

Unit 4.2.6 - Food Citizenship and Optimal Diets for People and the Health of the Planet

Key Knowledge 4.2.6

The role of food citizenship to ensure both an optimal diet for people and the health of the planet.

Key Skills 4.2.8

Apply a range of practical food skills to demonstrate understanding of sociocultural, sustainable and ethical food choices and preparation.

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Terms and Definitions

Food citizenship can be described as the shared practice of encouraging food-related behaviours that support the development of democratic, socially, and economically just and environmentally sustainable food systems.

A **food citizen** is a person who takes into consideration the origins of their food and its impact on both personal health and the environment.

An **optimal diet** can be described as consuming food that is safe to eat, nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable, and financially affordable.

The Role of Citizenship, Optimal Diets, and the Health of the Planet

In this unit, you will learn about the essential role of food citizenship in promoting both optimal diets for individuals and the health of the planet. You will explore the concept of food citizenship and its significance in shaping a sustainable food system. Through practical food skills, you will develop an understanding of sociocultural, sustainable, and ethical food choices and preparation, enabling you to make informed decisions that positively impact your own well-being and contribute to a healthier planet. You will gain insights into the interconnectedness of food choices, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility, empowering you to become agents of change in the global food landscape.

The Role of Citizenship

In today's society, many people simply function as food consumers, mindlessly purchasing and consuming whatever food is readily available to them. They give little thought to how their food choices are produced and how they affect their own health, the planet, and the well-being of others. This passive approach to food consumption is a contrast to the proactive stance of a food citizen.

A person who embraces the role of a food citizen takes into consideration the origins of their food and its impact on both personal health and the environment. A food citizen actively works towards positively influencing every aspect of the food system, from production to distribution and consumption. They are not content with making responsible choices themselves; they also strive to inspire and encourage others to do the same.

Food citizens firmly believe that all individuals should have economic access to food that is grown and produced in a manner aligned with their values. By actively participating in shaping the food system, food citizens aim to create a sustainable model that not only ensures the production of healthy food for communities but also safeguards the environment and supports the livelihoods of those involved in the food production process.

Optimal Diets

When it comes to an optimal diet, it is important to consider the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (AGHE) and the Dietary Guidelines (ADGs). These guidelines provide evidence-based recommendations for a balanced and nutritious diet. However, in our current food system, there are challenges that impact the achievement of an optimal diet. The prevalence of obesity, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and type 2 diabetes is on the rise, often linked to the consumption of highly processed and unhealthy foods. By embracing food citizenship, individuals can make informed choices that prioritise whole, minimally processed foods, in line with the AGHE and ADGs. This includes consuming a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. By actively supporting a food system that promotes access to and availability of these nutritious foods, individuals can contribute to reducing the risk of obesity, CVD, and type 2 diabetes, while also safeguarding the health of the planet.

Health of the Planet

When it comes to the health of the planet, our food choices have significant environmental implications, particularly in the face of climate change. Changes in primary food production are necessary to adapt to and reduce the impacts of climate change. This includes shifting towards more climate-resilient crops, the types of animals raised for food and agricultural practices that promote sustainability. Addressing food waste, minimising energy consumption throughout the food system, conserving water resources, and reducing the environmental impact of food packaging and transportation are all vital aspects of food citizenship. By embracing these changes, individuals can actively contribute to a more sustainable food system that protects the health of the planet in the face of climate change.

It is crucial to understand the direct connection between the health of the planet and the health of people. The well-being of individuals is closely linked to the condition of our environment. When we prioritise sustainable practices and take care of the planet, it directly benefits our own health. A healthy planet provides clean air, fresh water, and diverse ecosystems that support the availability of nutritious food. By actively embracing food citizenship and making environmentally sustainable choices, we can establish a positive relationship between the planet's health and our own well-being. This ensures a better and healthier future for everyone.

