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# MINT TEA

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LESSON PLAN



BY LA SEMILLA FOOD CENTER



## **Introduction**

Greetings, teachers! Welcome to this lesson on mint tea! This lesson plan offers you an overview of the activities, with additional information, sources, and optional activities that you might include around the lesson. The lesson can take between 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the student's reading speed and if they view the 25 minute story at the end. Activities are designed to be facilitated by the teacher, however, depending on the age level of the student, students can also work independently on some tasks.

### **Optional Pre-Work: Intro to remedies and mint**

Prior to beginning activity, have an initial conversation about plants as food flavorings and remedies. You might:

- Ask them if their families use plants as remedies.
- Mention that not all plants are edible – some are just used on the outside of the body – and if we want to learn about remedies we have to study with people who know.
- Share that scientists make medicines from plants.
- Introduce the subject of mint. Suggest to them that they already know some things about mint if they've ever had a minty candy (such as a candy cane) or used a minty toothpaste. Maybe they've already had mint tea.

Activity ideas that you might choose to integrate before or after students receive their kit are available on page 8 of this packet.

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## MINT TEA LESSON - CONTENT OVERVIEW

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### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Name one way people use mint
- Describe why plants make tannins
- Use adjectives to describe the taste of mint

### **Ground Rules & Safety**

Prior to beginning the activity, review the brief section in the student booklet titled “Get Ready to Explore Mint.” It lists behavioral and safety expectations. A flame symbol [🔥] appears wherever students are asked to work with hot elements. For young students, recommend that an adult help them heat up their water or they can use water from the faucet.

### **Baseline Assessment**

This optional activity aims to engage students by identifying what they already know the subject. The lesson will then reaffirm, complement, and clarify their existing knowledge. In this case, the activity (“Mint and Me”) invites students to draw or write what they know about mint. This can include if they’ve seen the plant, tasted it fresh or as a flavoring (including in candy), or had it as a remedy.

## **Background for teachers: History of Mint**

*This is an extended version of the section "Story and Uses of Mint" in the student booklet to be shared with students as applicable. Depending on the age level of students, have them read the "Story and Uses of Mint" section in their booklet independently or out loud with the class.*

The mint genus includes 25 species of herbs that are native to Eurasia, North America, southern Africa, and Australia [1]. Two commonly known herbs from this genus are Spearmint (*Mentha spicata*) and Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), which is a hybrid of spearmint and water mint (*Mentha aquatica*).

Spearmint is native to Europe and Asia, and it has become naturalized to North America and parts of Africa [2]. Peppermint was first cultivated in England in the late 17th century [1,3].

By the mid 1850s, peppermint candies were widely available in Europe. In America, mint flavored candies were made at home until Wrigley's gum was introduced in 1893, followed by peppermint LifeSavers approximately 10 years later [4].

## **Uses & Benefits of Mint**

Members of the mint genus have been used by different cultures [1]. People in Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome used mint to add flavor to foods, as a natural remedy, and for ceremonies. Today, mint is still a popular herb. It can be used fresh or dried, and it is a common food flavoring. Blending peppermint with spearmint results in 'double mint tea' [5].

Spearmint is a good source of Vitamin A, which is critical for eye health [6]. It also contains Iron, Manganese, and Folate. In addition, mint contains antioxidants, which protect cells from being damaged by free radicals (oxidative stress).

Many people use mint tea as a home remedy to settle an upset stomach. In clinical studies, peppermint oil has been shown to relieve indigestion and irritable bowel syndrome. Other studies on the benefits of inhaling the aroma of mint essential oil have demonstrated improvements in memory, decreased levels of frustration, anxiety and fatigue.

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[1] Petruzzello, M. "Mint." Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available [online](#).

[2] Petruzzello, M. "Spearmint." Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available [online](#).

[3] "Peppermint." Encyclopedia.com Available [online](#).

[4] Hesser, A. "Recipe Redux - 1897: Peppermints." New York Times Magazine. Available [online](#).

[5] "Peppermint Tea - A Cup full of Freshness." The Right Tea Blog. Available [online](#).

[6] Pearson, K. (2017). "8 Health Benefits of Mint." Healthline. Available [online](#).

## **Steeping Activity - “Tasting Tannins”**

*In this activity, students are introduced to the concept of tannins. This is an extended version of information provided in the student booklet.*

### **About Tannins**

Tannins are chemical compounds found in some plants that produce them as natural defense against pests [1]. Popular sources of tannins include tea, coffee, wine, and chocolate.

Tannins give these foods their astringent and bitter flavors. The longer a tea is steeped, the higher concentration of tannins in the infusion.

Tannins are flavorful and have some health benefits – they are anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antimicrobial. Some are being studied for their potentially cancer fighting effects. However, they also easily bind with proteins and minerals, including iron. This makes the body unable to absorb the iron. For people with normal iron levels, this is not a concern. However, if someone has an iron deficiency, it is recommended that they should eat iron rich foods at a different time than tannin-rich foods.

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[1] Hill, A. (2019) “What are tannins in tea, and do they have benefits?” Healthline. Available at:  
[www.healthline.com/nutrition/tannins-in-tea](http://www.healthline.com/nutrition/tannins-in-tea)

## **Steeping Activity - “Tasting Tannins”**

*(please refer to the student booklet)*

Supplies needed:

- 1 Mint tea bag
- 1 Cup of hot water
- 1 Teaspoon
- A Timer or Clock
- Pencil
- Activity handout

Instructions:

The student will steep a tea bag in a cup of hot water. At specific intervals, the student will take out a teaspoon of infusion and taste it. The student will record the flavor on the handout.

After completing the Tasting Log, students will make a mint tea with their second tea bag. Encourage them to steep the tea until it reaches the desired flavor and add sweetener if they would like.

Lastly, students are asked to reflect on how the mint flavor changed over time.

## Mint Tea Recipe

*(please refer to the student booklet)*

### Ingredients:

1 Mint tea bag

1 Cup of hot water

½ teaspoon honey or sugar (optional)

### Supplies:

1 Cup

1 Teaspoon

1 Clean plate or cup (optional)

Instructions: Students are asked to heat a cup of water and steep their tea bag for 5 minutes. They are encouraged to taste the tea as is before deciding to add sweetener.



## Closing Activity

In the final handout "Amazing Mint," three questions assess if Learning Objectives were met:

- How do people use mint?
- Why do plants make tannins?
- How does mint tea taste?

This section closes with an invitation to view the reading of My Tata's Remedies by Roni Capin Rivera-Ashford. To find the video, search for "HECHOS Tata's Remedies" on YouTube. The story is warmly read by Dr. César Cruz and lasts nearly 24 minutes. Students are asked to reflect on their family's use of plant remedies.



## **Additional Activity Ideas for Older Students**

### **Journaling Activity**

Invite students to use their senses to explore mint. They might work with a dried version (such as by opening a tea bag) or a fresh version (if there is mint in their home or garden). After looking at, touching, smelling, and tasting it, the student journals about what they saw, felt, smelled, or tasted.

### **Interview & Report**

Ask students to interview someone who knows about and works with plants. It may be someone in their family or community. The student will interview the person about mint:

- What does the person know about mint? How does the person use it?
- Does the person grow mint? If so, where and how?

In observation of COVID-19 safety protocols, students should be encouraged to conduct interviews by phone or video chat, unless they live with their subject. The student can report back on what they learned in written form, a verbal report, or another creative format.