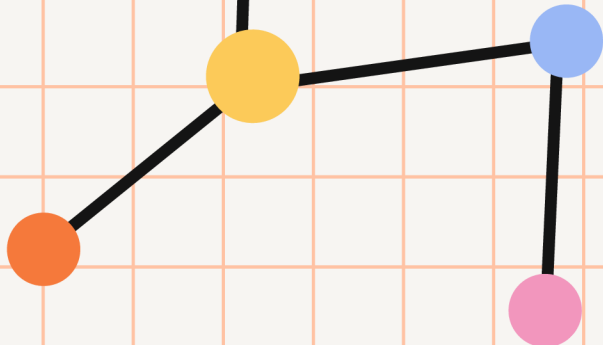


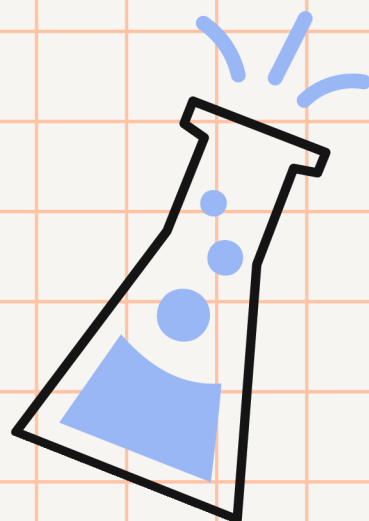
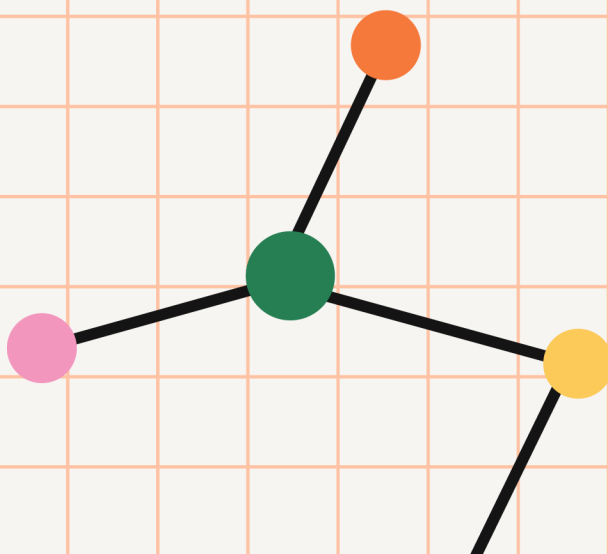
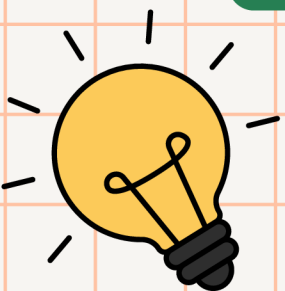


FOOD LABS



Family food confidence: one experiment at a time

**A guide to running
Food Labs**



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1. Welcome to Food Labs

This section gives an overview of Food Labs — what it is, why it works, and how it can be used in your setting.

1.1. What is Food Labs?

Food Labs is a hands-on, low-pressure way for children and families to explore food together.

It focuses on building confidence, curiosity and familiarity. Children take on the role of “food scientists” — exploring foods through sight, smell, touch and taste, at their own pace.

There’s no pressure to eat anything. Exploration comes first.



1.2. What is Food Labs aiming to do?

Many families find mealtimes challenging — especially when children are going through phases of ‘picky eating’.

Food Labs is designed to support families to:

- Build confidence around food
- Reduce pressure and stress at mealtimes
- Create more positive, shared experiences with food
- Gradually increase the range of foods children feel able to explore

1.3. Why this approach works

Many children go through phases of being unsure about food. For some, this can look like eating only a small number of familiar foods or avoiding certain textures, smells or appearances.

What we know is:

- Children often need to be exposed to new foods many times before accepting them
- Pressure to eat can increase anxiety and reduce willingness to try
- Confidence grows through exploration and positive experiences, not instruction

Food Labs creates a space where children can explore food in a way that feels safe, playful and within their control.

1.4. Is Food Labs right for your setting?

Food Labs is designed to be flexible and can work in a wide range of settings.

It is designed primarily for children aged approximately 4–12, but the approach can be adapted for younger or older children depending on your setting.

This could include, for example:

- Schools and early years settings
- Community groups and family hubs
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programmes
- Voluntary and community organisations

You don't need specialist food or nutrition knowledge to deliver Food Labs.

What matters most is that you:

- Work regularly with children and families
- Can provide a safe, welcoming space
- Have access to basic food preparation facilities (even simple ones)

Food Labs can be delivered with a range of group sizes. As a guide, aiming for around 6–8 children per adult facilitator allows time for support, interaction and supervision during activities.

Families can also use Food Labs at home — either by running their own “lab” or trying out individual activities in a way that works for them.



1.5 What success looks like

Success in Food Labs isn't about children eating everything on their plate.

It might look like:

- A child touching or smelling a new food for the first time
- A child watching others explore food with interest
- Families having relaxed conversations about food
- Trying something new at home — even in a small way

These small moments matter. They are how confidence grows.



2. Getting started with Food Labs

This section introduces how Food Labs works in practice — including what you'll need, how sessions are structured, and how to get started in your setting.

2.1. What you'll need

Food Labs is designed to be simple and flexible. You don't need specialist equipment or a fully equipped kitchen to get started.

The Food Labs session guides (Section 5) include a list of 'resources needed' for each session, so you can plan ahead.

At a minimum, you'll need:

- A space where children can sit, move around and explore safely
- Tables or surfaces for preparing and exploring food
- Access to water (for washing hands and basic cleaning)
- Basic food preparation equipment (e.g. chopping boards, knives, peelers, bowls)
- Ingredients for the session activities



2.2 How Food Labs sessions are structured

Food Labs is made up of eight themed sessions (or "labs"), each designed to explore different foods.

Each session is framed around a research question, helping to place curiosity and exploration at the centre of the experience.

All sessions follow the same core approach, while introducing different ingredients, ideas and ways of exploring.

The sessions are designed to be delivered as a series, but can also be used individually depending on your setting. They gradually increase in complexity, building confidence, skills and familiarity over time — so we recommend starting earlier in the sequence wherever possible.

The eight Food Labs are outlined overleaf:

	Session title	Research question	Food focus
1	The Welcome Lab	Can we explore food with all our senses?	Fruit
2	The Colour Lab	Can we eat a rainbow?	Vegetables
3	The Texture Lab	Can food change how it feels?	Beans and pulses
4	The Mix-It Lab	Can we mix foods to create something new?	Dairy and dairy alternatives
5	The Discovery Lab	Can we give a familiar food a makeover?	Grains and carbohydrates
6	The Shape-Shift	Can we trick our taste buds?	Meat and meat alternatives
7	The Magic Lab	Can we turn tins into a meal?	Store-cupboard staples
8	The Celebration Lab	Can we design our own food experiment?	All food groups

2.3 What a typical session looks like

Each Food Lab follows a simple, repeatable structure:

Predict + Prepare

Everyone is introduced to the food focus and encouraged to make a “scientific prediction” – something they’re curious to explore using their senses.