Throughout your journey in this course, you have explored the profound impact of your food choices on your physical, mental, and social well-being. You have also delved into the ethical considerations and environmental implications of these choices, particularly regarding ethics and environmental sustainability. This exploration has provided you with an invaluable opportunity to be “good food citizens.”

VCE Food Studies has empowered you to become a food citizen by encouraging you to reflect upon the the health of people and the planet when making thoughtful and informed food choices. By making wise decisions, you play a significant role in ensuring an optimal diet for both people and the planet’s health. You possess the power to shape the world by actively choosing a food system that reduces negative impacts such as pollution, and instead promotes a healthier and more sustainable future for all.

Watch this video about the health of people and the health of the planet: <https://youtu.be/Plc42oIU0Ik>

Written Activities

5 Questions!

1. What is the role of a food citizen and how does it differ from being a passive food consumer?

2. How can being a good food citizen contribute to both personal health and the health of the planet?

3. What challenges exist in achieving an optimal diet in our current food system?

4. How do our food choices affect the environment, and how can being a food citizen help reduce these environmental impacts?

You might opt to focus on packaging, transport or biodiversity when answering this question.

5. In what ways can individuals actively participate in shaping the food system and become agents of change as food citizens?

Practical Activity

Are you a Good Food Citizen?

The idea of completing this activity is to help you become more conscious about the types of choices you make throughout the cooking process that will help you become a good food citizen.

At each stage of the recipe, you will be presented with choices that require you to think like a good food citizen. Discuss the options within your class and make a decision that aligns with the principles of being a good food citizen.

Class Discussion Questions:

- Look at the list of vegetables provided and identify which ones are locally sourced, seasonal, and organic. Discuss why it is important to support local farmers and reduce carbon footprints by choosing seasonal produce. Select the vegetables accordingly.
- Read the ingredient labels on the tortilla packages and discuss which ones contain the fewest additives, preservatives, and artificial ingredients. Choose whole wheat tortillas, which are healthier and more sustainable compared to refined flour tortillas.
- Consider the cooking method. Discuss the benefits of using olive oil over butter or margarine, highlighting the health advantages and sustainability aspects.
- Think about the optional toppings. Why might it be better to make the homemade salsa or guacamole instead of store-bought versions.

In small groups or working individually, prepare the quesadillas recipe below.

Vegetable Quesadillas for Food Citizenship	
Salsa Ingredients:	
½ tomato, diced	1 to 2 teaspoons lime juice
½ tablespoon finely chopped red onion	⅛ teaspoon cumin powder
¼ jalapeño pepper, seeds and veins removed, chopped	Salt and pepper to taste
To make the salsa:	
1. In a bowl, combine the diced tomato, red onion, jalapeño pepper, and coriander or parsley.	
2. Add the lime juice and cumin powder to the tomato mixture. Stir well to combine.	
3. Season with salt and pepper according to your taste preference. Mix thoroughly.	
4. Taste and adjust the lime juice, salt, and pepper as needed.	
5. Allow the salsa to sit for about 10-15 minutes to allow the flavours to combine.	
6. Serve the salsa immediately or refrigerate for a short while to chill before serving.	
Guacamole Ingredients:	
¼ ripe avocado	2 sprigs coriander or flat-leafed parsley, chopped
¼ small tomato, diced	1 to 2 teaspoons lime juice
½ tablespoon finely chopped red onion	Salt and pepper to taste
To make the guacamole:	
1. Mash the avocado with a fork until desired texture is achieved (smooth or slightly chunky).	
2. Add the diced tomato, red onion, coriander or flat-leaf parsley, lime juice, salt, and pepper to the mashed avocado. Mix .	
3. Taste and adjust the lime juice, salt, and pepper according to your preference.	
4. Serve the guacamole immediately or cover it with plastic wrap, pressing it directly onto the surface of the guacamole to prevent browning.	

