

Fatcake - A winter treat for birds

Teachers' Notes

Between November and March many of the birds that over-winter in the UK find it harder to feed themselves. The generally colder and wetter weather means that there are less fewer insects, fruits and berries available for birds to feed on, and at the same time the birds are using more energy to keep themselves warm and dry.

Fatcake is packed full of energy and nutrients that birds need at this time of year, and is also a great way to use up food waste that might otherwise go into the bin and eventually landfill. Making fatcake and feeding it to birds, you are taking something that would have been harmful to the environment and turning it into something that is helpful to the environment.

Curriculum links

SC2 Topics

1b, 1c

2a, 2b, 2e, 2g

4b

5a, 5b, 5c

How to make Fatcakes

Ingredients:

- Lard, suet or waste kitchen fats from cooking meats.
- A mixing bowl
- One Saucepan
- A Spoon
- Old yoghurt pots
- Any of the following: wild bird seed, currants,
- sultanas, oats, bread and cake crumbs, grated cheese, peanuts.

NB:

Uneaten sandwich crusts make an excellent ingredient for fatcakes.

Method

1. Fatcake works best with a ratio of one part fat to two parts dry ingredients, so collect your ingredients together in that ratio by weight.
2. Mix all the dry ingredients together in a mixing bowl. Make sure that there is space in the bowl to add more ingredients later on.
3. In your saucepan, melt the suet / lard / fat.
4. Carefully add the melted fat to the dry ingredients in the mixing bowl and stir everything together with a spoon. The dry ingredients will soak up the fat and begin to stick together.
5. Spoon the sticky mixture into the empty (clean) yogurt pots. Leave everything to cool and harden. If you wish, pierce the mixture with a piece of string



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before it hardens. This can then be used to tie the fatcake to a branch for hanging, or as a weight on the end of a bottle birdfeeder (see separate lesson idea).

6. When the fatcake mixture is cool and hard, tip it out of the pot and use the string to tie the fatcake somewhere accessible for birds, such as a tree branch. Alternatively, place some fatcake inside a bottle birdfeeder.

Tips

Use a plastic container at home or in the school kitchen to collect cooking fat. Keep the container in the fridge when not in use to keep the fat solid and prevent it from spilling. The collected fat can then be used for making fatcake and will also keep your drains flowing freely.

Why it's a good idea to cut down on food waste

A lot of our food goes to waste. This is not good because food is very precious. If we did not have enough food we would not be able to grow or repair our bodies properly, we might become very ill and would eventually starve. Everyone needs food to live, but not everyone has enough food to eat. If you are lucky enough to have enough food, you should make sure that it is not going to waste.

Wasting food is also very bad for the environment.

Did you know:

- Food waste makes up to 40% (nearly half) of everything placed in a household general waste bin (a wheelie bin) each week.
- Each year people who live in Leicestershire throw away approximately 57,000 tonnes of food (that's not including the food thrown away by supermarkets, farmers, shops or schools).
- Most of the food thrown away could have been eaten if people had taken a bit of care of it before throwing it away.

In Leicestershire, most food waste ends up on landfill sites. A landfill site is a large hole in the ground where we bury the things that we don't recycle and no longer want. On landfill sites the food waste is buried underground with lots of different types of rubbish. Once underground the food begins to rot. As the food rots, it releases a gas called methane. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas which has been linked to global warming and climate change.

A lot of food and drinks are also wasted by being poured down the drain. In the UK an estimated 1.6 million tonnes of food are washed down the drain each year.



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Once in the drains, food waste will eventually be washed into rivers and seas where it pollutes the water and harms the animals that live there.

Some of the waste, particularly waste fats and oils, might collect together in a big lump and eventually block the drain. Some of these blockages can get very large. Large blockages are sometimes called fatbergs (like the word iceberg) by the people who have to remove them from the drains:

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/aug/06/fatberg-london-sewer-grease-blockage>

By collecting food waste and making into a fatcake, you are taking something that would have been harmful to the environment and turning it into something that is helpful to the environment.

Find out more

Find out more about food waste and its impact on the environment:

<http://england.lovefoodhatewaste.com/content/about-food-waste-1>

What is climate change?:

- http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/tackling_climate_change/climate_change_explained/
- <http://climatekids.nasa.gov/menu/weather-and-climate/>

RSPB bird identifier:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdidentifier/>

Take part in the Big Schools BirdWatch:

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/schoolswatch/>

