







**A MEALTIME APPROACH FOR EARLY CARE
AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS**



Contents

Introduction	1
 Program Ready	5
 Adult Ready	13
 Child Ready	21
 Resources	27

Resources – Quick Reference

28-29	<i>Glossary</i>
30-31	<i>Mealtime Conversation Starters</i>
32	<i>My Plate® Handout</i>
33-35	<i>CACFP Child Meal Patterns</i>
36-38	<i>Sample 5-Week Cycle Menus</i>
39	<i>OH Baby® Snack Card</i>
40-41	<i>Equipment Guide</i>
42	<i>Sample Program Policy</i>
43	<i>Handwashing Steps</i>
44	<i>Family Style Dining List of Web Resources</i>
44-46	<i>References</i>



Acknowledgments

Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association granted permission to North Dakota to adopt and update this Family Style Dining Guide. Through the help of our partners, Child Care Aware of North Dakota® has revised this guide to match North Dakota standards. Contributors include: North Dakota Department of Health, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and NDSU Extension.

A special thank you to the General Mills foundation for the generous funding of the Family Style Dining Project, to Nemours National Office of Policy and Prevention for its leadership and support and to the Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association for its content expertise and project coordination.

Thank you to the following individuals and agencies who contributed to the development of the Family Style Dining Guide:

AUTHORS

Holly Scheibe, Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association

Sarah Lee, Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association

CONTRIBUTORS

National Early Care and Education Learning Collaborative (ECELC)

Nemours National Office of Policy and Prevention
Health Promotion Consultant Network, OCCRRA

Office for Quality and Innovation, OCCRRA

Ohio's Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies:

- 4C for Children
- Action for Children
- Child Care Resource Center
- Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development
Child Care Resource Network
- Starting Point
- YWCA of Northwest Ohio Child Care
Resource & Referral

Family Style Dining Guide

What is Family Style Dining?

Family style dining is a meal service approach that early care and education programs implement to address childhood obesity prevention and support children in developmentally appropriate mealtime experiences. All foods that meet the meal pattern requirement are placed on the table where children and adults sit together to share the meal. Children are encouraged to serve themselves independently or with adults' help.

Why is Family Style Dining Important?

There are 1,892 days from when a child is born until he or she enters kindergarten and early care and education (ECE) professionals must be intentional in offering experiences that last a lifetime. Family style dining is one of these experiences. It reinforces learning and development, exposes children to mealtime practices, encourages social interactions with peers, families and communities, and instills lifelong healthy habits.

Family style dining is an approach that can impact childhood obesity through prevention strategies. It encourages healthy eating habits that can last into adulthood. Children are more likely to try new fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods when they see peers and adults eating and enjoying these foods. They practice serving correct portion sizes and listen to their own cues when hungry or full.

When children don't have healthy eating habits, they are at risk for unhealthy body weight, poor self-image, diabetes, increased blood pressure, and heart disease. Children receive adequate nutrition when they eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains

and lean proteins. Proper nutrition is important for healthy brain and body development.

Childhood Obesity has more than tripled in children and adolescents in the past 30 years. Children and adolescents who are obese are likely to be obese as adults and are therefore more at risk for adult health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, several types of cancer, and metabolic syndrome.

One study showed that children who became obese as early as age 2 were more likely to be obese as adults. (*Obesity Facts - Centers for Disease Control*)

🕒 Children grow at different rates, so it isn't always easy to know when a child is obese or overweight.

A child's health care provider can determine if a child's weight and height are in a healthy range.



Resources marked with this symbol can be viewed and downloaded at:
<http://ndchildcare.org/providers/family-style-dining.html>



Access this Family Style Dining Guide and Resources at:
www.ndchildcare.org/providers/family-style-dining.html

INTRODUCTION

Who Benefits from Family Style Dining?

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

When children set the table and pass a bowl of blueberries to their peers they learn how to engage in many aspects of mealtime. They are gaining independence, learning cooperation and turn-taking skills. Having a mealtime conversation about children's interests and the food they enjoy together enhances a child's vocabulary, models language use, and encourages peer and adult interactions. Children also benefit from the consistency of routines experienced at early learning programs and home.

Research shows that family style dining has the ability to change children's eating habits that last into adulthood. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, children who regularly eat family style are eating more fruits, vegetables and grains. Also, children eat less fried and fatty foods and drink less sugary beverages.

Family style dining is an approach that addresses these health benefits for children, which may address childhood obesity factors:

- Awareness of portion size
- Recognition of hunger and fullness
- Exposure to healthy foods
- Control over how much they eat

BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES

Family style dining builds lifelong habits for children. Families may discover that children are more eager to contribute to family mealtime when they have a role to play. Children demonstrate pride in their ability to carry spoons and napkins to the table and place them next to family members' plates. Children who feel that they have a contributing role at the table gain a sense of pride and belonging. Children may also be more willing to try foods at home when they have had positive food exposure in their ECE program.

BENEFITS FOR ECE PROFESSIONALS

ECE professionals are important to the success of family style dining. Just as in all areas of learning and development, children are dependent on adults to support and guide them in this mealtime approach. ECE professionals should take great satisfaction when adopting these practices knowing that they will help instill healthier eating habits and teach important self-help skills while strengthening children's social, emotional and physical development. Family style dining also addresses common mealtime challenges, such as rushed transitions and hurried mealtimes.

BENEFITS FOR ECE PROGRAMS

Serving meals family style helps programs realistically budget food costs and reduce food waste. Programs may be able to continue to use their current menus and food service providers. According to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Handbook for Independent Child Care Centers and the Family Day Care Monitor Handbook, family style dining is recognized as a meal service option for child care centers and family child care providers.





Family Style Dining and Cultural Sensitivity

Serving meals family style is to be approached in culturally sensitive ways. Families are the child's first teacher and are to be honored as such. This benefits the child and builds positive relationships with the family. Conversations between family and adults on mealtime preferences are important for supportive and successful dining experiences.

How to Be Successful with Family Style Dining

Every type of early care and education program can be successful with family style dining. Preparing the program, adults, and children before implementing family style meal service is crucial for success. Start simple. Gradually introduce skills and strategies. Recognize it will take time for children and staff to become comfortable with changes to meal and snack time. Don't give up. Be patient and reevaluate what is working and what changes are needed. Use this guide to provide direction in implementing this important meal time approach.

Why a Family Style Dining Guide?

This guide brings together current information on implementing family style dining, and offers a step-by-step approach in preparing the children, adults, families, and the program. Programs wishing to start family style dining as well as those looking

to advance their dining practices may find this guide helpful. Implementing family style dining may present challenges, however having the right tools, creating smaller achievable steps, and assessing your progress may ease your entry into this highly regarded practice.

This guide is intended to:

- Deepen understanding of the family style dining approach
- Strengthen current care-teaching practices
- Introduce new strategies and concepts
- Address barriers to conducting family style dining
- Be a road map for successful implementation

Who is this Guide for?

This guide is intended to help early care and learning professionals and their programs, including center-based, family child care, Head Start and public preschools, successfully implement family style dining practices. This guide focuses on serving meals family style with toddlers and preschoolers, though after-school programs may adopt these practices as well.





Guiding Principles


The development team was committed to guiding principles that:

- Represent universal ECE and health-related best practices
- Address childhood obesity prevention strategies
- Apply to early childhood professionals who provide care and education in many different settings and roles
- Present a holistic approach to learning, development, and healthy mealtime habits
- Are culturally sensitive and respectful
- Are reader-friendly and useful in a variety of ways


INTRODUCTION

How Should this Guide Be Used?


