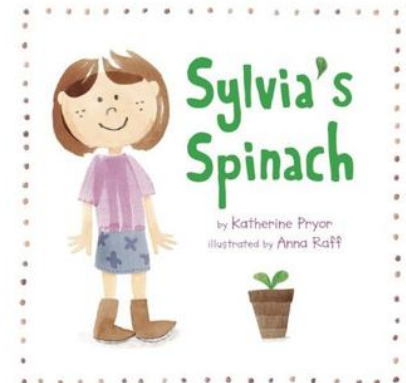


September 2016 Book of the Month

Sylvia's Spinach

By: Katherine Pryor

Sylvia is a picky eater, and she especially dislikes spinach. One day, her teacher gives each student in her class a different seed packet, and Sylvia ends up with...you guessed it...spinach! Each student plants their seeds, and Sylvia's spinach was the very last to sprout leaves. Eventually the class plants their sprouts in the school garden, and this time, Sylvia's spinach is among the first vegetables ready to be harvested! When it is time to sample the vegetables they grew, Sylvia surprises herself by tasting her spinach and discovers she actually likes it! This wonderful story about Sylvia and her classmates growing their own vegetables confirms the studies that young people will often try a food they dislike if they are involved in the growing process, and most will continue eating it! ¹



Fun Facts:

- **Baby spinach** is popular among consumers because its leaves are smaller and very tender and smooth, compared to regular (**savoy**) spinach, which has tough, wrinkly leaves. It gets the name “baby” because it’s harvested at an early stage of plant growth.
- Cooking spinach actually increases its health benefits! This is because our bodies cannot completely break down the nutrients in raw spinach. ²
- Spinach is an excellent source of Vitamin K, which helps prevent heart disease, builds strong bones, and plays an important role in blood clotting.
- Spinach is thought to have originated in ancient Persia (Iran). ³
- Spinach is a **cold-hardy crop**, meaning it can withstand hard frosts with accompanying temperatures as low as 20°F. ⁴
- Since spinach is cold-hardy, farmers are often able to grow it through the fall, winter, and spring seasons in North Carolina, making it a **three-season crop**. ⁶

Activities

Pre-Reading Activity—Mystery Bag: ⁵

Tell the students they will be learning about a new food. Prepare the spinach by washing and drying it. Place the leaves in a paper bag. Before beginning the activity, have students wash their hands, and explain the importance of hand washing before handling food. One at a time, ask the

students to come and feel inside the bag without looking. Ask the student to describe quietly what he/she feels. After everyone has guessed, reveal the spinach to the students. Start the discussion by asking questions such as; “*Is spinach a fruit or vegetable?*” “*Do the leaves feel thick or thin?*” (You could have baby spinach and regular spinach available to compare and contrast), “*Has anyone tasted spinach?*”

Spinach Leaf Print/Spinach Leaf Painting ⁵

Students can put a leaf of spinach inside the fold of a white piece of paper. Then, by rubbing crayon or pencil gently on the top of the paper covering the leaf, they will see the details of the leaf start to appear. After the leaf print is made, remove the spinach leaf from the paper. Have the students look at the leaf print and notice the stem, outline and any veins of the spinach leaf that are visible.

Students can also coat one side of their spinach leaf with paint, and press it onto the white paper to create interesting designs. Ask students to describe the designs they make. Do they notice other shapes, patterns, and objects within their paintings? Do they notice the outline, stem, and veins of the spinach leaf within their paintings?

Old MacDonald Had A Farm—Spinach Style ⁵

Lead students in singing these new words to the tune of “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” and demonstrate the suggested motions, or make up new ones.

1st Verse:

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!	(Skip in place)
On this farm, he grew some spinach, EIEIO!	(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)
Plant seeds here, and plant seeds there, Here seeds, there seeds, everywhere spinach seeds!	(Pretend to dig ground and plant using vigorous motions)
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!	(Skip in place)

2nd Verse:

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!	(Skip in place)
On this farm, he grew some spinach, EIEIO!	(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)
Water spinach here, and water spinach there, Here water, there water, everywhere water, water!	(Pretend to hold a watering can and water plants, walking along the rows)
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!	(Skip in place)

3rd Verse:

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!	(Skip in place)
On this farm, he grew some spinach, EIEIO!	(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)
Pick spinach here and pick spinach there, Here a pick, there a pick, everywhere pick spinach!	(Pretend to kneel and pick spinach) (Pretend to kneel and pick spinach)
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!	(Skip in place)

4th Verse:

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!	(Skip in place)
On this farm, he grew some spinach, EIEIO!	(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)
With a bite, bite here, and bite, bite there,	(Pretend to eat spinach)
Here a bite, there a bite, everywhere a spinach bite!	(Pretend to eat spinach)
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!	(Skip in place)

Spinach Smoothie

Prepare smoothies using spinach and the recipe below. This recipe is great for kids (and adults) who may not like spinach because you can't taste the spinach inside. Try mixing and matching different fruit combinations.

1 whole banana, sliced
1 cup strawberries, hulled, and sliced
1 cup spinach, washed
1 tablespoon honey
1 cup water
2-3 ice cubes (if desired)

Combine all ingredients in a blender, and blend until smooth. Enjoy!

Links:

- Sylvia's Spinach Book Trailer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dc-EqCwSBI>
- Strong to the Finish – Spinach Harvest
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cV9KY6jnQAc>

Sources:

1. <http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2014/11/28/teaching-kids-grow-vegetables-school/>
2. <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/8-surprising-health-facts-about-spinach.html>
3. <http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=43>
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