Test + Tinker

Children explore the food through hands-on activities – cutting, mixing, smelling, touching or tasting if they choose to.

The Big Experiment

Families bring their exploration together, often through a shared activity or eating experience.

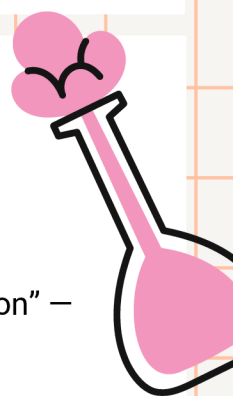
Results + Reflection

Everyone is supported to notice and talk about what they experienced – not just what they ate.

Home Experiment

A simple activity for families to try at home, helping to continue exploration beyond the session.

Each part of the session is flexible and can be adapted to suit your group. See Section 2.6 for guidance on timings and adapting sessions.



2.4 Preparing for your first session

Each Food Lab session guide (Section 5) includes everything you need to get started, including:

- A 'before this session' checklist
- A list of equipment and ingredients needed
- A step-by-step lab guide, including suggested adaptations, language to model and things to watch out for

You'll also have access to PowerPoint slides for each session, which can be used to support delivery.

You don't need to prepare everything perfectly. Food Labs isn't about delivering a perfectly polished session — it's about creating a space where children feel safe to explore.

While the session guides will support you with what to do, how the session feels is just as important — this is covered in the next sub-section.

2.5 Creating the right environment

Food Labs is not just about the activities — it's about how the session feels.

Food Labs works best in an environment that is:

- **Low-pressure** — children are never forced or expected to eat
- **Inclusive** — all responses to food are accepted without judgement
- **Curious** — children are encouraged to explore through questions and observation
- **Child-led** — children choose how they engage, at their own pace

Simple things make a big difference:

- Lean into the Food Labs theme — children are the scientists
- Use language like "You can explore this if you want to"
- Avoid praise or pressure linked to eating (e.g. "good for trying that")
- Focus on describing food (colour, smell, texture), rather than liking or disliking

A safe, supportive environment helps children feel in control and more open to trying new things.

Section 4 includes more practical guidance to support you in creating this environment.





2.6 Timings and flexibility

A typical Food Lab session lasts 60–90 minutes, but can be adapted to suit your setting.

Section 5 includes step-by-step guidance, suggested adaptations and indicative timings for each activity. These are there to support you, not to be followed rigidly.

You do not need to complete every activity. Some groups may benefit from spending longer in Test + Tinker and sensory exploration, while others may be ready to move more quickly to The Big Experiment.

Follow what works best for your group and let the session flex around their needs. What matters most is keeping the experience low-pressure and exploratory.



2.7 Health, safety and practical considerations

Food Labs involves practical, hands-on food activities, so **it's important to follow your organisation's usual health and safety procedures.**

This includes considering things like:

- Safe use of equipment (e.g. knives and peelers)
- Food hygiene and handwashing
- Allergies and dietary requirements
- Appropriate supervision during activities

You should carry out a risk assessment in line with your organisation's policies before delivering sessions.

It can also be helpful to think ahead about how ingredients will be used and shared to help minimise unnecessary food waste.

Some Food Labs activities are intentionally sensory and exploratory, meaning children may choose to touch, smell or investigate ingredients without eating them. These experiences are an important part of building familiarity, confidence and positive experiences around food.

Where possible, take a 'reuse first' approach to minimise waste. Suitable unused ingredients or prepared items can be reused by your setting or taken home by families to continue exploring at home.

Where ingredients cannot be safely reused, consider composting suitable food waste where facilities are available.

3. Understanding and supporting 'picky eating'

The following section explores what we mean by 'picky eating', what can make it more challenging, and how to provide support in a low-pressure, confidence-building way.

3.1 Understanding 'Picky Eating'

Many children go through phases of eating a limited range of foods or feeling unsure about trying something new. This is common and developmentally normal.

Children may be cautious around new foods for lots of reasons – including natural developmental stages, sensory sensitivities, or simply not having had many opportunities to explore different foods yet. For some, especially those who are neurodivergent, differences in how they experience taste, texture, smell or appearance can make certain foods feel overwhelming or unpredictable.

It's not about children being 'difficult', and it's not about getting it 'right' as a parent or facilitator. Our role is to build confidence, curiosity and positive experiences with food over time.

The following sections are grounded in research on child feeding, behaviour change and sensory development.

3.2 What can make food exploration feel harder?

It's natural to want children to eat well. Some common approaches – often used with the best intentions – can unintentionally increase pressure around food:

- Using food as a reward or linking foods (e.g. "you can have pudding if you eat this")
- Labelling foods as "good", "bad", "healthy" or "unhealthy"
- Praising or rewarding eating (e.g. "good girl for eating that")
- Asking children to "just try one bite" or repeatedly prompting
- Only introducing new foods at mealtimes, where the focus is on eating rather than exploring

These approaches can make eating feel like something children are being judged on or required to do.

Research shows that when children feel pressured, they are less likely to try new foods and more likely to reject them over time. It can also reduce their ability to listen to their own hunger and fullness cues, making eating feel less intuitive and more stressful. Over time, this can reduce a child's sense of control and make them less willing to try something new.

3.3 What helps children explore food

Children are more likely to try new foods when the environment:

- Offers repeated, low-pressure exposure
- Supports sensory exploration before tasting
- Protects a child's sense of choice and control
- Feels safe, predictable and enjoyable
- Recognises small steps as meaningful progress

Children often need to experience a food many times (sometimes 10–15 or more) before they feel comfortable trying it. These experiences don't need to involve eating – simply seeing, touching or smelling a food all count as important steps.

Feeling a sense of control is key. When children are allowed to decide whether and how they engage with food, they are more likely to feel safe enough to explore it over time.

These are the foundations Food Labs is built on – creating low-pressure, curiosity-led experiences where children can explore food in their own way.



3.4 In practice: Food Labs

Food Labs are designed to feel low-pressure, exploratory and led by children's choices. The way you facilitate each session can make new foods easier to explore:

Your language

- Use open, sensory-focused questions
→ Instead of: "Do you like it?" try: "What does it feel like?"
- Keep your language neutral and curious
→ Avoid praise or judgement linked to eating

What you encourage

- Give children time and space to engage
→ Let them choose how they take part
- Focus on exploration rather than eating
→ Notice touching, smelling and observing





What adults model

- Eat together where possible
→ Create a relaxed, shared moment where children see adults exploring food without any pressure to join in
- Talk about food in a neutral, curious way
→ Share observations, not opinions (e.g. “This one is crunchy” rather than “This is nice”)

3.5 When to seek additional support

Some children may need more specialist support. This might include:

- Eating a very limited range of foods
- Strong distress, fear or anxiety around food or eating
- Avoiding entire food groups (e.g. all vegetables or all textures)
- Difficulties that impact growth, nutrition or energy levels
- Eating becoming a source of ongoing conflict or distress for the family

In some cases, these patterns may be linked to more complex needs, such as:

- Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) – where a child avoids food due to sensory sensitivities, fear (e.g. of choking or vomiting), or low interest in eating, leading to significant nutritional or social impact
- Other eating disorders – which may involve distress around food, body image, or patterns of restriction or control around eating

These are not the same as typical picky eating, and they require specialist assessment and support. **If you're unsure, or if these challenges are present, it's important to seek advice from a health professional.**

3.6 Further information and support

If you are supporting a child where eating feels more complex or concerning, the following sources of support can help:



- [NHS Hampshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service \(CAMHS\)](#)

Practical guidance on recognising different eating difficulties (including ARFID), understanding underlying causes, and how to access specialist support in Hampshire.