Quesadilla Ingredients:

½ cup shredded cheese (cheddar and/or mozzarella)	Salt and pepper, to taste
½ cup mixed vegetables, chopped	2 whole wheat tortillas
¼ cup canned black beans, drained	1 to 2 tablespoons of light sour cream
1 tablespoon olive oil	

To make the quesadilla:

1. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the chopped vegetables with olive oil, salt, and pepper.
2. **Preheat** a frypan over medium heat.
3. **Place** a tortilla on the frypan and **sprinkle** ¼ of the cheese evenly over one-half of the tortilla.
4. **Add** half of the vegetable mixture on top of the cheese.
5. **Fold** the tortilla in half, covering the cheese and vegetables.
6. **Press down** gently with a spatula and cook for 2-3 minutes, or until the bottom tortilla is golden brown.
7. **Flip** the quesadilla over and cook for an additional 2-3 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the tortilla is crispy.
8. **Remove** from heat and let it cool for a moment before cutting into wedges.
9. **Repeat** steps 3 to 8 with the remaining tortilla and filling.
10. **Serve** the quesadillas with your choice of toppings such as salsa, guacamole, or sour cream.

Class Discussion:

- Reflect on the choices you made throughout the activity. Discuss with your class how your choices aligned with the principles of being a good food citizen, considering health, sustainability, and ethical aspects.
- Consider the storage of tortillas during preparation or afterwards.

Summary Activities

Are you a Good Food Citizen?

What is the main idea about this key knowledge & key skill? (Two or three sentences in your own words)

Define the term 'food citizen.'

List some ways that people can be good food citizens.

Describe what an optimal diet is like.

Describe what a healthy planet is like.

Explain the relationship between an optimal diet and the health of the planet.

Exam Preparation

Multiple-Choice Questions (5 marks)

Choose the response that is correct or that **best answers** the question.

1. Which of the following food-related decisions does NOT represent food citizenship?
 - a. Choosing locally sourced and organic fruits and vegetables.
 - b. Supporting fair trade practices by purchasing coffee from certified fair-trade producers.
 - c. Selecting whole wheat bread instead of highly processed white bread.
 - d. Throwing away leftover food in the rubbish bin.
2. What challenges impact the achievement of an optimal diet in the current food system?
 - a. Decreasing prevalence of obesity, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and type 2 diabetes
 - b. Prevalence of highly processed and unhealthy foods linked to health issues
 - c. Limited availability of highly processed and unhealthy foods
 - d. Lack of evidence-based recommendations
3. What is the connection between the health of the planet and the health of people?
 - a. A healthy planet negatively impacts human well-being
 - b. Sustainable practices benefit only the environment, not human health
 - c. The well-being of individuals is closely linked to the condition of the environment
 - d. Neglecting the planet's health has no consequences for human well-being
4. What are some vital aspects of food citizenship related to the health of the planet?
 - a. Minimising energy consumption and reducing food miles
 - b. Encouraging food waste and excessive packaging
 - c. Ignoring the impact of agriculture on biodiversity
 - d. Promoting deforestation for agriculture purposes
5. "With an estimated 10 billion people living on Earth by 2050, eating habits need to change to ensure a healthy planet and healthy people."

What is the primary reason behind the need to change eating habits as the global population increases?

 - a. To prioritise personal taste preferences and satisfaction.
 - b. To reduce the demand for food production and alleviate environmental strain.
 - c. To encourage the consumption of highly processed and unhealthy foods.
 - d. To support economic growth and profitability in the food industry.

Extended Response Questions**Question 1** (10 marks)

How can individuals promote both personal health and environmental well-being through their food choices?

Discuss the role of food citizenship in shaping optimal diets and sustainable practices, providing examples to support your viewpoints.

In your response, please address the following:

- Explain the concept of food citizenship and its relevance in fostering sustainable food systems.
- Explain how individuals can actively contribute to an optimal diet by making conscious food choices, emphasising factors such as nutrition and reduced reliance on processed foods.
- Explain the ways in which individuals can positively impact the environment through their food choices and actions
- Provide relevant examples to support your viewpoints, highlighting specific practices or initiatives that demonstrate the potential of food citizenship.