



# FOCUS ON FRUITS



**Begin each nutrition education lesson with a short physical activity break from the card set provided by IDPH. Have fun and get active with your students!**

## Objectives

Learn that strawberries and rhubarb are fruits that are grown in Iowa.

Explore the taste and appearance of strawberries and rhubarb.

## Supplies Needed

May

Pick a **better snack**™ & **Act** bingo card

Kindergarten: “Strawberry Seeds” coloring page

## Tasting Opportunities

Featured Fruits:

Strawberries  
Rhubarb

## Background

**Strawberries** are thought to have originated with the Romans, maybe as far back as the Greeks. The name “strawberry” may have resulted from children in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who threaded the berries on straw and sold them.

Strawberries are grown on a small, perennial (survives more than one growing season) plant that must be harvested by hand. Strawberries can be grown in Iowa during the spring. They are the first fruit to ripen in the spring. Over three-fourths of the nation’s strawberries are grown in California. The growing season for strawberries in California lasts almost year-round.

After strawberries are harvested, they are taken to refrigerated facilities within 24 hours. California strawberries are shipped to Iowa by refrigerated trucks. Hand picking and refrigerating immediately ensures good quality to far-away locations. California also ships strawberries to Japan, Mexico and Canada.

We eat the “fruit” part of the plant. The red fruit grows after a small white blossom blooms. Each strawberry has about 200 seeds on the outside skin. In Iowa, we harvest the fruit in June.

Strawberries contain vitamin C, folic acid, potassium and fiber. Eight fresh strawberries provide approximately the same amount of vitamin C as an orange.

**Rhubarb** is a very old plant that dates back to ancient China in 2700 BC. At that time, it was used for medicinal purposes. The roots of the Chinese variety are still used in medicine today.

Marco Polo is thought to have influenced the introduction of rhubarb to Europe. The first record of rhubarb as a food was in 1778 in Europe (used as a filling for tarts and pies). Rhubarb was thought to have come to the United States in early 1800.

Rhubarb is a perennial plant that we usually eat and harvest in the spring, when the stalks are tender. It can be grown in Iowa. Only the stalks (petioles) should be eaten because the leaves contain moderately poisonous oxalic acid.

Rhubarb can be eaten raw, but you may want to dip it in sugar because it is very sour. It can also be made into fillings for breads and cakes, as well as into pies, jams and jellies.

### Web Site Resources

[www.idph.state.ia.us/pickabettersnack](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/pickabettersnack)  
[www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org)  
[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)  
[www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard](http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard)  
[www.rhubarbinfo.com](http://www.rhubarbinfo.com)

### Do the Activity: Kindergarten

Distribute the “Strawberry Seeds” coloring page to each student. Have the students draw 20 seeds on the strawberry. Write the number “20” on the chalkboard. Count to 20 as a class. Children can practice writing the number 20.

Strawberries are different from most fruits in that their seeds are produced on the outside of the fruit instead of the inside. Their red color and plentiful seeds make them very attractive to birds.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

Make a list of red fruits on the board. *Strawberries, rhubarb, cherries, cranberries, red apples, watermelon, red pears, red grapefruit, raspberries*

Make a list of red **fruit-flavored** food items they like to eat. *Strawberry ice cream, cherry gelatin, watermelon bubble gum, strawberry sucker, etc.*

### Talk It Over: Kindergarten

Compare the number of seeds on their strawberry to the strawberry with 200 seeds. Can they taste the seeds when they eat a strawberry? Do they see seeds in strawberry flavored foods like candy and gelatin, like Jell-O®)? Explain to students that a food can have a flavor added that tastes like strawberry but there may not be any real strawberries in it.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

Review the list of red fruits. How are they similar? How are they different? Are they familiar with all of the fruits?

Review the list of fruit-flavored food items. How are they different from the actual fruits? Does watermelon bubble gum

have real watermelon in it? *No.*

How would they find out if a food item had real fruit in it? *The label on the front may say that it does and they can always look at the ingredient list to make sure.*

### Apply:

When might you eat strawberries? *(for breakfast, lunch, snack, anytime)* Why do you have to pick strawberries when they are ripe? *(They do not ripen once they are picked.)*

There are many ways to eat strawberries. Raise your hand if you have eaten strawberries in any of the following ways:

Fresh, holding the leaves and eating from the bottom all the way up to the leaves

Fresh, cut up on cereal

In a fruit salad

In a smoothie

In muffins

How many of you have eaten fresh rhubarb? Is it sweet or sour? *(It is very sour and can be dipped in sugar.)*

Have you ever eaten rhubarb that has been baked or cooked as a filling in breads, cakes, or pie?