Each of the three sections,  **Program Ready**,  **Adult Ready** and  **Child Ready**, details specific concepts, practices, and responsibilities that address the unique needs of everyone involved in serving meals and snacks family style. A reader can start with the section that aligns to his/her roles and is encouraged to read all of the sections to get the “big picture” of family style dining. Check out the  **Resources** section for materials and websites that support the program, adults, and children in serving meals family style. It is important that ECE programs follow their licensing rules and regulations before implementing practices outlined in this guide.

 **Program Ready** is for ECE program owners, administrators, cooks and staff who support meal service.


- Create a Family Style Dining Program ECE Policy
- Organize a Food Budget
- Plan a Menu
- Calculate Food Servings
- Identify Equipment Needs
- Create a Child Appropriate Meal Schedule
- Implement Gradually
- Conduct Meal Service
- Special Considerations for Meal Service

 **Adult Ready** is for those who care for and provide learning and play experiences for children, and who participate in meal and snack time.

- Importance of Healthy Eating, Healthy Habits
- Dining Supports Development
- Family Engagement
- Culturally Sensitive Dining
- Being a Role Model
- Adult’s Responsibilities During Meals
- Ready to Start Family Style Dining
- Family Style Meal Process
- Special Considerations for Meal Service

 **Child Ready** is for those who care for and provide learning and play experiences for children, and who participate in meal and snack time.


- Healthy Eating, Healthy Habits
- Play for Mealtime Practice
- Ready to Start Family Style Dining
- The Family Style Meal Process
- Special Considerations for Meal Service

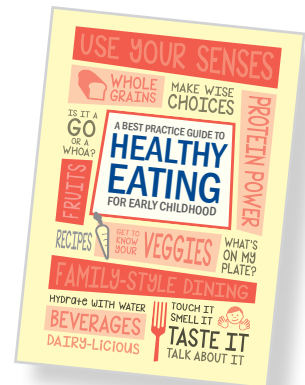
 **Resources** are to support programs, adults and children.

- Sample Family Style Dining Program ECE Policy
- Family Style Dining Equipment Guide
- Sample 5-Week Cycle Menus
- CACFP Child Meal Patterns
- My Plate® Handout
- Mealtime Conversation Starters
- OH Baby® Snack Card
- Handwashing Poster
- List of Web Resources

Help Children Develop Healthy Eating Habits

Use this guide as an additional resource to promote healthy eating in the early childhood setting and help children build a foundation of lifelong healthy eating habits.

A Best Practice Guide to Healthy Eating in Early Childhood 



Resources marked with this symbol can be viewed and downloaded at: <http://ndchildcare.org/providers/family-style-dining.html>



Program Ready


Serving meals and snacks family style encourages healthy habits that positively impact childhood obesity prevention and help children develop lifelong skills.


Family style dining includes opportunities for children to:

- Try a variety of healthy foods
- Learn portion sizes
- Regulate hunger and fullness
- Engage in pleasant, relaxed mealtimes
- Develop positive food attitudes
- Build self-confidence, self-help and social skills

Early Care and Education (ECE) Program administrators, cooks, support staff, and adults have key responsibilities in readying their program to serve meals family style. The following sections detail these responsibilities:

- Create a Family Style Dining Policy
- Organize a Food Budget
- Plan a Menu
- Calculate Food Servings
- Identify Equipment Needs
- Create a Child Appropriate Meal Schedule
- Implement Gradually
- Conduct Meal Service
- Special Considerations for Meal Service

Check out the  **Adult Ready** section for concepts and strategies that adults need to know to implement family style dining.

Look to the  **Child Ready** section for strategies on preparing children for serving meals family style and for how to conduct this type of meal service.

Create a Family Style Dining Policy

Create a policy on the family style dining approach to be included in the ECE program handbook and parent handbook, if available. This establishes expectations for staff and families, as well as reinforcing the program's dedication in preventing childhood obesity and creating mealtime experiences that support early learning and development. The policy is an effective way to engage families in an approach that can be used in the home as well.

Organize a Food Budget

Creating a food budget for family style dining is similar to the steps involved in budgeting for traditional meal service. An organized budget that records quantity of food purchased and served may help reduce food waste and save dollars.

When budgeting to serve meals family style, helpful strategies include:

- Use seasonal fresh foods
- Inquire with a food supplier about the variety of healthy foods they may be selling
- Align menu cycle to food supplier sale schedule
- Calculate number of servings needed by age for each meal/snack
- Account for second helpings, spills and contaminated dishes of food
- Add-in number of adults receiving a child-size portion
- Record number of portions served and left over



Plan a Menu

Successful menu planning ensures that children experience a wide variety of healthy foods while meeting nutrition standards. Menus must include foods that are developmentally and age appropriate both in types of food offered and serving sizes. Programs should frequently evaluate menus to ensure they are family style dining-friendly and offer an array of healthy food options. Read on for fresh ideas.

ASK FOR INPUT

Adults who care for children at the ECE program and children's families are a great source of information. For instance, ask what foods are left uneaten or are difficult for children to manage. Keep in mind that this doesn't mean these foods should not be served. Children may need more exposure to determine if they like a particular food or practice in learning how to serve a food. Input can be also be important when organizing the program's food budget. For example, a program wants to buy acorn squash when it is in season. Knowing that many children at the program are unfamiliar with acorn squash, the program purchases the amount needed for first servings plus slightly extra for seconds or to replace a contaminated dish of food.

BE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE



Families are the child's first teacher and are to be honored as such. This benefits the child and builds positive relationships with the family. Conversations with families about eating preferences and traditions, and foods served at home and in the program are important. For example, children may be hesitant to try food served at the program that is not served at home. Programs can talk with families about the menu and ask for suggestions on how to prepare foods in ways that are representative of foods served in their home. All children may benefit by being exposed to foods from other children's cultures.

ACCOMMODATE A CHILD'S SKILL LEVEL

Children's fine motor skills of grasping, pinching, and hand-eye coordination develop significantly in the early years. These skills are needed for feeding

and serving. Serving foods that match children's abilities reduces spills and food waste, builds self-confidence, and reinforces self-help skills. For example, finger foods for toddlers should be easy to grasp as well as manipulate with their child-size spoon and fork.


BALANCE NUTRITIONAL CONTENT

Healthy foods served at the same meal should be complementary in flavor and be low in sugar, fat and sodium. For example, serving a grilled cheese sandwich with french fries is high in fat, sodium and contains too many starches. However, serving a grilled cheese sandwich on whole grain bread with diced tomatoes provides a better balance of nutritional content. Refer to the [CACFP Guidelines for Meal Patterns](#).  

OFFER A VARIETY

Serving a wide variety of foods day to day and varying main courses creates interest in eating and exposes children to healthy foods. Consider serving different main course breakfast options throughout the week, such as buckwheat pancakes, oatmeal, and whole grain English muffins.

Switch up snack time by replacing crackers with fresh fruit served with plain yogurt. Combine a variety of vegetables with hummus to create different flavors when eaten together. This allows children to enjoy a combination of different flavors and textures.

