



..... THIS MONTH
WE'RE HARVESTING
Melons!

In This Issue



AND MORE!

Farmer Spotlight

**TOMMY BOTTOMS - TREMONT FARMS
DIXON, CA**



In 2022, Tommy Bottoms and his wife, Mandi, launched Tremont Farms near Davis, California. After earning his PhD in plant sciences at UC Davis, Bottoms decided he wanted to farm himself

rather than stay in academia. Before starting his own operation, he gained hands-on experience working with other farmers in the area. Today, he and Mandi manage 6,000 acres planted with a mix of crops, including four types of melons: hami, cantaloupe, honeydew, and watermelon.

Seedless watermelon has been a special focus for Bottoms over the past five years. Planting starts each spring when the soil warms, usually in April, so harvest lines up with summer demand. Tractors build raised beds for each row. Later, workers ride behind a tractor and plant young watermelon plants by hand. They add water to each plant to help it grow strong roots.

Drip irrigation keeps water flowing to the roots while keeping the fruit dry. Bees are just as important as water. "The real heroes

of watermelon production are the bees," Bottoms said. "We do everything in our power to create an environment where the bees are happy and willing to work." Watermelon vines grow bright yellow flowers that must be pollinated for the fruit to form. Once pollinated, the melons take about 45 days to ripen.

Knowing when a watermelon is ready to harvest takes a trained eye. Growers look for the right size, check for the pale spot on the underside, and watch a small tendril near the stem that dries out as the fruit matures. Many will also tap the melon and listen for a clear ping instead of a dull thud.

Fields are harvested in stages. "A single field will be picked two or three times," said Bottoms. "That first pick usually brings in about half the crop." Melons are sorted by size, packed into bins, and loaded onto trucks bound for grocery stores, distribution centers, and food service buyers. Some of Bottoms' watermelons even end up at his daughters' elementary school, where students get to taste them fresh in the classroom. "Being able to share our melons with the community is always rewarding," he said. "We're proud to grow a fruit that everyone can enjoy."

FOOD for FUEL



Melons provide unique health benefits. They are full of essential vitamins and a natural source of beneficial antioxidants.

**HERE ARE SOME OF THE HEALTH BENEFITS
OF INCLUDING MELONS IN YOUR DIET:**

Immune System SUPPORT

Cantaloupe and honeydew melons are packed with vitamin C, which helps keep your body healthy and fight off sickness.

Healthy HEART

Watermelon contains an antioxidant called lycopene, which gives the fruit its red color. Lycopene helps protect your body's cells from damage and supports heart health.

Hydration HELP

Melons like watermelon and honeydew are mostly water. Eating them helps you stay hydrated, which helps your body feel good and makes it easier for food to move through your body.



STRAWBERRY-MELON SUMMER SALAD

Making a fresh fruit salad is a fun and tasty way to enjoy seasonal fruits while practicing safe cutting and measuring skills. With kid-safe knives and melon ballers, kids can help wash, slice, and mix colorful ingredients. It's an easy recipe that turns teamwork into a healthy snack for everyone to share. Yields six 1-cup servings.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup plain or vanilla yogurt
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 cups watermelon balls
- 2 cups cantaloupe balls
- 2 cups fresh strawberries

Tools:

Melon baller, knife and cutting board, measuring cup, juicer, large bowl and tongs for serving

Directions:

1. Gently wash the strawberries under cold running water. Remove the tops and cut the berries into quarters.
2. Wash the melons under cold running water. Slice them open and scoop out the seeds.
3. Cut the melons into cubes or use a melon baller to scoop out melon balls.
4. Combine the melon pieces and strawberries in a large bowl.
5. Measure and pour the yogurt and lemon juice over the fruit mixture.
6. Gently fold the yogurt into the fruit until everything is coated.
7. Serve right away and enjoy a fresh, colorful snack!



Always check student information, especially allergies, before preparing or serving food to keep everyone safe. (Adapted from seedstosuccess.com)



Watermelon Fractions

Melons can help us see fractions in action! By slicing round watermelon slices into equal parts, students will get hands-on practice with partitioning shapes, identifying fractions, and discovering equivalencies.

Materials: Watermelon, kid-safe knives, paper plates or plastic trays, worksheet (page 3)

Objectives:

Students will create equal parts of a whole and name those parts using fraction language (halves, fourths, eighths) by cutting a watermelon slice. Working in groups, they will compare the sizes of fractions and recognize equivalencies by modeling with melon slices and worksheet practice.

California Standards: CC Math: 2.G.A.3, 3.NF.A.1, 3.NF.A.3, 4.NF.A.1; CC ELA: SL.2-4.1

Procedure:

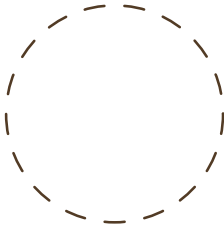
1. Prior to the lesson, wash and slice the watermelon into 1-inch rounds. Place each round on a plastic tray with a kid-safe knife. Review or establish classroom norms for using knives and working cooperatively in groups.
2. Show the class a whole round watermelon slice. Ask: "Right now this is one whole. If we cut it into parts, how can we make sure each person gets a fair share?" Record student ideas about equal parts on the board.
3. Divide students into groups and give each group a watermelon slice, plates/napkins, and worksheets. Students follow the worksheet instructions to cut their slice into halves, fourths, and eighths, drawing their slices at each stage.
4. After each group completes the worksheet, bring the class back together for a group discussion. Invite students to share what they noticed about fractions and equivalencies. Record new discoveries and equivalencies on the board. Conclude by asking: "Why do fractions need to be equal parts? How do we know when two fractions are equivalent?"
5. Optional: Allow groups to eat their fractions as a closing activity, reinforcing the idea of "fair shares."

