

How to Host a Water Taste Test

“When the well’s dry, we know the worth of water” Abraham Lincoln

Introduction

A *water taste test* is an event where individuals are invited to try both bottled water and tap water to find out if they can taste the difference between the two. The purpose is to bring awareness to the environmental and social issues associated with bottled water, enjoy a refreshing drink of water, and to have fun. This document provides you with the information you need to organize your own water taste test event.

Some things to think about before planning your event:

- Decide on the brands of bottled water you wish to use. Currently in Canada, the law distinguishes two categories of bottled water – spring or mineral water and treated water, such as distilled water. Spring or mineral water originates from an underground source not part of a community water supply and may not be subjected to any treatment that might modify the composition of the water. Bottled water not labeled as spring or mineral water may come from any source including municipal tap water. The label must explain how they’ve been treated (e.g. distilled water).
- Consider organizing a short presentation on the environmental and societal costs of bottled water and reasons why it is more environmentally friendly and just as safe to drink tap water.

Examples of Bottled Water:

Evian – spring water that comes from a source in the Northern French Alps

Dasani – municipal water which undergoes a reverse-osmosis-based purification process

Aquafina – purified tap water from Mississauga

Fiji Water – artesian well water from the Nakauvadra Mountains

Canadian Springs – comes from a few different springs across Canada

How to organize a water taste test event:

1. **Book a venue.** Any boardroom will work for the taste test. Make sure your venue is big enough for the number of participants you anticipate. Another idea is to use a common area so people will stop by to see what is going on. Make sure to check with your property management before using any common areas.
2. **Schedule a time.** A water taste test for 25-30 people will take approximately half an hour. Perhaps schedule the test during a coffee break and encourage people to go for ‘a drink of water’ instead of ‘going for a coffee’.
3. **Recruit volunteers.** Find a couple of helpful co-workers to assist you – people who are keen to help and have an interest in environmental issues. They may help to advertise, pour water for participants, tally results and help you transport items.
4. **Recruit a presenter.** Ask a knowledgeable coworker or friend if they will give a presentation on bottled water or put one together yourself.

5. **Advertise.** Once you have your day and time picked, you need to advertise. If you are targeting a particular group of people then consider using an Outlook meeting invitation. Other ways you can advertise your event include posting a description on the Greening Government site during Environment Week, writing an article for your department newsletter, sending an email to co-workers, or word of mouth.
6. **Water sample setup.** Purchase the bottled water several days before the event. Prepare the tap water by placing it in an open container at room temperature for at least 48 hours (glass jar is preferable). This will allow any chlorine to evaporate from the tap water as chlorine contributes to the 'unique' taste of tap water. Place all types of water in containers marked 'A', 'B', and 'C'. On a piece of paper, mark down which container contains which brand of bottled water or tap water. Keep this information a secret until the end of the taste test!
7. **Prepare questionnaire.** Prepare a quarter page questionnaire with the following questions:
 - a. Which sample of water (A, B, or C) do you think tastes the best?
 - b. Which sample of water (A, B, or C) do you think is tap water?Make enough copies for each participant.
8. **Water taste test execution:** Transport your containers filled with water to the venue. Set up for your presentation (if there is one planned). Set your water containers at the head of the table or front of the room. Make sure there are a few extra glasses or cups for participants to use in case they forgot their own. Welcome participants as they enter the venue and ask a volunteer to hand them a questionnaire. Begin the taste test at the scheduled time. Explain to participants the purpose of the taste test and give instructions on how the test will be conducted. The following outlines some sample instructions for participants:
 - a. Every person will taste all types of water. After the participants try all 3 types then they will be asked to complete the questionnaire.
 - b. Instruct the volunteers to pour a small sample of water into each participant's glass. Ask the helpers to mix up which participants get which sample first (some will get A first, some B and some C).
 - c. Ensure all participants try all three samples of water before completing their questionnaire.
 - d. Ask a volunteer to collect the questionnaires and to tally the results.
 - e. While your volunteer is tallying the results, deliver your presentation. This will give your volunteer time to tally the results.
 - f. At the completion of the presentation present the results of the taste test.
 - g. Thank the participants for coming.
9. Consider writing an article on the taste test for your government department newsletter.

Tips to make your event as green as possible:

- 👉 Avoid printing an excessive amount of posters to make your event as green as possible.
- 👉 Ask participants to bring their own glass or cup to the venue. Avoid using paper or Styrofoam cups.
- 👉 Recycle the water bottles after the event.
- 👉 To minimize paper use scrap or small slips of paper for the questionnaire.