Consider preparing food in a variety of ways. Children who may not like food prepared one way may like it prepared a different way. Unbreaded chicken or fish, as well as some fruits and vegetables can be baked, broiled, and grilled. Bananas, mangoes, plums, tomatoes, apples, pears, and peaches taste great fresh, baked or broiled. Check out the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl Recipe Finder](#)  for healthy recipes to include on your program's menu.

CREATE COLOR AND CONTRAST

Meals are more interesting and appealing if they offer different textures, temperatures and shapes. A slice of bread, diced pears, diced chicken and steamed




cauliflower serves as a tasty, nutritious lunch, but it is a beige colored meal that lacks a variety of textures and shapes. Instead, create contrast by serving whole grain toast, blueberries, diced unbreaded chicken, and sweet potatoes. It's nutritious, tasty and appealing to the eye. Fruits and vegetables are an easy way to add natural color and textures to any meal. Also, consider cooking with mild, colorful spices such as paprika or a dash of cinnamon.

INTRODUCE A NEW MENU ITEM

Exposing children to a variety of foods is important. They may eat a variety of nutrients and expand their food choices. It may also help them learn positive ways to experience unfamiliar foods in social situations. Keep in mind, children may not immediately take to a new menu item. Children need to be offered the same food 10 to 20 times before they decide if they like it. A food's color, smell, texture and taste all play a role in the child's decision to taste it. Give children plenty of time to adapt to a food's characteristics before taking it off of the menu.

CELEBRATE EVENTS

Build excitement about healthy foods. Celebrate National Cherry Month in February or National Rice Month in September, Programs can also create their own events to introduce different foods. The [USDA Seasonal Produce Guide](#)  can help you explore and celebrate different fruits and vegetables throughout the year such as Spring Produce, Summer Crops, Fall Foods, Winter Vegetables, or Fresh Vegetables and Fruits from A–Z.

Calculate Food Servings

Calculating the correct number of servings addresses food costs, assists in preparing the appropriate amount of food, and reduces food waste. To calculate servings, multiply the portion size for each serving by the number of servings needed. For example, a program plans to serve diced yellow bell peppers for 20 children, ages 3–5 years old. According to the USDA, the portion size of vegetables for children ages 3–5 years is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, therefore multiply $\frac{1}{2}$ cup by 20 children. This equals 10 cups of diced peppers. Remember to add in the

adults' child-size portion, which is calculated the same way. Consider an additional amount for second servings and for food wasted due to spillage or contamination such as when a child:

- Sneezes or coughs into the serving dish
- Licks the serving spoon and then puts it back into the serving dish
- Puts their bare hands in a serving dish instead of using an utensil

Consider keeping serving dishes covered when not in use to protect food from contamination.

When using frozen, canned or boxed foods, look at the nutrition facts label to determine how many servings are in the package. Divide the total amount of servings needed by the servings per container to determine how many packages to prepare.

After meal service, record the amount of food that wasn't served. This provides important information the next time this menu cycle occurs. Over time, consistent record keeping allows programs to more accurately predict the amount of food to prepare.

Identify Equipment Needs

Special equipment is not needed to serve meals family style. Though if equipment designed for children's smaller hands and developmental ability is used for eating and serving, children may be more successful and there will be less food waste and spills. Talk to adults who know the children's abilities to help determine how well children may be able to use serving items. Then take inventory of existing items before making purchases. This will give programs a clearer picture of needed equipment.

Gradually building the equipment supply may be more cost-friendly. A program doesn't need everything to begin serving meals family style. Before purchasing, check out equipment that is suggested for young children of different ages. Items that are smaller in size and child-friendly may be found at local stores, restaurant equipment suppliers, and from early education retailers.

Equipment needs are divided into two categories: meal service and clean-up.

EQUIPMENT FOR MEAL SERVICE

Meal service equipment are items that children use independently or with an adult's help to serve themselves food and drinks. For example, it is easier for children to grasp, lift, hold and pass a smaller, lightweight bowl containing only a few portions. Adult-size serving dishes are too large, heavy, and difficult for small hands to manipulate. Additionally, spills are reduced when young children use child-size serving equipment.

Assure that serving dishes are not hot to the touch. For example, metal bowls should not be used to serve heated food as they become hot to the touch and are unsafe for children.

EQUIPMENT FOR CLEANUP

After mealtime and when spills occur, children need to have the opportunity to assist in cleanup. This promotes independence, teaches responsibility, and self-help skills. When spills occur, children learn that it is okay to make mistakes and helping with cleanup is important. Young children need assistance when cleaning up. Cleaning supplies to keep nearby may include a hand-held or child-size broom and dustpan, paper towels, and a trash can.

Type of equipment designed for young children:

- **Child-size serving dishes** should have wide rims for gripping and be shallow to hold a few servings so they are not too heavy to lift. For example, using a 32 oz. shallow bowl that is filled half way will provide four, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup servings. Wide rimmed dishes also catch juices that drip from serving spoons, which reduces mess. Child-size eating dishes can be used as serving dishes. They hold a few servings and are the appropriate size. By dividing servings of the same food among a few small serving dishes, a contaminated dish of food can be removed without disrupting meal service or wasting a larger amount of food.
- **Short-handled serving spoons, scoops and measuring cups** fit more easily into a child's hand, are lighter weight, and make it easier to



scoop, carry, and pour food onto plates. Use the proper size spoon, scoop, or measuring cup that is needed for each meal component. For example, if each child should receive a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of broccoli, use a measuring cup or spoon that is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup to ensure children are receiving the proper portion size.

- **Pitchers** of different sizes are helpful for children of various ages and abilities. Toddlers may need to use the smallest pitcher for pouring while preschoolers may be more skilled at using a larger child-size pitcher.
- **Drinking glasses** marked with a visual cue, or line, help children know when to stop pouring beverages. With a permanent marker, draw a line on the outside of drinking glasses marking the age appropriate serving.
- **Clear plastic squeeze bottles** that contain jellies, peanut butter, mustard, relish, ketchup, and other spreadable ingredients are easy for children to use. When bottles are partially full, they are lightweight, easier to hold and squeeze. Bottles that are clear let children see the contents so they aren't dependent on adults to tell them what is inside. Label the bottles to support literacy development.



Equipment for family style dining should be age appropriate, child-sized, and durable. Items used for serving, eating and drinking should also be BPA-free.

Examples include:

- Short-handled solid and slotted serving spoons
- Measuring cups or scoops for serving
- Short-handled tongs
- Wide-rimmed serving dishes
- Shallow serving bowls such as 4 cups (32 oz.)
- Plastic squeeze bottles
- Small pitchers that hold 1–4 cups (8–32 fl. oz.)
- Drinking glasses that hold ½–1 cup (4–8 fl. oz.)
- Eating and serving plates
- Forks and spoons for eating
- Napkins for table setting
- Tub for dirty dishes, glasses, utensils
- Receptacle for trash
- Hand-held or short-handled broom, dustpan

FURNITURE FOR MEALTIME

Children who sit at tables and on chairs designed for their size and abilities may spill less, are more successful in feeding themselves, and feel comfortable and safe. Furniture is considered appropriately sized when their feet touch the floor, their arms are even with and rest comfortably on the table top, and their backs rest against the back of the chair. Children can then focus on eating, relaxing, and participating in the social interactions of mealtimes.

Create a Child Appropriate Meal and Snack Schedule

To ensure daily nutritional needs are met, meals and snacks should be regularly scheduled over the course of a day. Meals and snacks served at regular intervals keep children from being overly hungry. When children are exceptionally hungry they will have a harder time being patient as food is passed. For toddlers and preschoolers, it is recommended

that food be offered at a minimum of at least two hours apart and not more than three hours.

