



Niche Products, What Do They Really Mean?

Middle School Food and Agricultural Literacy Curriculum

Precepts

- B. Relationships
- B5. Participate effectively as a team member.

National Standards

- PS.03.04.01.a. Explain sustainable agriculture and objectives associated with the strategy.
- CS.01.02.02.b. Utilize communication skills to collaborate in a group setting.
- NL-ENG.K-12.12 – Applying Language Skills
- NL-ENG.K-12.4 – Communication Skills
- NS.5-8.3 – Life Science

Student Learning Objectives

- As a result of this **unit** the students will...
- Recognize common production systems used in the United States.
- As a result of this **lesson** the students will...
- Define niche animal production methods.

Content Outline

- I. **Niche animal production terms**
 - A. Niche – A place, employment, status or activity for which a person or thing is best fitted, or specialized market.
 - B. Certified – USDA has officially evaluated a meat product for class, grade, or other quality characteristics
 - C. Free Range – Allowed to range and forage with relative freedom
 - D. Natural – A product containing no artificial ingredients or added color and is only minimally processed
 - E. Organic – Food produced without employment of chemically formulated fertilizers, growth stimulants, antibiotics, or pesticides
 - 1. Antibiotic-free
 - 2. Hormone-free

Time

Instruction time for this lesson: 45 minutes.

Resources

Free-range. (n.d.) Merriam-Webster's online dictionary (11th ed.). Retrieved on July 29, 2009, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Free-range> — Meat and poultry labeling terms. (n.d.) Retrieved July 29, 2009, from United States Department of Agriculture: Official Website: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/FactSheets/Meat_Poultry_Labeling_Terms/index.asp — niche. (2010). In Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Retrieved June 2, 2010, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/niche> — Organic. (n.d.) Merriam-Webster's online dictionary (11th ed.). Retrieved on July 29, 2009, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Organic>

Tools, Equipment, and Supplies

- MS.AS.2.2.AS.A – one per class, cut up prior to class
- MS.AS.2.2.AS.B – one per student
- Resources – periodicals, a dictionary, a computer with Internet access
- MS.AS.2.2.ASSESS.A – one per student

Key Terms

The following terms are presented in this lesson and appear in **bold italics**:

Certified
Free-range
Natural
Niche
Organic

Interest Approach

Initiate a discussion with your students on the methods of communication that we use. Why do they use these methods? Most are personal preference; we will then relate the idea of personal preference to options available through the niche food market.

Hello! Let's get started. Think of all the different ways you have communicated with others in the last 24 hours. When I say GO, we will write the different methods of communication we have used on a piece of scratch paper with a writing utensil. We will have one minute. What questions are there? GO!



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Students should craft a list of communication methods such as: phone, e-mail, instant message, text, face-to-face, etc.

Time is up! Count how many different ways of communication you have used.

Those are some impressive lists! Why do we use so many different methods? Wouldn't one work just as well?

Discussion should focus on the fact that some methods work better to contact certain people.

So what I hear is that some of us prefer certain methods over others. This preference becomes our **niche**. A **niche** is a preference for texting instead of talking on the phone; or a preference for cooking instead of eating out; or a preference for developing our SAEs over developing a balance between SAE work and book work. It's simply something that we are best suited for doing, or something that is best suited for us to thrive.

You might check for understanding here. Observe reactions and/or ask for other examples of niches that students can identify with.

Today we are going to dive into niche production methods or ways to specially raise food products.

Summary of Content and Teaching Strategies

Objective 1. Define niche animal production methods.

Students will be divided into four groups; each group will become an "expert" on one area of niche production. They will then return to a different group with which they will share their knowledge.

As Americans, we love options and there are more options every day. From food to fashion, items become trendy and in style, but what does it mean to purchase an "**organic**" product?

Solicit responses from students. Do not focus on the right answer but instead get a feel for what their current view is.

How about a "**natural**" product?

Solicit responses from students. Do not focus on the right answer but instead get a feel for what their current view is.

Today we are going to examine exactly what these words mean. We can make better decisions at the grocery store by becoming better educated consumers.

Each of you will have the opportunity to learn to teach today. Other students will be depending on your teaching to gather the information they need.

What will happen if you are not a responsible team member?

Anticipated responses: team will not finish, the team will have a poor product, and team members will be disappointed in you.

How does being responsible help you in your day-to-day activities?

Anticipated responses: adults are more trusting of you, you are allowed to make decisions on your own, and you are trusted with more responsibilities by those around you.

Learning responsibility may be the most important skill you can develop to earn the trust of adults and other students around you. If you learn to be responsible, people will identify you as a trustworthy person, giving you more opportunities than you would have had otherwise.

