

Construct a Fruit Car!

Going to the local toy store isn't the norm for most around the world. In many countries, children and adults simply use naturally gathered materials to create toys. For example, in Haiti, one popular tradition involves using seasonal fruits to build toy vehicles. Show your little engineer how to make her very own fruit car with this cost effective and environmentally-friendly activity! Whether you find the materials from a neighbor's fruit tree (with permission, of course!), or a stall at the local farmers' market, choosing fruits to invent unique toys is half the fun of this project.



What You Need:

- Large fruits (preferably round or oblong)
- Round or oblong fruits you can slice
- Knife
- Cutting board
- Toothpicks
- Dried fruit

What to Do:

1. Embark on a backyard garden tour or shopping trip with vehicle creation in mind. If your budget permits, this excursion can be a fun opportunity to purchase and taste unfamiliar fruits. Consider persimmon, pomegranate, star fruit, papaya, mango or cactus fruit along with the more common lemon, lime, apple, banana, avocado or orange.
2. Have your child choose a whole fruit for the body of the vehicle. Something oblong or rounded works best, such as a lemon, lime, mango or papaya.
3. Use toothpicks as axles. Remind your child to be careful around the sharp ends of toothpicks. Your child should firmly place toothpicks at the base of the fruit, pushing them about three quarters of the way into the fruit.
4. Slice up some wheels. Your child can choose matching wheels from the same fruit, or go for mismatched wild wheels using a different fruit. Help her enter the fruit slice wheels on the toothpick axles.
5. Time to decorate the car! Bring out various dried fruit for and encourage your child to embellish her vehicle! Some raisins or dried cranberries make great hubcaps on the end of the toothpick axles. Bits of dried apricot create bright headlights.

Once you and your child (or a group of children) have made a few fruit cars, arrange a car show. Use wooden blocks as pedestals for showing off the fruit cars. Your child can even test her car's functionality by rolling it down a cutting board ramp.