Build time into the daily schedule for adults and children to set the table, eat a relaxed family style meal and to clean-up.

Implement Gradually



Gradual implementation of family style dining is critical. Programs may decide to start family style dining in one classroom or with one group of children. Then as the program and adults become more comfortable with this approach, another classroom can start the process. Meals should be served family style daily even as children are learning this type of service. The consistency and repetition of mealtime behaviors is important for future success. Every part of meal service, from setting the table, to serving and eating, to cleaning up should be taught and practiced a little at a time.

Allow time in your schedule when changing from adult-served to family style dining. It may take longer when first transitioning to family style dining.

Start simple so children gain the skills needed for serving foods. For example, an adult can plate three of the four food components at children's seats so children can state if they want the food or not. Also, children are watching food being served and observing how to use serving utensils and pass dishes. The fourth food component can be served with a hand-over-hand method so they are actively participating and learning skills at the same time. Foods easy for children to serve should be the first foods offered when starting this type of meal service. For example, chopped zucchini is easy to scoop, lift and pour and doesn't drip juices.

Also, children can serve themselves while an adult serves the other foods. This allows hungry children to eat without long periods of waiting. They become familiar with the concept of turn-taking at meal time and practice serving skills. Once children develop these skills, they become more proficient and understand the routine. As a result, the serving process naturally speeds up and another food can be added to the rotation of service.



Conduct Meal Service

Persons responsible for organizing meal service, such as cooks or other food service personnel, may find the following list here helpful in conducting mealtime. Adults who are responsible for children's care, play, learning, meal, and snack time should refer to the  **Adult Ready** and  **Child Ready** sections.

BEFORE MEALS

- ✓ Supply items children will need to help set the table: napkins, plates, forks, spoons, drinking glasses
- ✓ Provide multiple sets of child-size serving utensils in case of contamination
- ✓ Fill multiple small dishes of the same food and assure each serving dish contains only a few portions
- ✓ Place on the table the sufficient number of portions for all foods that meet the meal pattern
- ✓ Reserve extra servings of each food, in case of contamination or for second helpings
- ✓ Fill pitchers partially full to reduce spills
- ✓ Provide child-size items to help clean up spills, such as short-handle brooms and dustpans

DURING MEALS

- ✓ Adults who participate in family style meals and snacks with children will find information on responsibilities during meals in the  **Adult Ready** and  **Child Ready** sections

AFTER MEALS

- ✓ Provide a container for children to discard used dishes, drinking glasses and utensils
- ✓ Provide a receptacle for children to dispose of napkins or uneaten food



Special Considerations for Meal Service

Programs may serve specific foods **due to health conditions, food allergies, or cultural and family preferences**. Food substitutions may be individually plated and other food components may be served from serving dishes. Food substitutions can also be placed in individual serving dishes so children can serve themselves. Consult with a child's family and follow the medical care plan to ensure all protocols are followed. When possible, children should not be separated from peers at mealtime due to special dietary needs.

Catered meals may be served family style. Children can set the table, pour beverages, and clean up after themselves. Packaged foods may be transferred to child-size serving dishes or the caterer may be able to provide foods in a way that supports the family style dining approach.

Packed meals from home can be a part of family style dining. Children can set the table, pour beverages, and clean up. Snack time or meals offered by the program, such as breakfast, can be served family style.

Adults and children exhibiting signs of illness, or having open sores should not participate in passing and serving food at mealtime. When possible, they should eat at the same table with a prepared plate of food.

Food and beverages used in family style meal service must be **prepared, stored, and discarded** in accordance with state licensing rules and regulations.



Adult Ready



Early care and education (ECE) professionals play a critical role in helping children be successful in serving meals family style. Children depend on adults to support them in this mealtime approach, just as they do in all aspects of their learning and development.

Adults should take great satisfaction when adopting family style dining knowing that children will:

- Try healthy foods
- Learn portion sizes
- Control how much they eat
- Engage in relaxed, pleasant mealtimes
- Develop positive food attitudes
- Build self-confidence, self-help and social skills

This Adult Ready section addresses what adults need to know and understand when serving meals and snacks family style. Topics addressed in this section include:

- Importance of Healthy Eating, Healthy Habits
- Dining Supports Development
- Family Engagement
- Culturally Sensitive Dining
- Being a Role Model
- Adult's Responsibilities During Meals
- Ready to Start Family Style Dining
- The Family Style Meal Process
- Special Considerations for Meal Service

Look to the  **Child Ready** section for strategies on how to conduct this type of meal service and prepare children for serving meals family style. The  **Program Ready** section details responsibilities needed to ready the program to serve meals family style.



Resources marked with this symbol can be viewed and downloaded at:
<http://ndchildcare.org/providers/family-style-dining.html>

Importance of Healthy Eating, Healthy Habits

PROVIDE HEALTHY FOODS

Children receive over $\frac{2}{3}$ of their daily food from meals served in child care. Meals and snacks served at ECE programs encourage eating more fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. This provides the opportunity for children to select healthy options and to be exposed to foods that may not be available at home. When programs offer a variety of healthy, developmentally appropriate foods, children make good food choices and may demonstrate a willingness to try new foods.

OFFERING FOODS AND SECOND HELPINGS

Following CACFP requirements, a child needs to be offered all foods from a nutritious, balanced meal. Children do not need to accept these foods onto their plate or take a bite of each food. One of the most successful ways to encourage children to eat a nutritious, balanced diet is to offer food that tastes good and looks appealing in an environment that is relaxed, pleasant and supportive. Recognize children's hunger cues and offer second helpings. Children can have additional servings without finishing all foods on their plate.

Children must never be forced to eat or drink. Food cannot be used as a reward or punishment. For example, a child does *not* have to take a bite of each food to be served milk. Children may also leave food uneaten without punishment.

ACKNOWLEDGE HUNGER & FULLNESS

Out of concern, adults may question a child's ability to know how much to eat, and fear they will eat too little or too much. Research from the Institute of Medicine suggests that very young children can respond to their own hunger and fullness cues, and self-regulate their food intake. By responding to a child's fullness cues, adults are implementing a childhood obesity prevention strategy. Keep in

mind too, that hungry children need to be fed in a timely manner. When a child is focused on hunger, he cannot focus on learning and play.

UNDERSTAND PORTION SIZE

Portion sizes vary by age and by food group and must be followed to ensure a balanced, nutritious diet.

Follow the [CACFP Meal Patterns for Serving Sizes](#)  

OFFER A VARIETY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Exposing children to a variety of fruits and vegetables is important. It may increase the variety of healthy foods they eat and can increase the likelihood that children try unfamiliar foods when paired with more familiar foods at mealtime. Children need to be offered the same food approximately 10–20 times before they decide if they like it.

Children who may not like food prepared one way may like it prepared a different way. Bananas, mangoes, plums, tomatoes, apples, pears and peaches taste great fresh, chilled, baked or broiled. Give children time to experiment with temperature, textures and taste.

Dining Supports Development

Every meal and snack time is a hands-on learning experience! Family style dining, like other play and learning opportunities, supports a program's curriculum. Dining experiences like passing, pouring, and serving promote small motor and social skills, and language development. It also helps develop children's identity of self by providing opportunities for making decisions and taking responsibilities.