When I say GO, you will line up in the front of the room by your birthday, January 1st to my left, December 31st to my right. Oh, and there will be no talking. GO!

While students are lining up, create four sections in the classroom and lay one of the terms and definitions from **MS.AS.2.2.AS.A** in each section. This is the term they will be responsible for teaching others later in the activity.

Great job! I will number you off and you are to report to your section with this activity sheet and a writing utensil.

Distribute **MS.AS.2.2.AS.B**.

Each of your groups has a different term and definition; you will learn the term and definition as a group.



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You are also to spend some time brainstorming and researching examples of this production method. At the end of five minutes, you should have your term, definition, and examples written down and be ready to teach others. GO!

Supervise student work. Groups may need help to identify useful resources in the room to find examples of this product: periodicals, a dictionary, a computer with Internet access. If possible, going to the library might be helpful for this activity. If you choose to have students access the Internet for this project, check that they are using credible websites, such as the United States Department of Agriculture site.

Your time is up! When I say GO, you will number off in your group 1-4, and then take your activity sheet and writing utensil to your new group. GO!

You have 10 minutes for each person in your group to share about your "expert" area. Be sure to capture the information on your activity sheet. You may begin.

Supervise the groups to ensure everyone shares and everyone leaves the group with a completed activity

Time is up. Return to your seat with your completed activity sheet.

Of the four methods we discussed today, which term applies to all meat products available for sale in the store?

Student response: All meat available in a store is certified by USDA.

Which term applies to products that are raised without the use of growth hormones, fertilizers, or stimulants? What are some examples you might find in a store?

Student response: Organic: common products include produce and eggs.

Which term applies to those animals that are allowed to range and forage outside during their growth process? What are some examples?

Student response: Free Range: common products are poultry and pork.

Which term refers to the avoiding of artificial colors and ingredients in the production process?

What are some examples?

Student response: Natural: can be found in a variety of minimally processed foods such as whole poultry parts.

If possible, provide examples of products or labels showing these terms.

If we were in a grocery store and had the option of purchasing a product that was labeled in one of these four ways, which would you select and why?

Who would like to share?

It sounds like you have a good understanding of what these terms mean, but next you will have a chance to prove it!

Review/Summary

To review, use the Party Host e-Moment®. Five students will be needed. One of the students will act as a "host" of the party; each of the other four will enter the room "acting" like one of the four terms of the day. The host is guessing which term they are representing.

Next, we will prove you know the terms of the day. I will need a host for our party. Who will serve as the host? Thank you for volunteering! Step outside the room until we come to get you.

We now need guests for our party; I need four volunteers. Who would like to play? Thanks for volunteering. Each of you will act out one of the four words of the day using words and actions. It is important you stay in your character during the entire party.

If students seem stuck, brainstorm with the entire class ways they could portray that role.

Great! It is time for the party!

Welcome the host back in. Each guest interacts with the host as if they were arriving at the party. When the host is ready they can begin guessing who the characters are. If they get stuck, encourage the class to help with clues.

After today, we are better able to interpret the words used to describe food products, especially those raised under conditions different from the standard. The next time we visit a grocery store, let's see which ones we can find.



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Application

Extended classroom activity:

Visit a local business that incorporates an aspect of niche production or visit the grocery store and identify the niche products. Another option for students is to create their own propaganda flyer or poster about a niche market of their choice.

FFA activity:

At an FFA meeting or other function, serve examples of "niche" products or investigate local niche markets.

SAE activity:

Research three ways you could incorporate a "niche" aspect into a possible or your current SAE.

Evaluation

MS.AS.2.2.ASSESS.A.

Answers to Evaluation

1. B
2. D
3. A
4. C
5. Answers will vary.



Certified	USDA has officially evaluated a meat product for class, grade, or other quality characteristics
Free Range	Allowed to range and forage with relative freedom
Natural	A product containing no artificial ingredient or added color and is only minimally processed
Organic	Food produced without employment of chemically formulated fertilizers, growth stimulants, antibiotics, or pesticides



Niche Production Methods

Term	Definition	Examples of Products
Certified		
Free Range		
Natural		
Organic		



Types of Niche Production

Directions: Match the letter of the definition to the term by placing the letter in the blank provided.

Term	Definition
____ 1. Certified	A. A product containing no artificial ingredient or added color and is only minimally processed
____ 2. Free Range	B. USDA has officially evaluated a meat product for class, grade, or other quality characteristics
____ 3. Natural	C. Food produced without employment of chemically formulated fertilizers, growth stimulants, antibiotics, or pesticides
____ 4. Organic	D. Allowed to range and forage with relative freedom

5. If you were to select one of the above food products, which would you chose and why?
