What's For Dinner?

*Used here courtesy of Canadian Wildlife Federation*

**Objective**
Students will be able to generalize that all animals, including people, depend on plants as a food source, either directly or indirectly.

**Method**
Students list and analyse the sources of foods.

**Background**
Plants ultimately support all forms of animal life, including people, either directly or indirectly. Most people are omnivores, which means they eat both plants and animals in some form. Some people include a lot of meat in their diets, others much less, and some people none at all.

It is easy to see people who are vegetarians - who eat only plants and plant products - are supported directly by plants. It may not be easy for children to see that even when they are eating animal products they are indirectly relying on plant resources. For example, cows, from which milk and other products are derived, and chickens, which provide eggs and meat, are animals that depend upon plants for some or all of their food. Every animal including people, either eats plants directly - or depends for food upon other species, which in turn depend upon plants.

The primary purpose of this activity is for students to trace human and other animals' dependence upon plants for food.

**Materials**
Writing materials, chalkboard, poster and drawing materials (optional).

**Procedure**
1. What's for dinner? Ask students to go home and make a list of everything that they have for dinner on a particular evening - perhaps with help from a parent or brother, or sister.
2. In the classroom ask the students to work alone or in a group to analyse where food comes from. Every food should be traced back to a plant. As each item on the menu is examined ask the students to create a flow diagram or chain which shows the major sources of food - from the product they eat all the way back to the plant origin. for example: Me Milk Cow Grass. Some
chains will be short; others will be long. Sometimes the students will not be sure what particular animals eat for food, so they will want to do some library research to find out.

3. Have a general discussion with the students: "What are some of the things you have learned from this activity?" After the students have described things they have learned, encourage them to make two generalizations about plants and animals:
   - all animals, including people and wildlife need food; and
   - all animals, including people and wildlife, depend upon plants for food. (Watch for the insight that ultimately plants need animals, too! The decay of animal life after death into nutrients in the soil provides sustenance to plants as well!)

Extensions

- Create posters of the menus showing the food chains involved in each. Add soil, water, sun, and air - since these are necessary to plants, people, and all animals too!
- Create a master list of all the plants that were identified. Look to see which plants we seem to depend on more than others. Some other groups of people - like people in other parts of the world who live in different environments - could come up with a very different list of plants that they depend on.
- Adopt a rock! Did you know that everything you ate for breakfast (lunch, dinner, or snack!) started somewhere with a rock! Trace plants to their soil and soil to their parent matter - including rocks!

General Information

Age: Grades 3 - 12
Subject: Language arts, science, health
Skills: Analysis, classification, discussion, drawing, listing, media, construction, writing
Duration: 20 minutes or longer
Group Size: Any
Setting: Indoors
Key Vocabulary: Food chain, plants, animals

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