Children's success with family style dining is dependent on adults understanding the stages of early learning and development in all developmental domains. Refer to national, state, and local resources to learn more about early learning standards and developmental milestones. Visit the

Family Style Dining Guide resource page for links to learn more about developmental milestones :

- [Ages and Stages - The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) 
- [Developmental Milestones - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) 
- [North Dakota Early Learning Standards](#) 

SMALL, LARGE, ORAL MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Passing out plates, tipping a pitcher of milk, and lifting a serving spoon of squash uses a variety of muscle skills. For example, a child must coordinate her arms, hands, wrists, fingers and track with her eyes just to serve herself. She must also remain balanced in her chair. A child's oral motor skills develop when learning to drink from a glass and from eating a variety of foods.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Turn-taking when passing dishes, and using a peer's name to ask for the cherries to be passed, are skills that also relate to play and learning experiences. Helping children realize that by taking a proper portion, they ensure that all those around the table have enough food to eat and supports development of empathy and recognition of the needs of others. Children talking with peers and adults about their interests teaches them the art of conversation and creates a pleasant mealtime.

Mealtime provides an opportunity to practice social etiquette, such as saying "please" and "thank you." As adults model etiquette behaviors, children will learn these important skills and may begin to use them more frequently during and outside of mealtime in the child care setting, their home and their community.



LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Mealtime conversations are important to children's language development. Exposure to many descriptive and meaningful words, asking and answering questions, and taking turns talking provide for a language-rich environment. For example, words and sentences that describe a food's



texture, flavor, appearance, and temperature enrich a child's vocabulary.

Chilled describes cold food. Cubed, diced and chopped describe appearance. Brown foods may be beige, yellow foods may be golden. Also, relationships between word meanings are explored when comparing various characteristics of foods.

Keep in mind, talking about many different topics, not just mealtime happenings, creates more opportunities for language development. Talk about topics that interest children. This extends conversations and introduces new concepts and vocabulary that may be missed otherwise. Refer to [Conversation Starter Ideas](#)  

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Getting peas from the serving bowl to their plate is a reason to celebrate. "I did it!", are important words for children to speak. Their self-confidence and sense of pride encourage them to try new skills, which is critical to school success. Waiting their turn for the dish of cauliflower helps children practice self-regulation. Setting the table, serving themselves, and clearing dishes are critical self-help skills that lead to independence. The more children can do for themselves, the less an adult must do. Children develop a sense of pride from their accomplishments.

Family Engagement

Family style dining is also an approach that supports mealtimes at home. Educating families on the decision to serve meals family style, the benefits to their child, and how this meal service operates keeps families informed. Trust is built, relationships are strengthened, and concerns and questions are more easily be addressed when families and ECE professionals share information.

Frequent communication may include:

- Program's menus
- Foods tried and reactions
- Mealtime conversations

- Learning experiences associated with mealtime
- Child's food preferences

Program information can be shared through family meetings, bulletin boards, newsletters, the program's website, and social media. Share information about a child's specific mealtime behaviors at pick-up and drop-off, with personalized notes and emails, and at conferences.

Invite families to occasionally participate in meal and snack time. Individual families can join meals on different days so as not to overwhelm children and complicate meal service. Children and families will enjoy this experience. Families will also get to experience how the program serves meals family style.

Culturally Sensitive Dining

Families are the child's first teacher and are to be honored as such. This benefits the child and builds positive relationships with the family. Conversations with families about eating preferences, traditions, and foods served at home and in the program are important. For example, children may be hesitant to try a food served at the program that is not served at home. Programs can talk with families about the menu and ask for suggestions on how to prepare foods in ways that are representative of foods served in their home. All children may benefit by being exposed to foods from other children's cultures. It may be helpful to include the program administrator and those who prepare and serve the food in conversations with the family.

Being a Role Model

Children watch and listen to everything adults do and say. This is true when sharing meals family style. Adults influence children's eating behaviors by the foods they offer, the behaviors they model, and their social interactions when they sit and eat with children at meal and snack time. An adult's interest and enthusiasm is contagious and children will follow their lead.

Children's food preferences and willingness to try foods are influenced by the people around them.

As a role model:

- Wash your hands
- Set your place at the table
- Remain seated, assisting children as needed
- Wait patiently for food to be served
- Eat the same foods as the children and try all foods enthusiastically
- Say "please" and "thank you"
- Eat slowly setting the pace for the children
- Engage in meaningful child conversations
- Handle spills calmly
- Wait patiently while children eat
- Clean up your dishes/utensils after you are done eating
- Wash your hands after eating

Adult's Responsibilities During Meals

During meals and snacks, adults are responsible for helping children. Adults may use a variety of developmentally appropriate practices to engage children in family style dining.

Responsibilities include:

- Clean the table:
 - Wash table top with soap and water
 - Spray with sanitizer (*Read label to make sure the sanitizer is for use on food contact surfaces. Use according to the directions on the label*)
 - Keep children away from table when spraying with sanitizer
 - Make sure the table is dry before using
- Provide safe dishes and utensils:
 - Disposable utensils and Styrofoam cups/dishes are not recommended for infants/toddlers



- Children should wash their hands before setting the table, as well as before and after eating
- Demonstrate how to set the table:
 - Do not touch eating surfaces
 - Handle cups from the bottom and utensils with the handle
- Show how to use utensils and serving dishes and keep them sanitary:
 - Place serving utensil(s) in serving bowl or place on a clean barrier such as a napkin, plate, bowl, paper towel, etc.
- Introduce foods
- Eat the same food as the children
 - Do not eat different food in front of the children
- Cut food into smaller pieces to prevent choking
 - 1/4" for infants or 1/2" for toddlers
- Check temperature of the food to prevent burns
- Make sure serving dishes are not too hot for children to touch
- Help serve foods and beverages
- Role model family style dining
- Sit and talk with children
 - Do not use your phone or do other tasks at the table
- Closely supervise the children
 - Eating is considered to be a high risk activity
 - If you have to leave the table, keep the children in your sight in case of choking or ask another adult to watch the children



- Support children in cleanup
 - Coach the children as to what they can do for themselves in regards to self-help skills.
 - Children can help with washing the tables with soap and water, but only adults should be handling the chemicals for sanitizing.

Ready to Start Family Style Dining

To successfully implement family style dining, adults need to thoroughly understand the approach and how to prepare and support children.

Review these strategies to prepare for family style dining:

ASSESS MEALTIME SKILLS

Children's skill level should match what is required during meal service. If children don't have the skills needed for manipulating serving dishes and utensils, they will need practice and support. For example, a child can serve himself, but the adult may want to use a hand-over-hand method to guide the scoop.

To determine what family style dining skills each child is proficient in or needs to strengthen, observe children during play and learning activities and at mealtime. Document each child's abilities. This helps adults identify teaching strategies to track children's progress and to assist children in developing mealtime skills.

Look for these skills when observing children:

- What small motor skills does the child exhibit?
- Can the child grasp an object and maintain control?



- Does the child show good eye-hand coordination?
- When setting items down does the child bang them or set them gently?
- Does the child use two hands or one for different tasks?

TEACH NECESSARY SKILLS

Family style dining, unlike play and learning opportunities, has specific skills that need to be learned. These skills can be achieved when they are introduced in developmentally appropriate ways. Young children learn best from "hands-on" experiences that are enjoyable, brief, and allow them to be actively involved. Children must be given ample time and opportunities to learn and practice each new skill. Examples of needed skills include handling of utensils and dishes, setting/clearing table, handling spills, and handwashing. Provide children with extra sets of serving equipment to use for play to help them learn and practice.



