



- ☆ Put together a cookbook of the children's favorite recipes. Include recipes the children have "created" or take pictures of the children preparing food. Make it into a booklet that could be a gift for parents.

ENLISTING HELP FROM PARENTS

Parents influence children's eating habits and interest in food. Young children learn most of their food preferences at home. Parents teach children by the foods they serve and what they eat in front of their children. Work with parents so their children enjoy learning about food.

Here are some suggestions for getting help from parents:

- * At least once a week, send home food-related activities that the parent and child can complete together. Some examples are making a snack, going shopping, storing food, or growing food in a windowbox. This will allow the parent to be involved in the child's learning experiences.
- * Invite parents to visit at snack and meal time. Serve the same or similar foods at parent meetings (other cultures, new foods, etc.). At parent meetings, use foods that children have helped prepare. Have a parent meeting where parents prepare a food from another culture or some other unfamiliar food.
- * Ask parents to provide a favorite recipe or oral instructions for preparing a favorite food. You can use this recipe as a way to introduce a new food or share information about a culture.

IN CLOSING . . .

You play a very important part in helping young children develop their attitudes about food and eating. Feeding children is very important for many reasons—it helps them grow, it keeps them healthy, and it helps them learn.

We hope that the information in this book will help you create a safe and healthy eating environment for the children. Keep the goals in this book in mind, and always work hard to give children positive experiences with food and eating.



NU108 Parents shall be informed of the scope of nutrition learning activities provided in the facility. Nutrition information/education programs shall be conducted at least twice a year under the guidance of the child care nutrition specialist, based on the needs assessment for nutrition information/education as perceived by families and staff.

What can you do for a child from another culture, for whom many of the foods you serve are new? Try to serve some foods from that child's culture. This way, the food that is familiar to him will be new to some of the other children, and foods that are familiar to the rest of the children will be new to him. Talk about where each food comes from and how it is prepared.

Preparing Foods

Children can learn a lot about food by helping to prepare it. Helping you prepare food can also teach them other skills like counting, measuring, sorting, and following directions.

WHAT DO CHILDREN GAIN FROM PREPARING FOOD?

- ♡ Experience with sharing as they take turns
- ♡ Creativity—changing flour and other ingredients into raw dough, then a cookie or muffin that can be decorated
- ♡ Self-esteem—they gain a sense of accomplishment when they complete a project, with something to show for it
- ♡ Fine and gross motor skills (children really enjoy rolling bread or cookie dough)
- ♡ Knowledge about safety—injury prevention and sanitation
- ♡ Knowledge about parts of plants—stems, skin, seeds, etc.
- ♡ Knowledge about science—how plants, animals, and people grow

HELPING FAMILIES LEARN

Be sure to keep parents informed about the activities that you provide to help their children learn about food and health. Work with the child care nutrition specialist to provide nutrition education programs for parents at least twice a year. Take an informal survey to find out what parents want to know. **NU108**

Be sure to coordinate what you are teaching children and parents. If parents are aware of what you are teaching, they can reinforce your messages at home.

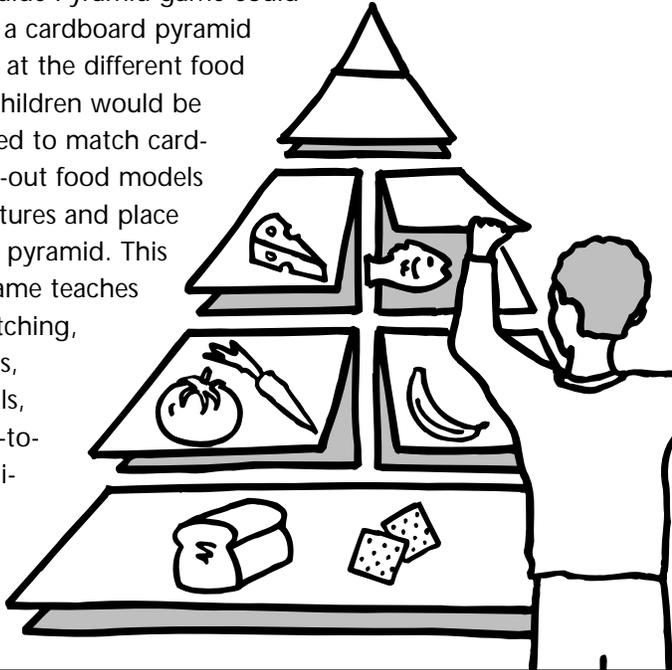
Suggestions for communicating with parents:

- ☆ Try newsletters or handouts that parents can take home and read (see “Parent Materials” in the Appendix).
- ☆ Give parents some tips to hang on the refrigerator (see Figure 4.2, “Snack Ideas,” and Figure 4.4, “Very Good Sources” on pages 40 and 42).
- ☆ Post menus to let parents know what you are serving their children. This will teach them about appropriate meal patterns, meal planning, and food groups. Try to have menus in the language that most of the parents speak. Ask a parent to help translate if necessary.



FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID GAME

A Food Guide Pyramid game could start with a cardboard pyramid with flaps at the different food groups. Children would be encouraged to match cardboard cut-out food models to the pictures and place inside the pyramid. This type of game teaches color, matching, differences, motor skills, and hand-to-eye coordination, as well as food choices.



NU33 Caregivers shall sit at the table and shall eat the meal or supplement (snack) with the children. Family-style meal service shall be encouraged. The adult(s) shall encourage social interaction and conversation about the concepts of color, quantity, number, and temperature of food; eating behaviors; and events of the day.