- [Public Health Hampshire – children, young people and families](#)

General advice and support on children's health and wellbeing available in the local area.

- [Young Minds](#)

A national charity supporting children and young people's mental health, including information and support relating to ARFID and eating difficulties.

4. How to facilitate Food Labs

This section shares practical ways to help Food Labs feel calm, inclusive and low-pressure. You'll also find short reflection tasks to help you practise key approaches before you begin.

4.1 Setting the tone

The first few minutes shape how the whole session feels.

In practice:

- Create a welcoming atmosphere (e.g. background music)
- Lean into the “scientist” idea (e.g. lab coats, goggles, language)
- Be clear about purpose: “This is about exploring, not eating”
- Position children as in charge: “You decide what you want to try”



4.2 Creating a low-pressure environment

Children engage more when they don't feel judged, watched or pushed.

In practice:

- Keep the focus on participation, not eating
- Avoid drawing attention to individual choices
- Make it easy to opt in and out (e.g. set up an optional non-food activity like colouring)
- Use neutral, observational language (rather than labels like “good” or “healthy”, or pressure like “just one bite”)
- Acknowledge all responses – including dislike: “You’ve learnt something new about that food”
- Close on a positive note: “Today was about exploring – and you all did that”

Reflection task 1: What would you say?

A child says: *"I'm not eating that. It's disgusting."*

How do the following responses shape what happens next?

1. "Okay, leave it then."
2. "Don't be rude"
3. "You don't have to eat it – what makes it seem disgusting?"
4. "What about just trying a bite?"
5. "That's okay – you don't have to eat it. What do you notice about it?"

What to notice:

- Which responses keep the child engaged in the activity?
- Which ones shift the focus away from eating and towards exploration?

Key takeaway:

Don't shut down engagement – like responses 1 and 2 do – even if a child's reaction sounds negative. Instead, gently redirect towards exploration – as in responses 3 and 5 – without adding pressure.



4.3 Modelling curiosity (not control)

Children learn through observing, not being told.

Your role is to model exploration, not direct it.

In practice:

- Remember children are the experts in the room! You're not there to teach or fix eating – you're there to create the conditions for exploration.
- Wonder out loud e.g. "I wonder what this looks like inside?"
- Explore food alongside them
- Normalise not knowing about certain foods, or not liking something
- Reinforce that there isn't a "right answer"



Reflection Task 2: Turn it into an experiment

Take a typical instruction and reframe it as a “lab” moment e.g. “Peel the cucumber” → “What’s different before and after you peel it?”

How could you reframe:

- “Cut the carrot like this” → ?
- “Taste this and tell me if you like it” → ?
- “Mix this together” → ?
- “Smell this” → ?
- “Try a bit” → ?

What to notice:

- Which versions remove pressure to get it “right”?
- Which ones invite curiosity instead of judgement?

Key takeaway:

Shift from telling children what to do, to inviting them to explore.



4.4 Managing group dynamics

Comments or actions from others can quickly introduce pressure or shame. Your role is to keep the space calm, respectful and low-pressure.

In practice:

- Set expectations early: “Everyone explores food differently — there’s no right or wrong way”
- Think ahead about groupings where helpful:
 - Use name cards to set workstations
 - Pair older children with younger ones for support
- Gently step in if adults begin to take over: “Let’s give them space to explore it their own way”
- Draw attention to differences in a neutral way: “Some like this, some don’t — both are fine”
- Step in early if pressure starts to build: “Remember — this is about exploring, not getting it right”

Reflection Task 3: Spot the pressure

Read the statements below and decide: pressure or no pressure?

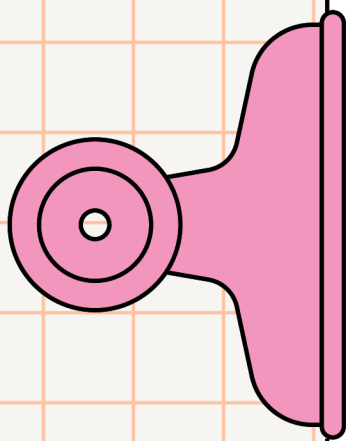
1. “Just try one bite”
2. “You don’t have to eat it — you can just touch it”
3. “Good girl for eating that”
4. “You’re in charge of what you explore”

What to notice:

- Which statements sound positive but still create pressure?
- Which ones genuinely leave the choice with the child?

Key takeaway:

Pressure isn’t always obvious — it often shows up in well-meaning language, like statement 3.



4.5. Responding in the moment

The session plan is there to guide you — not to be followed rigidly. What matters most is responding to the people in front of you.

In practice:

- Allow more time for exploration where it's needed — don't rush to get through activities
- If something isn't landing, move on without making it a moment: "That was a new experiment — let's try something else"
- Notice signs of overwhelm or disengagement and respond early (e.g. offering a break, changing the activity, or reducing attention)

Reflection Task 4: One activity, three ways

Take a simple task (e.g. chopping a cucumber) and think about how you could respond in the moment and adapt it:

1. For a child who is avoiding touching food
2. For a child who needs movement
3. For a child who wants more challenge

What to notice:

Did you change the task — or just how the child could take part?

Key takeaway:

Inclusion isn't about changing the activity — it's about widening how children can engage with it.



5. Food Labs: Session guides

This section gives you step-by-step support to run each Food Lab session.

Each session is supported by a simple 'lab guide' and an accompanying slide deck to help you prepare and deliver it. Together, these provide structure, prompts and activities for each session.

Each guide includes:

- a short session overview
- what you'll need
- any lab-specific preparation tips
- a session snapshot with timings and facilitator guidance

Before each session, use the checklist below to help you get set up. This covers key things to think about, such as allergies, equipment, room set-up and support needs.

Use these resources as flexible support, not a rulebook. All activities are optional and can be adapted to suit your group, setting and the time you have. What matters most is creating a relaxed, low-pressure space where children and families can explore food in their own way.



Before each session

1. Consider your group

- ✓ Check allergies, dietary requirements, access needs and any additional support participants may need.
- ✓ Make sure you know your setting's safeguarding, first aid and emergency procedures.

2. Get to know the session

- ✓ Review the lab guide and slide deck together, so you're familiar with how the session flows.
- ✓ Decide how you would like to tailor the session to your setting – you don't need to include every activity.

3. Prepare the space

- ✓ Check you have all equipment on that session's equipment list.
- ✓ Print any handouts you plan to use from the Appendix.
- ✓ Prepare the space so it feels calm, welcoming and easy to move around.
- ✓ Set up a non-food activity option (e.g. colouring) for children who need to step back.

4. Brief your team

- ✓ Brief any supporting facilitators on roles, language and any children who may need extra support.

5.1 - The Welcome Lab

Session overview

Research question: Can we explore food using all our senses?