CREATE A CHILD APPROPRIATE MEAL AND SNACK SCHEDULE

To ensure daily nutritional needs are met, meals and snacks should be regularly scheduled over the course of a day. Meals and snacks served at regular intervals keep children from being overly hungry. When children are exceptionally hungry they will have a harder time being patient as food is passed. For toddlers and preschoolers, it is recommended that food be offered at a minimum of at least two hours apart and not more than three hours.

Build time into the daily schedule for adults and children to set the table, eat a relaxed family style meal, and to clean up.

CONDUCT EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS

Establish a schedule that allows sufficient time and supervision for pre-meal and post-meal transitions. Children need time to prepare mentally for their next activity. Children also need more time than adults might need to move between activities and to do what is asked of them.

Transitions should not be hurried. These are prime opportunities for children to learn self-help skills and correct procedures. For example, children who learn the correct [Handwashing Procedure](#)  , and are supervised to ensure procedures are followed, are learning to reduce the spread of germs and stay healthy.

Children's family style pre-meal transitions include ending play activities, washing hands, setting the table, and sitting down to eat. Post-meal transitions involve children clearing their place setting, washing their hands and face and then helping them engage in play and learning activities.

These pre- and post-meal transitions help children develop lifelong self-help skills that build their self-confidence and become independent.

CREATE PLEASANT MEALTIMES

Eating is a time to take in nutrients and to enjoy a pleasant, relaxing break from the stressors of the day. Create a visually attractive table by setting a plastic vase with real or pretend flowers in the center of the table. Use colored napkins occasionally, too. Talk about the children's interests and the day's events. Respond to their comments and questions. Topics of conversation shouldn't revolve around nutrition and mealtime activities.

Refer to [Conversation Starter Ideas](#)  

SCREEN-FREE DINING

Keep TV, movies and computers off during meal and snack time. Eating while watching TV may result in distracted eating and children not paying attention to hunger and fullness cues. This can lead to overeating. Screen-free dining may also lead to more engaging conversations since children are focused on eating and the social aspects of mealtime.

IMPLEMENT GRADUALLY

Gradual implementation of family style dining is critical. Every aspect of family style dining – from setting and clearing the table to serving the food – must be done a little at a time. There is no standard order of what should be done first. The only correct order is that which matches the children's skill

level. One child may need hand-over-hand help in spooning his tomatoes, another child may need help pouring her milk, and a third child may be able to do both of those tasks independently. Keep in mind that children need individual support by patient, caring and respectful adults.

Passing a bowl of chopped broccoli for children to serve themselves while an adult plates other foods allows hungry children to eat without long periods of waiting. They become familiar with the concept of turn-taking at mealtime and practice serving skills. Once children develop these skills, they become more proficient and understand the routine. The serving process naturally speeds up and another food item can be added to the rotation of service. Foods that are easy for children to serve on their own should be the first foods offered.

USE APPROPRIATE FURNITURE

Children who sit at tables and on chairs designed for their size and abilities are more independent in managing their meals and snacks. They may spill less, are more successful in feeding themselves, and are more comfortable and safe. Children who sit at appropriately sized furniture can focus on eating, relaxing and participating in the social interaction of mealtime.

Furniture is considered appropriately sized for children when:

- Feet flat on the floor
- Knees at 90° angle
- Arms are even with and rest comfortably on the table top
- Backs rest against the back of the chair.



Photo used with permission.
www.CommunityPlaythings.com

The Family Style Meal Process

Children depend on adults to fulfill these meal and snack time responsibilities:

BEFORE MEALS

- ✓ Wash own hands
- ✓ Supervise children as they wash their hands
- ✓ Guide children in table setting
- ✓ Provide multiple sets of child-size serving spoons and tongs in case of contamination
- ✓ Present all food items that meet the meal pattern on the table at the same time
- ✓ Reserve extra servings of each food, in case of contamination or for second helpings
- ✓ Fill pitchers partially full
 - Children can become comfortable pouring liquids
 - Chance of spills decrease due to the weight of the pitcher
- ✓ Keep cleanup supplies nearby

DURING MEALS

- ✓ Place serving utensil(s) in a serving bowl or on a clean barrier (e.g., napkin, plate, bowl, paper towel, etc.)
- ✓ Engage in conversations that are interesting to children
- ✓ Assure that no food, including beverages, is held back as a reward or punishment.
- ✓ Assist children as they learn to serve themselves
- ✓ Have children of various abilities sit together to enjoy the meal
 - Children learn by watching one another
- ✓ Sit and eat with children

- ✓ Gently encourage children to try foods
- ✓ Respect the child's decision to decline a food
- ✓ Honor a child's hunger and fullness cues

AFTER MEALS

- ✓ Guide children in clearing the table
- ✓ Let children know what will be happening after they are finished eating
- ✓ Help and supervise children as they wash hands and wipe faces
- ✓ Wash own hands

Special Considerations for Meal Service

Programs may serve specific foods **due to health conditions, food allergies, or cultural and family preferences**. Food substitutions may be individually plated and other food components may be served from serving dishes. Food substitutions can also be placed in individual serving dishes so children can serve themselves. Consult with a child's family and follow the medical care plan to ensure all protocols are followed. When possible, children should not be separated from peers at mealtime due to special dietary needs.

Adults and children exhibiting signs of illness, or having open sores should not participate in passing and serving food at mealtime. When possible, they should eat at the same table with a prepared plate of food.

Food and beverages used in family style meal service must be **prepared, stored, and discarded** in accordance with state licensing rules and regulations.

Discard all food that has been on children's plates or has been in serving dishes on the table where the children ate. If the food has not been served to the children, store leftovers immediately after the meal. The leftovers can be served at a later time if the food has been stored correctly. Follow recommended storage guidelines.



Child Ready


Family style meal service is listed in the Institute of Medicine's Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies as a way for child care providers to practice responsive feeding. This includes letting children serve themselves on their own with help, and having adults sit and eat with children. This allows adults to model healthy eating habits and to give guidance on serving sizes while allowing children to listen to their hunger and fullness cues. The family style dining approach reinforces healthy habits through portion control, by offering of a variety of fruits and vegetables, and through the self-regulation of food intake.


Family style dining, like other play and learning opportunities, supports the program's curriculum and child development. Dining experiences like passing, pouring, and serving promote fine motor and social skills as well as language development. Children's sense of identity of self is strengthened when they have opportunities to make decisions, such as what foods to put on their plate.

Young children grow more independent every day and family style dining celebrates this. Infants participate in mealtime group interactions as they self-feed or are fed. Toddlers and preschoolers learn to pass food and serve themselves as their skills develop.

This Child Ready section addresses these strategies in preparing children for family style dining:

- Healthy Eating, Healthy Habits
- Play for Mealtime Practice
- Ready to Start Family Style Dining
- The Family Style Meal Process
- Special Considerations for Meal Service

Check out the  **Adult Ready** section for concepts that adults need to know and understand when serving meals and snacks family style.

The  **Program Ready** section details responsibilities needed to ready the program for family style meal service.



Healthy Eating Habits

CHOOSE HEALTHY FOODS

Unlike traditional meal service where children receive their plate of food, meals served family style allow children to make decisions about what they want on their plate. Children need to know that all healthy food on the table is available to them.

