

Make at Home! Edible Asteroids

(From: <http://www.space-explorers.com/internal/events/spacefun/edibleasteroids.html>)

Asteroids are rocky, metallic objects that orbit our Sun. Asteroids are the remains of collisions that occurred during the formation of planets and moons in our solar system. In some cases, asteroids might have grown into planets themselves, but their interactions with other planets, like Jupiter, kept them from clumping together. Asteroids range in sizes from 1000 km in diameter to the size of giant boulders. They are irregular in shape and are bigger than meteoroids. The larger asteroids have big, circular, holes – craters – on their surfaces that mark where other asteroids have run into them! Here is your opportunity to make your own edible asteroid!

What You Need:

- 4 to 8 cups of smashed potatoes (from a box is fine!)
- ½ stick of butter
- A few tablespoons of milk and flour (if needed)
- Salt and pepper
- Mixing bowl and spoon
- Electric mixer or a strong arm to mix the potatoes
- Cookie sheet
- Oven mitt

What to Do:

- Share the images of asteroids with them. What do the asteroids look like? Invite your child to make their own model of an asteroid – though smaller!
- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
- Take a small slice of butter and rub onto cookie sheet.
- Make the mashed potatoes, add butter and salt and pepper to taste. Mix well. The mixture should stick together. If it is too dry, add a little milk. If it is too moist, add a little flour (start with 2 tablespoons).
- Take a handful of mashed potatoes and shape into an asteroid. Be sure to poke holes in the asteroids to model craters. Set the asteroids on the greased cookie sheet. Put them into the oven and bake for 20-25 minutes or until brown around the edges. Remove the asteroids from the oven and place on a serving plate. Let sit for 5 minutes to cool down.
- Enjoy the asteroids!

Parent Prompts:

Ask your child how an asteroid is different from a meteoroid. (Both are rocks in space, but an asteroid is bigger!)

How is an asteroid different from a planet? (It is smaller and irregular in shape.)

What made the deep circular holes on the surface of the asteroids? (Other asteroids or comets hitting the asteroid.)

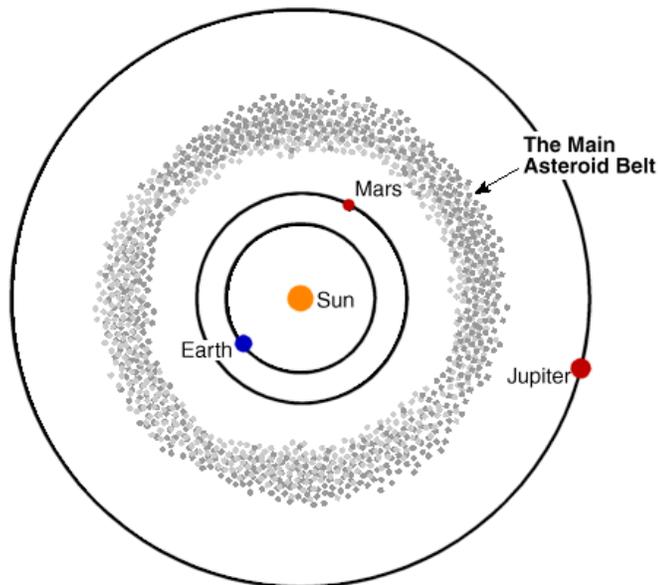


Mathilde

Gaspra

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Asteroid images from NASA.



(Orbits drawn approximately to scale)

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Most asteroids are in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. In this image, it looks like there are lots and lots of big asteroids and very little space between them - and movies often make it look like asteroids are all over the place in the asteroid belt. But there is actually much, much, much more space between individual asteroids. If you saw one asteroid, you probably would not be able to even see another one without traveling further! Image from NASA.