

NO COOK PEPPERMINTS

GRADE LEVEL:

K - 6

TIME:

40 minutes to overnight

MATERIALS:

1/3 cup of light corn syrup
1/4 cup of softened butter
1-2 drops of pure peppermint oil
3-4 cups of powdered sugar
Food coloring
Nitrile gloves to handle mixture with peppermint oil

VOCABULARY:

Commodities: Crop that is bought or sold, has commercial value.

Volatile organic

compounds: A substance with a scent or gas evaporating from plant leaves when exposed to air.

DESCRIPTION:

Oregon produces 35% of the United States' peppermint. Like many spices and herbs, peppermint is believed to have medicinal properties, such as helping upset stomachs, inhibiting the growth of certain bacteria, and when applied to the skin, helping soothe and relax sore muscles. Peppermint is often used as flavoring in tea, ice cream, candy, chewing gum, and toothpaste. Peppermint can also be found in shampoos, soaps, and skin lotions. This lesson is a delightful way to talk about an important **commodity**.

BACKGROUND:

Mint and other herbs have strong flavors, called **volatile organic compounds**, or fragrances, scents, or odors that are emitted when a plant leaf is crushed and exposed to the air. Do you grow mint in your yard or garden? Due to the volatile organic compounds that give mint its characteristic flavor, it is typically avoided and not eaten by deer, rabbits, or other herbivores. Mint production in Oregon has remained steady for decades, although the primary growing region has shifted from the Willamette Valley to Northeastern Oregon.

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Using an electric mixer, or by hand, knead together the first three ingredients (do not let young children handle the peppermint oil; it is extremely concentrated and can burn skin).
 - 2) Continue kneading while you add in 3 to 4 cups of powder sugar in small amounts.
 - 3) Add in 5 drops of food coloring.
 - 4) Process or knead (with nitrile gloves) the mixture until it is firm and smooth.
 - 5) Roll the dough into marble-sized balls. Press them flat on wax paper. Alternatively, you can roll dough into long rolls and cut mints into 3/4 inch squares for a different shape.
 - 6) Let stand overnight to harden (optional).
- Makes approximately 75 candies.



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