Watermelon Fractions

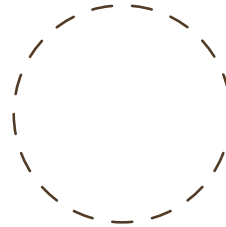
Today we'll use a round slice of watermelon to explore fractions. Follow the steps with your group, then answer the practice questions at the bottom.

Part 1: Cutting Your Watermelon Slice

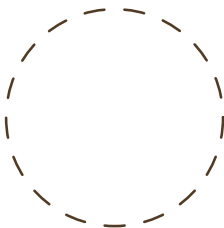
Start with your whole slice. Look at the circle shape of your watermelon. Right now, it is one whole (1). Draw your whole slice here:



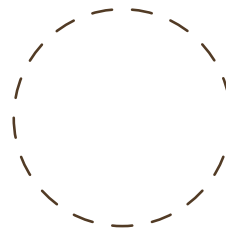
Carefully cut your circle straight across the middle. Now you have 2 equal parts. Each piece is called one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$). Draw your halves here:



Take each half and cut it in half again. Now you have 4 equal parts. Each piece is called one-fourth ($\frac{1}{4}$). Draw your fourths here:



Take each fourth and cut it in half. Now you have 8 equal parts. Each piece is called one-eighth ($\frac{1}{8}$). Draw your eighths here:



Part 2: Equivalent Fractions

Shade half of each watermelon, then write the equivalent fractions.



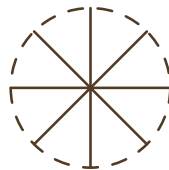
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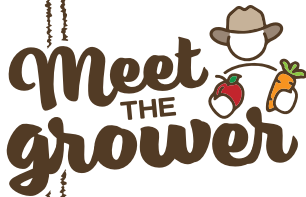


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Extra Challenge:

A watermelon is sliced into 10 equal pieces. 5 pieces are eaten. What fraction of the watermelon is eaten?

A watermelon is cut into 8 equal slices. 3 slices are eaten. What fraction of the watermelon is left?



In this video interview, melon farmer Tommy Bottoms of Tremont Farms shares the sweet story behind his family's farming operation. From his early dreams of working the land to the unique challenges and rewards of growing watermelons, Tommy gives us a behind-the-vines look at what it takes to bring these summertime favorites from field to table.



DIG DEEPER

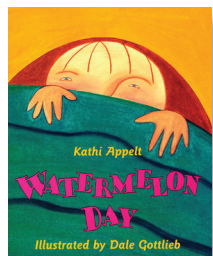
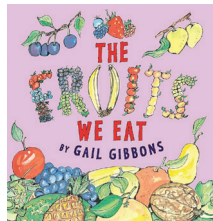
These books, websites, and other resources will help you and your students learn more about melons.

BOOKS

The Fruits We Eat

by Gail Gibbons

This nonfiction book explains how different fruits grow, including cantaloupe and other melons, along with other favorites. It's clear, colorful, and age-appropriate for elementary students.



Watermelon Day

by Kathi Appelt

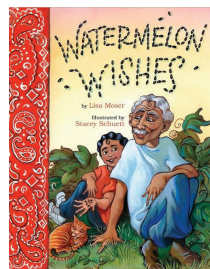
This fiction picture book tells the story of a young girl eagerly waiting for her homegrown watermelon to ripen. It introduces children to the basics of growing food by following the

planting, tending, and harvesting of a watermelon on a warm summer day.

Watermelon Wishes

by Lisa Moser

This fiction picture book shows a boy and his grandfather planting watermelon seeds and caring for them through the growing season. Readers learn about planting, watering, and waiting for watermelons to ripen while following a simple family story.



WEBSITES

watermelon.org

The Watermelon Board website shares fun watermelon facts, nutrition tips, and growing information. Visitors will find delicious recipes, kid-friendly activities, and helpful ideas for serving and storing watermelon.

learnaboutag.org

The California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom provides free resources to teachers. The resources highlight many of California's 350 agricultural commodities, including melons.

fruitsandveggies.org

Created by the Produce for Better Health Foundation, this website is a great source for learning about cantaloupe, honeydew, and watermelon. The site features nutrition facts, storage and handling guides, and recipes that make it easy for families to add more fresh fruit to their meals.

RESOURCES

Lesson Plan: Melons, Mitosis, and Meiosis (Grades 9-12)

By Utah Agriculture in the Classroom and National Center for Agricultural Literacy (NCAL)

In this lesson, students will apply the steps of mitosis and meiosis to understand how both seeded and seedless watermelons are produced. They will also learn about the discovery of colchicine, which made seedless watermelons possible.

Activity Plans: Watermelon Teacher Toolkit (Grades K-12)

By the Watermelon Board

Organized by subject area, this teacher toolkit includes worksheets and easy-to-follow activity plans to help students learn about watermelons. From hands-on science experiments to creative math exercises, this collection brings learning to life with a juicy twist.



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melons

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