In this lab, children are introduced to Food Labs and the idea of being food scientists. They'll explore fruit through sight, touch, smell and (optionally) taste. In The Big Experiment, they'll create their ideal fruit sundae and notice how different people experience the same food in different ways.



What you'll need

Ingredients

- A selection of fruits (include a mix of familiar and less familiar options)
- Strawberries for the "Strawberry Heat Test"
- Base ingredients (e.g. yoghurt, whipped cream or dairy-free alternatives) for "Your Ideal Sundae"
- Optional toppings (e.g. nuts, cereals, chocolate pieces, jam) for "Your Ideal Sundae"

Equipment

- Chopping boards
- Child-safe food prep tools (e.g. knives, peelers)
- A pan and stove for the "Strawberry Heat Test"
- Small cookie cutters are helpful for "Shape-Shifting", but not essential
- Trays, baking parchment or plates as 'exploration spaces'
- Plates, bowls or cups for serving
- Cutlery for "Let's Eat Together"
- Fruit skewers and containers or bags for taking food home

Before this session

- ✓ Check the "Before each session" checklist before running this lab.
- ✓ Wash and prepare fruit where needed, leaving some whole for prediction and exploration.
- ✓ Plan how to present a mix of familiar and less familiar fruits so each child has choice.
- ✓ If using the "Strawberry Heat Test", prepare a safe, simple way to warm the fruit and plan how children will observe.

Session snapshot



Use this page for a quick overview of suggested timings, activities and key facilitation tips. Each activity matches a slide with the same name in this session's slide deck.

Activity	Facilitator guidance
Predict + Prepare 15–25 minutes	
Welcome to Food Labs	Introduce children as “food scientists” and frame the session as an experiment. Emphasise choice and no pressure to taste.
Make a Prediction	Focus on noticing, not getting it right. Encourage children to choose one familiar and one less familiar fruit to explore. Use prompts like: “What might it look like inside?” rather than “Will you like it?”.
Set Up Your Lab	Frame safety as part of the experiment. Model safe tool use and encourage children to ask for help where needed.
Test + Tinker 20–45 minutes	
Senses Challenge	Build exploration gradually. Introduce one sense at a time (look → touch → smell → optional taste). Reinforce that children can stop at any stage.
Shape-Shifting	Encourage creativity and control. Let children cut, stack or arrange fruit in their own way. Focus on patterns, shapes and play rather than outcomes.
Strawberry Heat Test	Keep the focus on change and curiosity. Heat strawberries gently on a low to medium heat until they soften and release their juices (around 5–10 minutes). Ask “What do you notice?” as the fruit heats, rather than explaining. The softened fruit can then be mashed into a purée to use in “Your Ideal Sundae”.
The Big Experiment 20–40 minutes	
Your Ideal Sundae	Keep children in control of their choices. Offer a range of options and let them decide what to include. Reinforce that there's no right or wrong way to build it.
Let's Eat Together	Model the kind of conversation you want to see. Keep the focus on what children notice — such as texture, smell, temperature or colour — rather than whether they like it or how much they eat.
Results + Reflection 10–20 minutes	
What Did You Discover?	Celebrate curiosity, not outcomes. Ask open questions: What surprised you? Did different people notice different things? Can be facilitated as a whole group discussion or in smaller family groups.
Home Experiment 5–10 minutes	
Sharing is Caring	Encourage continued exploration. Suggest using leftovers to make fruit skewers, and invite children to include a fruit they haven't yet explored.

5.2 - The Colour Lab

Session overview

Research question: Can we eat a rainbow?

In this lab, children explore vegetables through colour, prediction and playful food experiments. They'll make guesses, notice similarities and differences, and work together in The Big Experiment to create "Our Rainbow Picnic".



What you'll need

Ingredients

- A selection of colourful vegetables and fruits
- The same food in different colours (e.g. peppers or tomatoes) for "Guess the Colour"
- Base ingredients (e.g. dips, crackers, grains) for "Our Rainbow Picnic"

Equipment

- Chopping boards
- Child-safe food prep tools (e.g. knives, peelers, mashers, cookie cutters)
- Plates, bowls or containers for serving
- One easel per child (e.g. baking tray or baking parchment) for "Pick Your Experiment"
- Containers or bags for taking food home

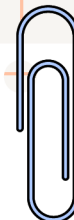
Optional extras

- Picnic tablecloth, to help create a colourful shared picnic reveal

Before this session

- ✓ Check the "Before each session" checklist before running this lab.
- ✓ Set up the shared picnic base in advance (e.g. dips and grains) and keep it covered, so it feels like a reveal at the start of "Our Rainbow Picnic" rather than a buffet when participants arrive.
- ✓ Offer a choice of plates, bowls or containers where possible, so children can decide how they'd like to present their picnic food.

Session snapshot



Use this page for a quick overview of suggested timings, activities and key facilitation tips. Each activity matches a slide with the same name in this session's slide deck.

Activity	Facilitator guidance
Predict + Prepare 15–25 minutes	
Welcome to Food Labs	Remind children they're food scientists and frame the session as an experiment. Emphasise that the session is guided by them, with no pressure to taste.
Imagine a Rainbow	Keep the conversation broad and low-pressure. Talk about colours, foods and memories rather than preferences. Use whole-group or smaller group discussion.
Make a Prediction	Reassure children that predictions can change. Enjoying exploring does not mean tasting.
Set Up Your Lab	Frame safety and preparation as part of the experiment.
Test + Tinker 20–45 minutes	
Pick Your Experiment	Give each child their own space to explore. Use trays or baking parchment as 'easels' and reinforce choice. Encourage parents to follow their child's lead.
Guess the Colour	Focus on surprise and noticing, not getting it "right". You may choose to ask one adult taster to model this as a whole-group activity. Avoid praise linked to eating.
The Big Experiment 20–40 minutes	
Our Rainbow Picnic	Preparing food counts as taking part. Children can choose which colours or foods to add, without pressure to eat. Encourage parents to follow their child's lead while supporting safe use of equipment.
Let's Eat Together	Keep children in control of what happens on their plate. Uneaten food can be saved or taken home. Focus conversation on what children notice – such as colour, texture or smell – rather than whether they like it or how much they eat.
Results + Reflection 10–20 minutes	
What Did You Discover?	Celebrate noticing and curiosity. Can be run as a whole-group discussion or in smaller family groups.
Home Experiment 5–10 minutes	
Fridge Forensics	Encourage shared decision-making about leftovers. Support families to plan how to use leftovers together and let children choose what to take home.

5.3 - The Texture Lab

Session overview

Research question: Can food change how it feels?

In this lab, children explore different food textures through hands-on experiments. They'll discover how beans and pulses change texture depending on how they're prepared and notice how this shapes their experience of food. In The Big Experiment, they'll create their own "Texture Mix".



