

# clover food lab

Are you and a particular vegetable not on ~great terms~?  
Can't get your kids on the veggie train?



Hi there! My name is Cody and in addition to working at Clover I also have three kids ages 2, 6, and 10. Our family puts a big emphasis on eating veggies, but at times the struggle is real.

What if we don't have time to roast a beet or [ferment a medlar](#)? Also, what do we do with the veggies that we'd like to be part of our diet, but that we or our kids just don't like very much?

A question for the other adults in the room: is there a veggie you've always *wanted* to like but can't seem to get yourself to eat?

The good news is, in a strange twist of events, it turns out that we can actually use our brains to change...our brains! We can even *trick* our brains by using our own brain against itself.

For those of you never met a turnip they didn't turn-down, count yourselves blessed. For the rest of us, here are some science-backed ways to get yourself to like certain veggies:

## 1. Try to identify the specific reason you don't like the vegetable.

Is it the texture? The sweetness? The way it's typically prepared?

Many people go through life telling themselves they don't like spicy foods, only later to realize they had only tried foods with very specific spicy ingredients.

Also, what does the food make you feel...like...emotionally? Some foods are inextricably linked to difficult times in our life or negative experiences. Identifying what these are is a good first step to eventually overcoming them.

## 2. Research the health benefits of the veggie.

Whether you're tasting something new or doing research, your brain is the one here doing all the heavy lifting.

Help it out by reinforcing *why* you should eat the veggie in the first place. Knowing its specific health benefits will help send positive signals to your brain while you're eating it.

## 3. Figure out how to best prepare the veggie.

You may not want to reinforce the "badness" of the veggie by preparing it the same way you've always had it.

For helpful tips, search the [Clover blog](#), refer to [old Veggie Monster emails](#), or ask people you trust with a knife.

When in doubt, chop it into pieces and roast that baby up with some olive oil and salt!

## 4. Mix it in with things you already love, and increase the ratio each time.

Going with #1, if it's the sweetness of beets that you hate, try pairing them with something that's the total OPPOSITE of sweet. Maybe a briny, tangy, slightly salty feta sauce drizzled on top?

By mixing the veggie with other things that you love, soon your brain will develop a positive association with it and your palette will soon follow suit.

Just like with kids (parents, scroll down!) repetition is key. The more you do it, the faster your taste buds will adjust, and the sooner you'll be eating new veggies by the mouthful.

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## BONUS: Three tips for getting kids to like veggies!

Most kids don't really buy into the whole "let's hack my own brain to better myself" thing. So as their parents, it's our responsibility to hack their brains on their behalf (they'll thank us later).

Here are two science-based ways and one really fun way to do that:

### 1. Add something sweet

Research shows that even half a teaspoon of sugar can be [used to build kids' positive association with a vegetable](#). But it doesn't have to be sugar, it can be anything that provides a hint of sweetness - honey, agave, maple syrup, etc.

Then once they are vibing with it, take the sweet out and poof they like a new vegetable! Finally a parenting win that doesn't cause [irreversible trauma](#) LET'S GO.

### 2. Exposure, exposure, exposure

Children need to be exposed to a new food up to [15 times before adjusting to it](#). That's a lot! Patience is necessary!

I'll add that *positive* exposure is key and will only accelerate the process. This means involving kids in family shopping, planning, or meal prep - even if they don't eat their creations right away.

Most importantly, parents need to set an example by preparing and eating lots of veggies for ourselves and our kids.

### 3. Have them draw a veggie monster and win prizes!

If you've been subscribed to VM for a while, you're familiar with Lucia's famous veggie monster drawings. While no one can aspire to her level of cartoon vegetable mastery (she has literally been drawing vegetables for 13+ years) we can still get the kids in on the fun!

So if you have kids in your family who want to try their hand at some scary, silly, or downright nutritious veggie monsters, send us a pic of their drawing [here](#). We'll pick a few to get some sweet prizes and may feature them in upcoming VM emails, the blog, or on social media. We can't wait to see the entries!

Have a veggie-filled weekend,

Cody



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