When beginning family style dining, some food may be pre-plated if children's skills are not advanced enough for self-service. A gradual introduction of family style meal service allows children time to develop their skills and helps them understand that foods being passed or plated are available to them. As adults serve themselves a portion of each food and model family style service, children will gradually gain new knowledge and may begin mimicking dining behaviors.

To increase children's awareness of available healthy foods, ask if they would like each food on the table. Gentle encouragement is okay, such as politely asking the children to put a tasting bite on their plate. If children refuse, politely reply that if they change their mind they can have some later in the meal. Often when children see a peer or an adult try a food they may change their mind.

Keep in mind that the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) states children need to be offered all foods from a nutritious, balanced meal. However,

children do not need to accept these foods onto their plate or taste each food. Children must never be forced to eat or drink. Food cannot be used as a reward or punishment. For example, a child does *not* have to take a bite of each food to be served milk.



ACKNOWLEDGE HUNGER AND FULLNESS

Research from the Institute of Medicine suggests that very young children can respond to their own hunger and fullness cues, and self-regulate their food intake (Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies, 2011).

During snack and meals, adults should respect a child's fullness cues. Examples of cues include children turning or shaking their head, pushing their plate away, saying or signing "No." Children may also just leave the table. When observing these cues, adults should not persuade children to take additional bites.

Encourage connections between amount of food eaten, cues and language. If a child says, "More," respond, "You are still hungry? You may have a second helping." If the children are able, have them serve themselves. When he says "Done," respond, "You are full?" to connect what he is feeling to mealtime words. Be cautious in repeatedly asking children if they are hungry or full. This may cause them to second guess their cues and eat past their state of fullness.

UNDERSTAND PORTION SIZES

Teaching children how to serve a proper portion can help prevent overeating. Using serving utensils correctly sized for a child's portion helps them visually connect the size of the scoop to the amount of food on the plate. Follow the [CACFP Meal Patterns](#)   for serving size requirements

If children need assistance in serving foods or an adult needs to plate specific foods, allow children to say or sign "Stop" or "Enough" so they are in control of their portion size.



TRY A VARIETY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Children need to be offered the same food approximately 10–20 times before they decide if they like it. Children may need to see it, choose it, allow it on their plate, lick it, bite it and then may spit it out or eat it. This process helps them have a positive attitude about food. A food's color, smell, texture and taste all play a role in a child's acceptance and liking of a food. Children do not have to accept food on their plate or try a bite. Gradually letting children try foods may increase their chance of eating it.

Prepare children for foods that are new to the menu. There are a variety of ways to introduce these foods. Use pictures in sale ads, add play foods to the dramatic play area, read a relevant book, make up a chant, and have children dress in the color of the food. Have a tasting party so children can try a sample of the food outside of meal or snack time. Have fun when introducing and offering foods. Adults can ask who would like to be first to try the new menu item and should react enthusiastically when a child tries it.

Play for Mealtime Practice

Children need opportunities outside of mealtime to practice family style dining skills. Daily transitions, routines, and play and learning experiences help children develop the skills needed to make family style dining more successful.

Be creative! Allow children to mix play objects from different learning areas to create their own learning opportunities. **Be sure all materials are safe and appropriate for age and development of child. Read product labels for safety warnings and recommendations.**

DAILY TRANSITIONS AND ROUTINES

Transitions and routines help children to learn self-help skills and healthy practices. Children who wash hands correctly with adequate supervision are learning to reduce the spread of germs and stay healthy. Appropriate routines and transitions also help a child regulate behavior, especially when they need for a child to wait for a short amount of time.



DRAMATIC PLAY

Create a dramatic play area that reflects mealtime experiences. A variety of serving utensils and dishes like those used for meals allow children to practice serving play food or passing play dishes without making the mess. Create pretend food for serving practice. For example cut up yarn to resemble spaghetti and use tongs to practice serving. Use developmentally appropriate sized lacing beads to represent foods that can be scooped, and thin rectangle sponges as slices of bread.

A child can learn the correct way to set and clear the table for a pretend meal with his doll, peer or adult. Adults can show how to hold play utensils by the handle when setting the table for a pretend meal. A child can use a play broom and dustpan to clean up pretend spills.

SMALL MOTOR EXPERIENCES

Nontraditional materials can be used in play and learning experiences to develop children's fine motor skills which are necessary for using serving utensils, such as pinching and grasping. Examples of these materials include using containers, scoops, spoons, cups and tongs with counting tokens, cotton balls, lacing beads, small unit blocks, and clay or play dough cubes.

SAND AND WATER PLAY

A variety of sizes and styles of measuring cups, slotted spoons, squeeze bottles, non-slotted spoons, scoops, pitchers, cups and containers should be available for sand and water play.

An item that resembles dining equipment gives children a more realistic experience. An empty scoop is lighter than a full scoop which makes a difference to little hands. In addition to dry sand and water, clean potting soil and sand that is damp offers different weights and textures. All materials can be used indoors and outdoors. Have children help with cleanup when play is done. This is good practice when spills happen at mealtime.

LITERACY AND MUSIC/MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Make picture books showing children engaging in family style dining. Take pictures of older children in the program eating family style as well as in their own peer group. Ask families to provide pictures of them eating together. Providers can use pictures of their own family. Have a conversation with the children about what is happening in the pictures. Encourage children to match items they see in the pictures to items in their environment.

Ask children to tell a story about food or mealtime. Write their words and let them draw the pictures. Older preschoolers may be able to write letters and words while adults can supplement with written text.


Songs and chants can be used during transitions or during music/movement activities. Create lyrics about new foods, food groups or mealtime activities.

Ready to Start Family Style Dining

Serving meals family style is a multi-step approach. Preparing children is a critical first step.

To help children be successful with family style meal service:

ASSESS MEALTIME SKILLS

To prepare children for family style meal service, adults must assess what skills the child currently has and identify emerging skills. Once this has been determined, adults can consider the best methods of support and level of participation at meals for each child. See the  **Adult Ready** section to learn more about assessing skills needed for family style dining.


TEACH NECESSARY SKILLS

Family style dining involves specific skills which may require instruction and frequent opportunities to practice these skills. Developmentally appropriate teaching strategies should always be used. Children will need guidance and support while they learn.

They should perform these tasks at meal and snack even though they are learning. Practice helps them become proficient.

- To prevent the spread of germs or illness, **proper handwashing techniques** must be taught and supervised. Children and adults must wash hands before and after eating, before setting the table, and before handling food or service items.
- Teach children to hold **utensils by the handle, glasses by the side, plates by the edge, and bowls by the sides or rim**. Hands shouldn't touch areas intended for foods or liquids, unless it is their dish or glass. Frequently remind children that serving utensils cannot go in the mouth.
- Prompt children **to look at the person they are passing the dish to, or receiving the dish from**. This helps to reduce spills and supports social etiquette.
- Show children how to **set the table** and where items are to be placed. Provide visual cues such as laminated place mats that can be removed and sanitized after mealtime. Stand or kneel side-by-side with children as they place napkins and plates, for example, at each setting.
- Show children how to **clear their setting**. A tub for dirty dishes placed at children's level and close to the meal table reduces spills and allows for independence. Walk with them from the table to the dirty dish container as they learn how to clear their setting. Allow children to make more than one trip. Children may make fewer trips as their skills increase.
- Children need to have the opportunity to **assist in cleanup** after mealtime and when spills occur. This promotes independence and teaches responsibility and self-help skills. When spills occur, children learn that it is okay to make mistakes and that helping with cleanup is important. Young children need help to assist in cleanup. Cleaning supplies to keep nearby may include a hand-held or child-size broom and dustpan, paper towels, and a trash can.