What you'll need

Ingredients

- A range of foods with different textures for "Mystery Food"
- A selection of beans and pulses (e.g. chickpeas, lentils, beans) for "Mixing It Up"
- Popcorn kernels for the "Explosion Experiment" (or ready-made popcorn if pans/stoves are not available)
- Mix-in ingredients with varied textures (e.g. dried fruit, cereal, chocolate pieces, roasted chickpeas, lentil crisps) for "Build Your Texture Mix"

Equipment

- A range of items (e.g. sponge, tissue, golf ball) for "Mystery Object"
- Containers or bags to hide items from view for "Mystery Object" and "Mystery Food"
- A pan with a lid and a heat source for the "Explosion Experiment"
- Trays, baking parchment or plates as exploration spaces
- Bowls or containers for exploring and mixing
- Spoons or scoops
- Containers or bags for taking food home

Optional extras

- Blindfolds for sensory exploration, if appropriate for your group
- Gloves for sensory exploration, if helpful for your group

Before this session

- ✓ Check the "Before each session" checklist before running this lab.
- ✓ Set up mystery items so children can investigate without seeing.
- ✓ Plan how the "Explosion Experiment" will be led and safely supervised.
- ✓ Prepare any ingredients for "Build Your Texture Mix" and consider how to offer choice to children.

Session snapshot



Use this page for a quick overview of suggested timings, activities and key facilitation tips. Each activity matches a slide with the same name in this session's slide deck.

Activity	Facilitator guidance
Predict + Prepare 15–20 minutes	
Welcome to Food Labs	Frame the session as a sensory experiment. Reinforce that children can explore using touch and senses, without pressure to taste.
Spot the Difference	Focus on noticing, not preferences. Encourage children to describe textures (e.g. smooth, crunchy). Explain that texture is how food feels.
Set Up Your Lab	Frame safety as part of good science. Model safe tool use and encourage children to ask for help where needed.
Make a Prediction	Keep predictions open and flexible. Invite curiosity about how foods might be linked, without needing a “right” answer.
Test + Tinker 20–30 minutes	
Mystery Object	Encourage descriptive language through touch. Prompt children to notice (e.g. soft, hard, smooth, bumpy) and guess without looking. Can be run as a whole-group or small group activity.
Mystery Food	Use multiple senses, without pressure to taste. Focus on noticing sounds, smells and textures rather than identifying the food correctly.
Mixing It Up	Encourage playful experimentation. Invite children to combine textures (e.g. soft + crunchy) and create something new. Reinforce that exploration is valuable, even if the food is not eaten.
The Big Experiment 15–25 minutes	
Explosion Experiment	Keep the lid on and focus on noticing change. Invite children to describe what they can hear, smell and notice as the food heats. Keep this adult-led and safely supervised.
Build Your Texture Mix	Support creativity and choice. Encourage children to add different textures (e.g. crunchy, chewy, soft, sticky) and name their own creation.
Results + Reflection 10–20 minutes	
What Did You Discover?	Celebrate noticing and exploration. Eat together, if possible. Invite children to reflect on what surprised them and how textures changed their experience of food. Reveal that foods from “Make a Prediction” were the same base food, prepared in different ways.
Home Experiment 5–10 minutes	
Keep Exploring	Emphasise the value of this type of conversation to food confidence.

5.4 - The Mix-it Lab

Session overview

Research question: Can we mix the unexpected?

In this lab, children investigate what happens when foods are combined. They'll explore different dairy and dairy alternatives, notice how mixing changes foods (e.g. colour, texture, smell or taste), and see how ingredients interact. In The Big Experiment, they'll create their own "Super Smoothies".



What you'll need

Ingredients

- A range of smoothie bases (e.g. milk, oat milk, coconut water)
- A range of ingredients to mix into smoothies (e.g. fruit, vegetables, seeds, nuts)
- A selection of the ingredients above set aside for "Messy Mixing"

Equipment

- Forks or mashers
- Blenders or whisks
- Spoons or scoops
- Cups, bowls or containers for mixing and tasting
- Containers or bags for taking food home

Optional extras

- Clear cups or containers to help children see changes when mixing
- Straws for serving smoothies

Before this session

- ✓ Check the "Before each session" checklist before running this lab.
- ✓ Prepare a range of ingredients that can be safely mixed and explored in different ways.
- ✓ Plan how "Sugar Surprise?" will be introduced and whether you will use the additional guidance.
- ✓ Check equipment (e.g. blenders or alternatives) is ready and safe to use.
- ✓ Consider how to offer choice so children can lead their own combinations.

Session snapshot



Use this page for a quick overview of suggested timings, activities and key facilitation tips. Each activity matches a slide with the same name in this session's slide deck.

Activity	Facilitator guidance
Predict + Prepare 15–25 minutes	
Welcome to Food Labs	Remind children they're food scientists and frame the session as an experiment. Emphasise that the session is guided by them, with no pressure to taste.
Think Like Scientists	Start with familiar foods and build curiosity. Prompt children to reflect on what changes when foods are mixed (e.g. look, smell, feel or taste), using examples to support discussion.
Make a Prediction	Keep predictions open and creative. Invite children to choose any two foods and guess what might change (e.g. colour, feel, smell or taste). Reinforce that they won't have to eat it, so combinations can be as creative as they like.
Set Up Your Lab	Frame safety as part of good science. Model safe tool use and encourage children to ask for help where needed.
Test + Tinker 20–45 minutes	
Messy Mixing	Encourage hands-on exploration. Invite children to choose ingredients, mix them and notice what changes (e.g. look, feel, smell). Reinforce the value of sensory exploration, even if foods are not eaten.
Dairy Detectives	Use adults to model exploration and run as a whole-group activity. Invite an adult to taste and describe samples (e.g. milk and alternatives), focusing on noticing rather than getting it "right". Avoid pressure on children to join in, but if they choose to take part, you could turn this into a light, playful competition.
Sugar Surprise?	Focus on curiosity, not accuracy. Invite children to guess and explore what might be mixed into different drinks. When revealing answers (found overleaf) keep the focus on noticing and discussion rather than being correct.
The Big Experiment 20–40 minutes	
Super Smoothies	Support choice and experimentation. Encourage children to select ingredients and lead their own combinations. Model noticing (e.g. colour, texture, smell) rather than focusing on outcomes. If you do not have blenders available, mash soft fruits (like bananas or berries) with a fork or potato masher before whisking them with liquids.
Smoothie Switch-up	Focus on predicting and noticing change. Prompt children to make a guess, then guide them to compare what actually changes when ingredients are adjusted. Avoid framing this as getting it "right". Emphasise that tasting is optional.

Layer It Up	Encourage noticing patterns. Ask open questions (e.g. what mixes, what stays separate, what floats or sinks). Give children time to observe before jumping in with explanations.
Results + Reflection 10–20 minutes	
What Did You Discover?	Create space for sharing and reflection. Invite children and families to compare, discuss and taste their creations, focusing on what changed and what surprised them. This can be run as a whole group or in smaller family groups.
Home Experiment 5–10 minutes	
Mix-it Mealtime	Encourage continued noticing at home. Reinforce that this kind of low-pressure exploration helps build food confidence.

Sugar Surprise: Facilitator guidance

Share information in a neutral, exploratory way.

When revealing the answers, focus on comparisons (e.g. which has more or less sugar, and how this compares to children's guesses) rather than labelling foods as "good" or "bad".

For example, you might reveal the following and ask: "Does anything surprise you?"