New Foods

Help children learn to eat new foods. Remember that young children learn by imitating adults. Eat with the children and eat the same foods they are eating. ^{NU33} If children see you eating and enjoying a food that is new to them, they will be more likely to try it. If the food is rejected, do not make a big deal about it. Simply serve the same food again later. The more familiar children become with the food, the more easily they will accept it.

Here are some additional tips for helping children try new foods:

- ☉ Serve new foods when children are hungry.
- ☉ Serve small amounts of the new food.
- ☉ Introduce only one new food at a time.
- ☉ Involve the children in preparing and serving the food.



HELP CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT FOOD

Have a tasting party. Use some fruits and vegetables that are new to the children. Help older children use the correct knife to cut them up. Then have the children dip the fruit or vegetable in yogurt or dressing. Be sure to include some fruits and vegetables that the children already know and like.



NU107 Children shall be taught about the taste and smell of foods, and shall feel the textures and learn the different colors and shapes of foods. This teaching shall be evident in mealtime and curricular activities, without interfering with the pleasure of eating.

NU105 The facility shall have a nutrition plan. The plan shall include opportunities for children to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to make appropriate food choices. This plan shall be the shared responsibility of all staff, including directors and food service personnel.

children's eagerness to learn and their natural curiosity about the world. Don't let teaching interfere with the pleasure of eating. **NU107**

HELPING CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT FOOD USING THEIR FIVE SENSES

Here are some ideas for helping children use their senses to learn about food:

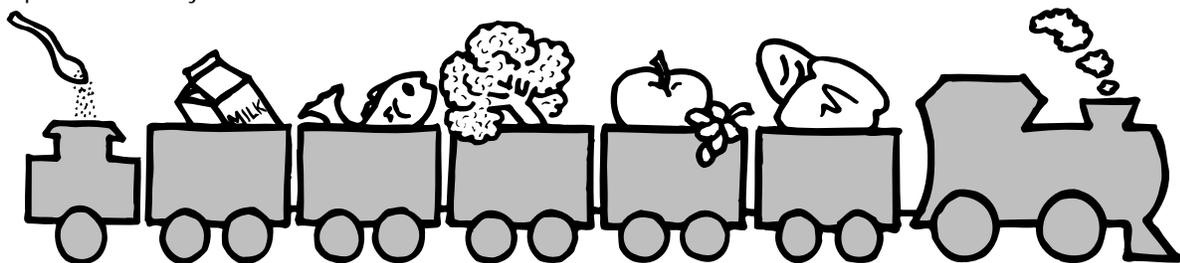
- ♡ Have a tasting party. Let children pick foods to taste based on the shape or color of the food.
- ♡ Help children compare the taste of raw and cooked fruits and vegetables.
- ♡ Have children break, snap, tear, or chew foods and listen to the sounds.
- ♡ Have children close their eyes and guess what made the sound—biting an apple, pouring milk, popcorn popping.
- ♡ Have the children reach into a "mystery bag" to feel foods of different sizes, shapes, and textures. Have them describe what they feel and identify the food.
- ♡ Ask the children to identify foods by their smell. Some foods that may be easy to identify include onions, garlic, or citrus fruits such as oranges or lemons.

Food Choices

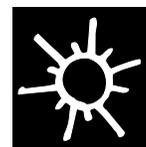
Help children learn about the food choices they should make every day. **NU105** Look for simple ways to teach so that children will understand. Use hands-on activities and props they can touch. Use real food as much as possible.

FOOD TRAIN

Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, a national, nonprofit organization, adapted the Head Start curriculum for young children that uses the idea of a food train. Cars for the train are made from different colors of construction paper. The different colors represent the food groupings in the Food Guide Pyramid. Within a food group, one car is made for each serving of a food the child needs to eat each day. Children place pictures of foods they eat into the correct cars during the day. By the end of the day, children can see what they have eaten from each food group and what they still need to eat.



HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES LEARN ABOUT FOOD



It takes many people to provide young children with a safe and pleasant eating experience. Work closely with parents, other caregivers, food service workers, and the child care nutrition specialist to see that this happens. **NU1**

Helping children and families learn about food and its importance to health is a big responsibility. When you teach, plan to: **NU105**

- ☆ Introduce children to food and eating experiences
- ☆ Provide learning activities about food and health—activities that can be related to experiences the child has at home
- ☆ Encourage the children to tell their parents about their food experiences in child care

NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR STAFF

Before you can help children and families learn about food, you must have the knowledge yourself. Small family home caregivers should have at least 12 hours of continuing education each year based on the information needed. Some possible topics include nutrition for children, rescue breathing, or first aid for choking. **ST51**

HELPING CHILDREN LEARN

The messages you give children about food and eating will stay with them for the rest of their lives. You have a responsibility to help children develop good attitudes about food and eating. Make it interesting and fun to learn about food. Activities with food help children learn about foods and be more willing to try them.

Properties of Foods

Let children taste, smell, and feel different foods. Help them learn about the textures, colors, and shapes of foods. Do this at mealtime and during learning activities. Take advantage of

NU1 Children shall be provided nourishing and attractive food according to a written plan developed by a qualified child care nutrition specialist. Carrying out the plan shall be the shared responsibility of all caregivers, directors, and food service personnel.

NU105 The facility shall have a nutrition plan. The plan shall include opportunities for children to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to make appropriate food choices. This plan shall be the shared responsibility of all staff, including directors and food service personnel.

ST51 Small family home caregivers shall have at least 12 clock hours of continuing education based on staff competency needs.