

Your favourite meal

Time: 15 minutes

Whole class

Purpose

To make a spot check on the sustainability of our favourite meals
To explore needs, wants and opportunities in the context of designing for ourselves
To use existing, familiar objects to inform our design thinking

Materials needed

None

Background to the task

We seldom think about sustainable design in much of what we do everyday. Today we will think about eating. Each student is to think about his or her favourite meal. Ask them to close their eyes and imagine they are eating it! Then raise some sustainability issues relating to food e.g.

- How are the raw materials grown or produced? Are they organic? Or do they rely on synthetic fertilisers and pesticides?
- Are they fair-traded?
- How far do the raw materials have to travel? Do they require refrigerated transport? Are they carried by lorry / ship / train / plane?
- How much meat is used?
- How much is wasted during preparation?
- How much energy is used in cooking the meal?
- Is it a ready-made meal or cooked at home? The latter preserves traditional skills.

These could be on the board.

Carrying out the task

Ask a few participants (6-8) to get up and place themselves along a continuum from one end of the room to another. Those who have thought carefully about some of the issues should place themselves at one end: those who have not thought about them at the other, with gradations in between. Ask them to explain what their meals are and why they have placed themselves in the positions they have chosen.

Ask pupils not involved in the line-up to comment on whether or not they think that the pupils have placed themselves correctly and ask them to move accordingly. Use this as an opportunity to discuss the issues.

Now ask the whole class to brainstorm suggestions on how the favourite meals described could be made more sustainable.

Recording results

Not essential but key issues could be written up for homework.

Extensions

Organise a debate on the pros and cons of organic farming or fair-traded food. This could be done in conjunction with science and citizenship teachers.

Alternatively ask groups of students to prepare PowerPoint presentations on the same themes. Some teams could put the arguments for organic food production or fair-traded food: others could put the arguments for chemically sustained agri-business as the best way to feed people in emergencies or buying supermarket brand products from large, wealthy producers.