In an average 250ml glass:

- Coca Cola: 27g
- Energy drink: 28g
- J20: 11g
- Ribena: 11g
- Water: 0g

You may choose to introduce age-appropriate guidance to add context, while keeping the focus on curiosity rather than judgement. For example, NHS guidance on maximum daily sugars:

- Age 4–6: 19g
- Age 7–10: 24g
- Age 11+: 30g

Sugar is only one characteristic of a drink. Depending on your group, you may wish to highlight that some low or no-sugar drinks may also contain caffeine, acidity or sweeteners, and create space to discuss these characteristics.

5.5 - The Discovery Lab

Session overview

Research question: Can we give a familiar food a makeover?

In this lab, children discover how new foods can feel easier to explore when they're added to familiar meals. They'll use their senses to explore different grains along the way, before creating their own "Perfect Pizza" in The Big Experiment.



What you'll need

Ingredients

- A variety of jars of herbs and spices with the labels removed for "Scent Scientists" and "Sauce Creation Station"
- Tins of chopped tomatoes and tomato paste for "Sauce Creation Station"
- A range of grains that can be used as pizza bases (e.g. wraps, pittas, gluten-free options) for "Base Builders"
- A variety of pizza toppings (e.g. cheese, vegetables, pesto, tuna) for "Perfect Pizza"

Equipment

- Forks or mashers
- Spoons or whisks
- Cups, bowls or containers for mixing and tasting
- Oven (if cooking pizza)
- Plates and cutlery (if eating pizza)
- Containers or bags for taking food home

Before this session

- ✓ Check the "Before each session" checklist before running this lab.
- ✓ Prepare a range of ingredients that can be safely mixed and explored in different combinations. Aim for a balance of familiar and less familiar options, and present these in a way that supports choice so children can lead their own combinations.
- ✓ Decide how to run "Scent Scientists" (e.g. whole group or smaller groups) and set up ingredients accordingly.
- ✓ If cooking pizzas, plan how this will be led and safely supervised.

Session snapshot



Use this page for a quick overview of suggested timings, activities and key facilitation tips. Each activity matches a slide with the same name in this session's slide deck.

Activity	Facilitator guidance
Predict + Prepare 15–25 minutes	
Welcome to Food Labs	Remind children they're food scientists and frame the session as an experiment. Emphasise that the session is guided by them, with no pressure to taste.
Think Like Scientists	Start with what feels familiar. Facilitate a whole-group discussion about foods children already enjoy, and use this to introduce the idea that small changes can make new foods feel easier to try.
Make a Prediction	Keep predictions open and flexible. Avoid suggesting that combinations need to be "better" – the focus is on what happens.
Set Up Your Lab	Frame safety as part of good science. Model safe tool use and encourage children to ask for help where needed.
Test + Tinker 20–45 minutes	
Scent Scientists	Model descriptive, non-judgemental language. Encourage children to describe smells (e.g. strong, sweet, spicy) before identifying foods. Reinforce that guessing is part of the experiment. Can be run as a whole group or in smaller groups.
Sauce Creation Station	Encourage trial and adjustment. Invite children to add, mix and change ingredients in their own way. Ask open questions (e.g. "What happens as you mix?") and avoid directing towards a specific outcome.
Food Fact or Fiction?	Use this to spark curiosity, not test knowledge. Invite children to share what they think and why. Keep the tone playful and avoid correcting too quickly.
Base Builders	Support noticing and comparison. Encourage children to notice differences (e.g. texture, thickness) and choose what they prefer to explore further.
The Big Experiment 20–40 minutes	
Pizza Perfection	Frame all ingredient combinations as valid experiments. You may suggest creating pizza for someone else if this supports exploration.
Results + Reflection 10–20 minutes	
What Did You Discover?	Celebrate sharing and noticing. Eat together, if possible. Encourage children to talk about what changed, what felt familiar and what was different.
Home Experiment 5–10 minutes	
Try a Twist	Encourage families to plan one swap together. Invite children to help choose the change. Keep the focus on noticing what happens, rather than whether it's a success.

5.6 - The Shape-shift Lab

Session overview

Research question: Can we trick our taste buds?

In this lab, children explore meat and meat alternatives through hands-on experiments. They'll notice how ingredients like beans can be mashed, mixed and shaped, and how this changes texture. In The Big Experiment, they'll use beans to create their own "Brilliant Burgers" and explore whether they can trick their taste buds.



What you'll need

Ingredients

- A selection of beans (e.g. kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans)
- A range of "binder" ingredients (e.g. egg, flax egg, aquafaba)
- A range of starches (e.g. oats, breadcrumbs, quinoa, cornflour)
- A selection of herbs and spices with labels removed for "Scent Scientists". If you've completed The Discovery Lab, include both familiar and new examples
- A variety of extras (e.g. wraps, buns, salad, toppings) for building "Brilliant Burgers"

Equipment

- Forks or mashers
- Bowls or containers for mixing
- Spoons or scoops
- Frying pan and heat source (if cooking burgers)
- Plates and cutlery (if eating)
- Containers or bags for taking food home

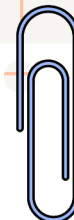
Optional extras

- Gloves for sensory exploration (if helpful for your group)

Before this session

- ✓ Check the "Before each session" checklist before running this lab.
- ✓ Decide how to present your bean, binder and starch combinations to enable choice
- ✓ Decide how to run "Scent Scientists" (e.g. whole group or smaller groups) and set up ingredients accordingly.
- ✓ If cooking burgers, plan how this will be led and safely supervised.

Session snapshot



Use this page for a quick overview of suggested timings, activities and key facilitation tips. Each activity matches a slide with the same name in this session's slide deck.

Activity	Facilitator guidance
Predict + Prepare 15–25 minutes	
Welcome to Food Labs	Remind children they're food scientists and frame the session as an experiment. Emphasise that the session is guided by them, with no pressure to taste.
Think Like Scientists	Use this to open up thinking, not check knowledge. Keep this exploratory and avoid correcting too quickly – the goal is noticing and questioning.
Make a Prediction	Focus on what might happen, not getting it right. Encourage creative guesses.
Set Up Your Lab	Frame safety as part of good science. Model safe tool use and encourage children to ask for help where needed.
Test + Tinker 20–45 minutes	
Food Fact or Fiction?	Use this to spark discussion, not test knowledge. Keep the tone playful and avoid reinforcing “correct” answers too quickly.
Touch Test	Focus on noticing, not accuracy. Model descriptive language (e.g. smooth, hard) to support children in describing what they feel.
Squish and Shape	Encourage hands-on exploration of texture. Use prompts like “What changes?” and “How does it feel?” without steering towards a specific result.
The Big Experiment 20–40 minutes	
Burger Binder Test	Encourage testing and comparison. Invite trying different combinations and notice what helps mixtures hold together. Avoid positioning any outcome as “best”.
Scent Scientists	Model descriptive, non-judgemental language. Encourage describing smells before identifying ingredients. Reinforce that guessing is part of the experiment.
Sizzle and Crisp	Focus attention on change during cooking. Keep this adult-led and safely supervised. Alternatively, burgers can be taken home to cook.
Brilliant Burgers	Keep children in control of their choices. Frame all ingredient combinations as valid experiments.
Results + Reflection 10–20 minutes	
What Did You Discover?	Support comparison and reflection. Eat together, if possible. Focus discussion on noticing (e.g. look, feel, texture) rather than liking.
Home Experiment 5–10 minutes	
The Leftover Lab	Encourage shared decision-making. Keep the focus on experimenting and trying new combinations at home.