Can you think of other ways to eat rhubarb or strawberries?

Strawberries are a good source of vitamin C. Vitamin C helps cuts heal and fight infections. Rhubarb also has vitamin C, along with fiber to help food move through our bodies.

Do you think you would get more strawberries in a strawberry smoothie made with strawberries, bananas, ice, yogurt, and orange juice, or from strawberry soda pop? *(You were right if you thought you would get more strawberries in the strawberry smoothie. Strawberry pop doesn't actually have strawberries in it. It just has the flavor of strawberries.)*



### Tasting Opportunity

Have students wash their hands.

Wash the strawberries for the students to sample. Have the students hold the stem and eat!

Wash and cut the rhubarb for the students to sample. They may want to dip it in sugar.

Students can put an "X" through the bingo square of the fruit that they sampled.

How would you get a strawberry ready to eat as a snack?  
Strawberry – **Wash. Eat. (How easy is that?)**

How would you get rhubarb ready for a snack?  
Rhubarb – **Wash. Slice. Eat. (How easy is that?)**

On the back of the Pick a **better** snack™ & **Act** bingo card for each month, there is information for their parents and grandparents. Tell your family about tasting strawberries and rhubarb.

### Extend the Activity



#### Art, Music & PE

Teach a variation of a counting rhyme. As a student starts jumping rope, chant:

“Strawberries, strawberries in a dish,  
“How many strawberries do you wish?”

Then count how many times the student can jump before missing.



#### Language Arts & Reading

Read The Mother’s Day Mice by Eve Bunting, New York, Clarion Books, 1986. This book highlights the surprise that Middle Mouse was getting for Mother. Or read The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry, and The Big Hungry Bear by Don & Audrey Wood, New York, Child’s Play, 1984. Little Mouse worries that the big, hungry bear will take his freshly picked ripe, red strawberry for himself.



#### Math

Place numeral cards (1-20 or 1-30) in a learning center along with strawberry models such as found in “Fruity Fun Counters.” ([www.enasco.com](http://www.enasco.com) for about \$17.95) The students could work with a partner to create sets of strawberries that match the numeral on the card drawn from a pile of cards.



#### Science & Health

Read Jamberry by Bruce Degen, New York, Harper Festival, 1995. Place strawberries and rhubarb at a learning center. Consider, also, placing the other berries from the book in the center if available.