5.7 - The Magic Lab

Session overview

Research question: Can we turn tins into a meal?

In this lab, children explore how store cupboard staples can be turned into something new. They'll make predictions, reveal what's inside different tins, and experiment with how these ingredients can be combined. In the Big Experiment, they'll create their own "Perfect Pasta".



What you'll need

Ingredients

- A range of tinned foods with labels removed (e.g. mixed vegetables, tuna, olives, chickpeas). Aim to include a mix of familiar and less familiar options.
- Pasta
- A range of pasta sauces (e.g. olive oil, pesto, cream cheese). Choose pre-made or simple combinations depending on your group
- A variety of flavour additions (e.g. garlic, rosemary, lemon)
- Vegan food colouring for the "Colour Experiment"

Equipment

- Tin openers
- Pans and a heat source (or enough pre-cooked pasta for everyone)
- Drainers or sieves
- Ziploc bags for the "Colour Experiment"
- Cups, bowls, containers or plates
- A range of cutlery
- Containers or bags for taking food home

Before this session

- ✓ Check the "Before each session" checklist before running this lab.
- ✓ Decide whether to use pre-made pasta sauces or how you will guide simple ingredient combinations, depending on your group.
- ✓ Prepare and set up tinned ingredients (e.g. labels removed) so they can be revealed during the session.
- ✓ If cooking pasta during the session, plan how this will be led and safely supervised.
- ✓ Consider how you will offer choice so children can explore and combine ingredients in their own way.

Session snapshot



Use this page for a quick overview of suggested timings, activities and key facilitation tips. Each activity matches a slide with the same name in this session's slide deck.

Activity	Facilitator guidance
Predict + Prepare 15–25 minutes	
Welcome to Food Labs	Remind children they're food scientists and frame the session as an experiment. Emphasise that the session is guided by them, with no pressure to taste.
Set Up Your Lab	Frame safety as part of good science. Model safe tool use and encourage children to ask for help where needed.
Make a Prediction	Build curiosity through guessing. Invite children to shake, listen and predict what might be inside each tin. Keep the focus on possibilities, not getting it right. Can be run as a whole group or smaller family group activity.
Test + Tinker 20–45 minutes	
The Big Reveal	Reveal slowly and keep the focus on noticing. Open tins one at a time and invite children to reflect on their guesses. Ask open questions like "What could you do with this?" and avoid evaluating answers. Keep the tone positive and exploratory. This activity mirrors a real-life situation some families may have experience of (e.g. being given a selection of tins through food banks and needing to turn them into a meal). Keep the focus on what's possible with the ingredients rather than what's missing.
Colour Experiment	Focus on noticing change over time. Add cooked pasta to a ziplock bag with a little cold water and a couple of drops of food colouring, then leave for around 5 minutes. Use open prompts (e.g. "What do you notice?"). Encourage sharing and combining. Invite children to swap small amounts of pasta to create a mix of colours.
The Big Experiment 20–40 minutes	
Perfect Pasta	Keep children in control of their combinations. Avoid steering towards "typical" meals and frame all mixes as valid experiments.
Results + Reflection 10–20 minutes	
Sharing is Caring	Support comparison and reflection. Invite children to talk about what they made, what worked and what surprised them. Eat together, if possible. Keep the focus on noticing and discovery rather than liking or finishing food.
Home Experiment 5–10 minutes	
Cupboard Quest	Encourage continued exploration at home. Keep it low-pressure. Emphasise that this is about ideas and curiosity – there's no need to cook or taste.

5.8 - The Celebration Lab

Session overview

Research question: Can we create our own food experiment?

In this lab, children design and lead their own food experiments using what they've explored across Food Labs. They'll choose ingredients, decide what they want to test or change, and bring their ideas to life in their own way.



What you'll need

Ingredients

- A range of ingredients that children have already explored across previous labs (e.g. fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy or alternatives, store cupboard items)

Equipment

- Containers or bags to hide items from view for "Mystery Ingredients"
- Bowls, containers or plates for mixing, exploring and presenting foods
- A range of cutlery and simple utensils
- Pans and a heat source (or alternatively ingredients that don't require cooking)
- Any equipment used in previous labs (e.g. cookie cutters, blenders, tin openers)
- Containers or bags for taking food home

Optional extras

- Blindfolds for sensory exploration, if appropriate for your group

Before this session

- ✓ Check the "Before each session" checklist before running this lab.
- ✓ Set up the "Mystery Ingredient" combinations in advance.
- ✓ Prepare a flexible range of equipment and presentation options so children can design and present their own experiments.
- ✓ Plan how you will support idea generation (e.g. prompts, linking back to previous labs).
- ✓ If using heat or more complex equipment, plan how this will be led and safely supervised.
- ✓ Decide how you will celebrate and close the session (e.g. sharing, certificates, group reflection).

Session snapshot



Use this page for a quick overview of suggested timings, activities and key facilitation tips. Each activity matches a slide with the same name in this session's slide deck.

Activity	Facilitator guidance
Predict + Prepare 15–25 minutes	
Welcome to Food Labs	Remind children they're food scientists and frame the session as an experiment. Emphasise that the session is guided by them, with no pressure to taste.
Think Like Scientists	Encourage reflection. Invite children to share what they noticed or enjoyed, without comparing or judging. Reinforce “scientist behaviours” (e.g. “you explored”, “you predicted”).
Make a Prediction	Support idea generation. Keep suggestions broad (e.g. “try again”, “mix ideas”, “change something”) and avoid steering towards one type of experiment.
Set Up Your Lab	Frame safety as part of good science. Model safe tool use and encourage children to ask for help where needed.
Test + Tinker 20–45 minutes	
Flavour Match-up	Encourage curiosity through the senses. Invite children to smell and explore ingredients before naming them. Ask open questions (e.g. “What might go together?”) and avoid directing combinations.
Mystery Ingredients	Keep the focus on noticing, not getting it right. Encourage children to describe textures, shapes or smells before identifying foods. If you completed the Texture Lab, link back to this learning. Reinforce that uncertainty is part of experimenting.
The Big Experiment 20–40 minutes	
Ready, Steady, Cook!	Support collaborative decision-making. Run in small groups and give time for children to share ideas before agreeing on one experiment. Frame experimentation clearly. Prompt thinking (e.g. “What are you testing or changing?” or “What do you think will happen?”). Encourage adults to step back during making. Allow children to lead, intervening only for safety or support. Avoid suggesting “better” combinations.
Results + Reflection 10–20 minutes	
Sharing is Caring	Guide reflection through noticing. Invite children to talk about what they made, what worked and what surprised them. Eat together, if possible. Keep the focus on discovery rather than liking or finishing food. End by celebrating participation (e.g. by using the Scientist Certificates in the Appendix).
Home Experiment 5–10 minutes	
The Home Lab	Encourage families to continue exploring together. Reinforce thinking like scientists, with no expectation to cook or taste.

6. Reflection and shared learning

This section offers practical guidance to help you reflect on Food Labs sessions and build confidence over time. It also explains how you can share feedback and learning to help shape future Food Labs resources and sessions.

6.1 Reflect and build confidence

Food Labs is all about experimenting and learning – for facilitators too. Taking a few minutes to reflect after each session can help you notice what worked well, adapt activities over time and build confidence in delivering Food Labs.

There are two simple ways to reflect on how sessions have gone, both included in the Appendix:

Food Labs Family Feedback Form

A short, flexible form you can use to gather feedback from children and families about what they enjoyed, what felt helpful and any ideas for future sessions. This can help you understand what landed well and what families may want more of.

Facilitator Reflection Log

A practical prompt sheet to help you reflect on the session yourself – including what worked well, what you might adapt and anything to build on next time.

Use whichever feels most helpful for your setting and the way you run sessions. These are there to support your thinking, not create extra paperwork.

6.2 Share your learning

We'd love to hear how you get on with Food Labs.

Hearing what worked well, what needed adapting and what families responded to can help us strengthen future resources, highlight useful ideas and shape the future of Food Labs.

You can share your learning in whichever way feels easiest:



Facilitator Feedback Form

Use [this short facilitator survey](#) to tell us:

- what worked well
- any challenges or ideas for improvement
- suggestions for future labs

Lab Report

If you'd like to capture a session in more detail, you can use the Lab Report template in the Appendix.

This is a chance to:

- celebrate what children and families enjoyed
- note useful adaptations
- share ideas and examples that could help other settings

You can send completed Lab Reports to: PublicHealthHampshire@hants.gov.uk

Even a few quick comments can help make Food Labs better for other children, families and facilitators. Thank you for being part of it.



7. Appendix: Printable resources

This appendix includes optional printable resources and templates to support Food Labs delivery.

7.1 What's included

You can use whichever of these resources feel most helpful for your group, setting and the way you run sessions:

- **Food Labs Access Pass** – lanyard-sized passes to help children step into the Food Labs scientist role and build excitement at the start of sessions.
- **Food Labs Experiment Log** – a child-friendly handout that can be used alongside any lab or home experiment to record observations, surprises and favourite moments.
- **Food Labs Family Feedback Form** – a short, flexible form facilitators can use to gather feedback from children and families about what they enjoyed, what felt helpful and any ideas for future sessions.
- **Facilitator Reflection Log** – a practical prompt sheet to help facilitators notice what worked well and what they may want to adapt next time.
- **Lab Report Template** – a simple way to capture and celebrate what children and families explored, enjoyed and discovered.
- **Food Labs Scientist Certificate** – a certificate to celebrate curiosity, experiments and discoveries made throughout Food Labs, which can be used in the final lab.



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0307



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0308



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0309



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0302



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0301



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0303



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0313



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0334



 **LABORATORY**
LEVEL 8 CLEARANCE

SCIENTIST

ID: 26-0097-0389



Food Labs Experiment Log

Name: _____ Date: _____



1. My prediction

What are we exploring today? What do you think might happen?
Write or draw your ideas.



2. What I noticed

What did you notice with your senses?

3. Something that surprised me was...



4. Something I enjoyed doing today was...

Food Labs Family Feedback Form

Thank you for taking part in Food Labs today. Your feedback helps us make future sessions even better.

1. Who are you?

- ☐ I'm a child ☐ I'm an adult

2. Overall, how did today's Food Labs session feel?

- ☐ Loved it 😊
☐ Liked it 😊
☐ It was okay 😐
☐ Didn't really enjoy it 😞

3. What did you enjoy most today? (Tick any that apply)

- ☐ Exploring different colours of food
☐ Touching, smelling or playing with food
☐ Preparing food together
☐ Eating together
☐ Having choice over what to try
☐ Something else:



4. Did today help you feel more confident around food?

- ☐ Yes, a lot
☐ Yes, a little
☐ Not really
☐ Not at all

5. Is there anything you tried today that surprised you?

- ☐ Yes – what was it?

- ☐ No
☐ I didn't try anything new today (and that's okay)

6. Would you come to another Food Labs session?

- ☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No

7. One thing that would make Food Labs even better next time:

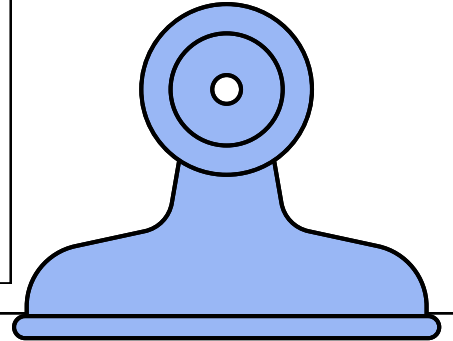
Facilitator Reflection Log



Use this log to capture what worked well, what you noticed and anything you'd like to adapt for next time.

Date: _____

Lab: _____



Overall reflections

- What stands out most to you from this session?

Atmosphere

- Did everyone seem relaxed and comfortable?
- Did the space feel welcoming and low-pressure?
- Was anyone overwhelmed or needing extra support?

Engagement

- Which activities worked particularly well?
- What seemed to spark curiosity or enjoyment?
- Were there moments where children lost interest or needed a different approach?

Inclusion

- Did everyone have a way to take part?
- Were activities accessible for different needs, communication styles and confidence levels?
- Did anyone need more choice, structure or reassurance?

Facilitation

- Did I model curiosity and low-pressure language?
- Did I give children enough time and space to explore?
- Is there anything I would explain or pace differently next time?



Practicalities

- Was the session length about right?
- Did the room set-up and equipment support the activities well?
- Is there anything practical I'd change next time?

Next time

- What should I definitely keep doing?
- What would I tweak next time?
- Is there anything to build on in the next session?



Lab Report: Our Food Labs Experience



What did we explore?



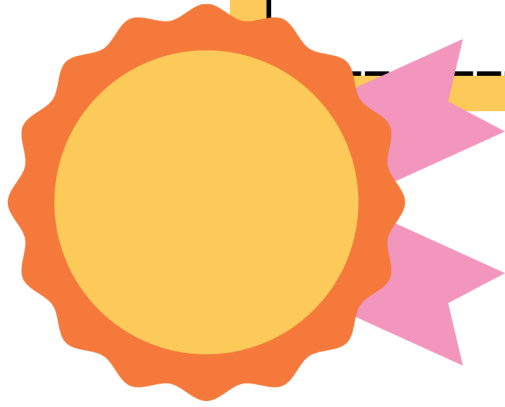
What went well?

What surprised us?

What would we tell others?

FOOD LABS

SCIENTIST



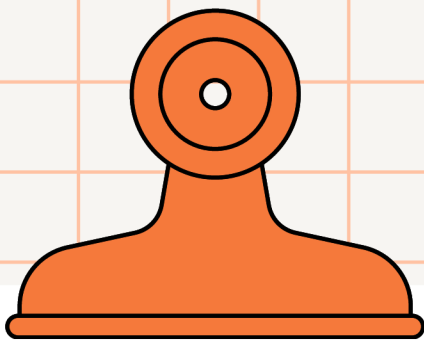
Awarded to:

A dashed rectangular box for writing the recipient's name, with a solid horizontal line at the bottom.

For:

- curious exploring
- brilliant noticing
- great questions
- taking part in your own way





**ROSE HARVEY
& CO**



Working with
Hampshire
County Council