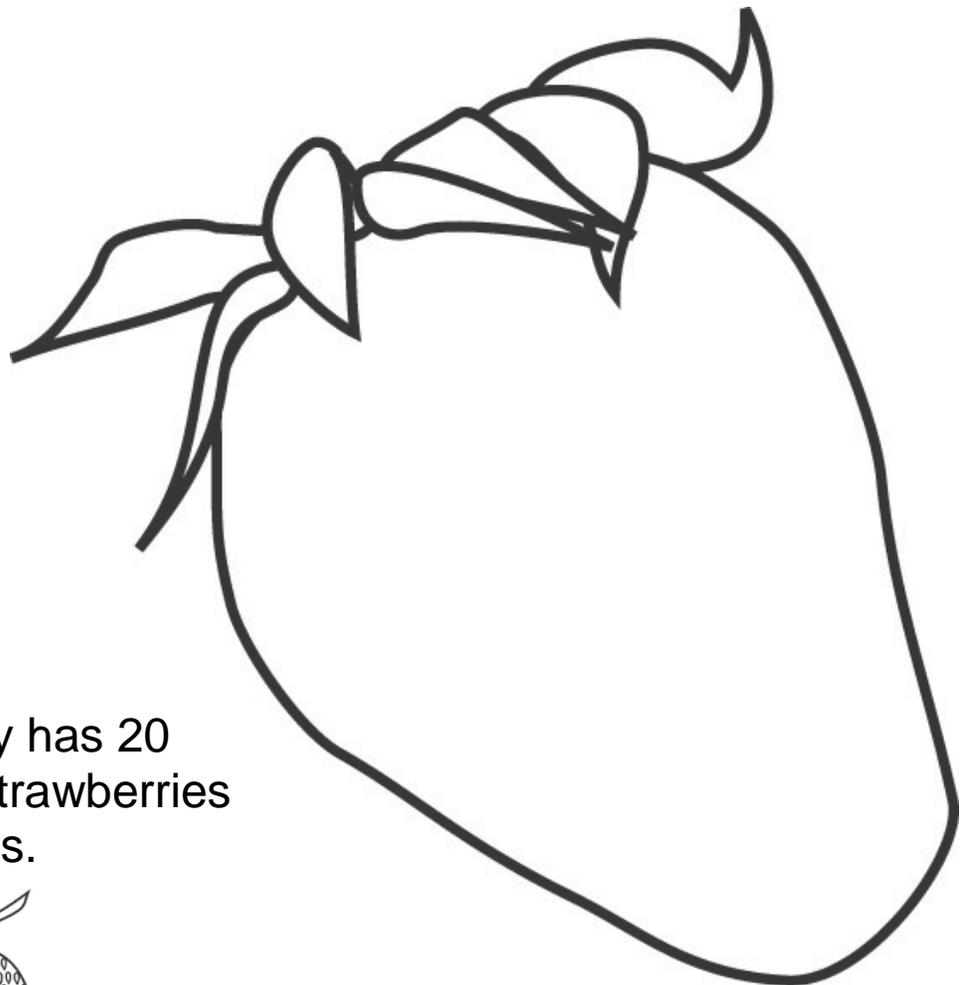
#### Social Studies

Encourage students to ask their parents to take them to a strawberry-picking farm if your community has one.

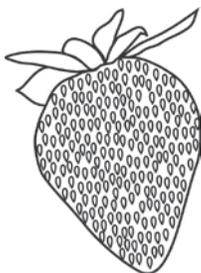
How would California strawberries travel to Iowa? Could a bicycle, horse, boat, truck, airplane or train deliver them? Do they need to be refrigerated? (yes)

# Strawberry Seeds

Draw 20 seeds on the strawberries and then color the picture.

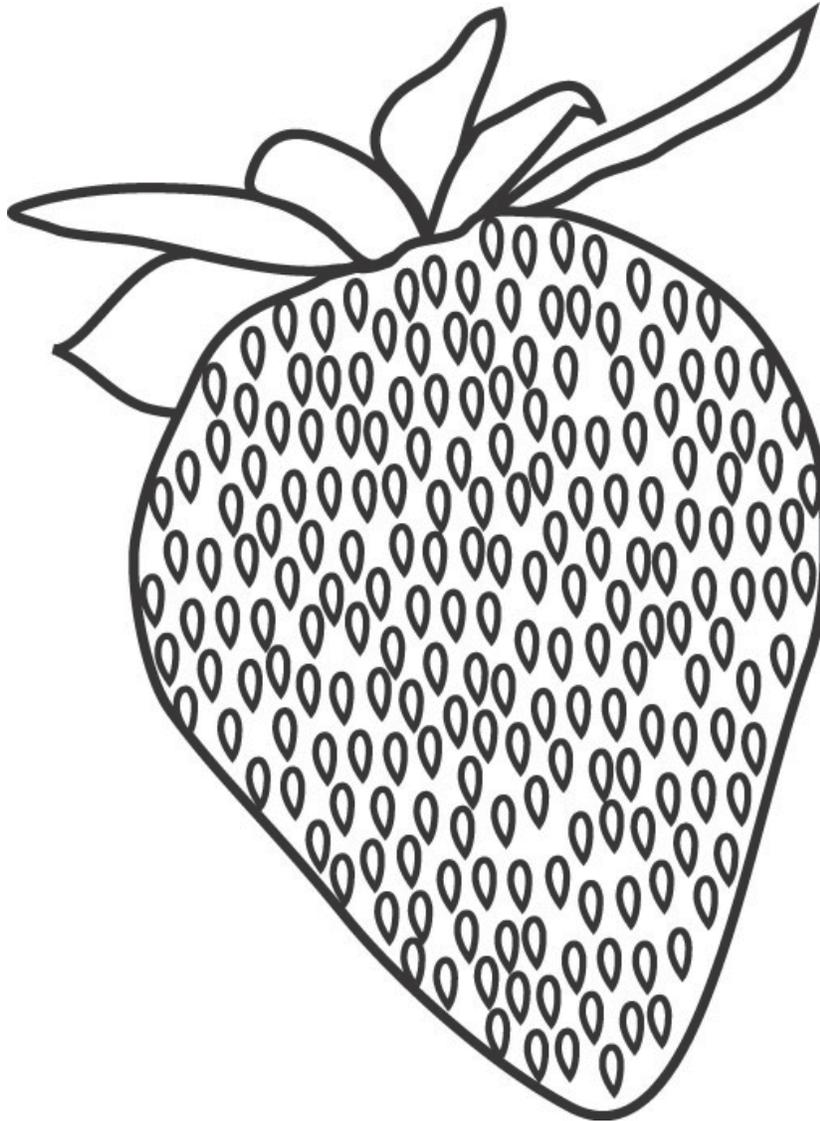


This strawberry has 20 seeds. Most strawberries have 200 seeds.





# Strawberry Seeds



**200 Seeds**