ENCOURAGE SELF-FEEDING PRACTICES

National best practices state that adults should encourage older infants and toddlers to hold and drink from an appropriate child-sized glass, and use a child-sized spoon and/or fork to feed themselves. Self-feeding with fingers is also appropriate. Preschoolers are usually more successful in feeding when appropriately sized utensils, dishes and glasses match their abilities. (*Caring for Our Children 3rd Edition 4.3.2.3*) 

PERMIT CHILDREN TO MAKE FOOD CHOICES

Children may be more receptive to trying a variety of foods when they make decisions about what to put on their plate. Children who dislike a specific food may be defiant in eating it if it is pre-plated. When they have the ability to choose, they may be more open to trying it. Providing a variety of fruits and vegetables, non-fried foods and non-sweetened beverages ensures children have healthy food to choose from.

ARRANGE SEATING TO SUPPORT SKILLS

Adults can sit near children that need more support. Small group size allows adults to easily assist with the passing of dishes and helping children serve themselves.

IMPLEMENT GRADUALLY

Gradual implementation of family style dining is critical. The program should serve meals family style daily even as children are learning this type of service. The consistency and repetition of mealtime behaviors is important for future success. Mealtime should be relaxing and enjoyable for children and adults and never be rushed.

Preparing children to set the table is easier if adults show them one step. Let them try that step for each meal and snack until they are successful, then introduce another step. For example, have a child be responsible for setting his plate on the table then progress to passing out everyone's plate as his skills and patience increase.

For learning to clear a table, have children clear their drinking glass then eventually they will learn to clear their whole place setting one piece at a time.



Start simple so children gain the skills needed for serving foods. For example, an adult can plate three of the four food components at children's seats so they can state if they want the food or not. Also children are watching food being served and observing how to use serving utensils and pass dishes. The fourth food component can be served with a hand-over-hand method so they are actively participating and learning skills at the same time. Foods that are easy for children to serve should be the offered first when starting this type of meal service.

Each child is unique and develops skills at different stages. A child's level of participation in family style dining is dependent upon age and abilities. Toddlers will start with more simple tasks of learning to use utensils for eating and serving. Older toddlers may be able to slide a serving dish to a peer. Preschoolers may advance to serving themselves, passing all foods and pouring their beverages. Since adults sit with children at meals and snacks, they can provide consistent physical and verbal support.

USE APPROPRIATE FURNITURE

Children should use appropriately sized mealtime furniture for play and learning as well as when eating. This enables them to practice getting independently in and out of chairs while maintaining their balance.

The Family Style Process

Remember, children will need guidance and support from patient and respectful adults as they learn to participate in family style meals. Children may not be able to perform all of the skills listed here when family style dining first starts. Allow them to do as many as they can with the right amount of help. Start simple and gradually add responsibilities for each child.

BEFORE MEALS

- ✓ Have ample time to transition to meals and snacks
- ✓ Wash hands with supervision
- ✓ Set the table with assistance

DURING MEALS

- ✓ Serve themselves and pass serving dish(es) to one another as able
- ✓ Are offered a variety of healthy foods
- ✓ Are guided in serving the correct portion
- ✓ Are invited to touch and smell food as a natural step towards tasting
- ✓ Pour their own beverage as able
- ✓ Engage in conversation
- ✓ Set their own pace for eating
- ✓ Acknowledge when they are full or hungry

AFTER MEALS

- ✓ Clear their setting as able
- ✓ Leave the table when they are done eating
- ✓ Wash their hands and wipe their face
- ✓ Are offered engaging play and learning activities while peers finish eating

Special Considerations for Meal Service

Programs may serve specific foods **due to health conditions, food allergies, or cultural and family preferences**. Food substitutions may be individually plated and other food components may be served from serving dishes. Food substitutions can also be placed in individual serving dishes so children can serve themselves. Consult with a child's family and follow the medical care plan to ensure all protocols are followed. When possible, children should not be separated from peers at mealtime due to special dietary needs.

Adults and children exhibiting signs of illness, or having open sores should not participate in passing and serving food at mealtime. When possible, they should eat at the same table with a prepared plate of food.



Glossary

Added Sugars – Sugars and syrups added to foods during processing or preparation. Added sugars do not include naturally-occurring sugars such as those found in milk and fruits.

Balanced Meal – A balanced meal includes one food from each food group: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean protein and dairy. These foods provide vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients, and are generally low in fat, sodium and sugar content.

BPA-Free – Bisphenol A, more commonly known as BPA, is a chemical widely used to make polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins. Plastic products that are made with BPA are marked with the number 7 on the bottom of the item. To reduce BPA exposure, do not use plastic products that come in contact with food and beverages, including dishes, reusable food storage containers, infant bottles and beverage bottles. Look for child toys, food containers and dishes marked “BPA-Free.”

CACFP – The Child and Adult Care Food Program is a federally-funded United States Department of Agriculture program. It provides aid to child and adult care institutions and family or group day care homes for the provision of nutritious foods that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children, and the health and wellness of older adults and chronically impaired disabled persons.

Child-Size – An environment and furnishings that are suitable for children’s physical needs to help them feel secure, comfortable and in some instances, independent.

Choose **My Plate** – A nutrition guide published by the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion that illustrates daily recommended servings of grains, vegetables, fruits, proteins and dairy.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices – Programs, activities, and environments that are designed on the basis of: knowledge of how children develop and learn; knowledge of the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children; and knowledge of

the social and cultural contexts in which children live.

Emerging Skills – A child’s new behavior or abilities that are coming into existence.

Emotional Development – Ability to become secure and confident, express feelings, develop self-awareness, and self-regulate; ability to describe themselves and compare their characteristics with those of others.

Healthy Food – Provides vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients, and is naturally lower in calories, fat, sodium and sugar. Includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean protein and dairy. Low sodium-canned vegetables, and fruits canned in 100% juice offer the same great nutrients as fresh and frozen varieties.

Language Development – The increasing ability to communicate successfully with others to build relationships, share meaning, and express needs in multiple ways.

Large Motor – Also known as gross motor skills; children’s ability to control their body movements as they move through space; skills such as crawling and standing are integrated with more complex skills to develop more competence and control of their body’s movement.



Non-Responsive Feeding – Non-responsive feeding is dominated by a lack of reciprocity between the caregiver and child, because the caregiver takes control and dominates the feeding situation (controlling/pressuring), the child controls the situation (indulgence), or the caregiver ignores the child (uninvolved).

Obesity – A condition characterized by the excessive accumulation and storage of fat in the body. Having too much body fat increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, arthritis and some cancers. Factors that might affect weight and obesity include genetic makeup, overeating, eating high-fat foods, and not being physically active.

Oral-Motor Development – Refers to the development of use of the lips, tongue, jaw, and teeth. Important for speech as well the ability to consume certain foods.

Policy – Clear, simply written statements that provide guidance for decision-making and outline accepted procedures. Program policies should support the program’s vision, mission and goals. Program policies provide guidance for administrators, employees and families.

Portion Sizes – A portion is the recommended measured amount of food or drink, such as a ½ cup of vegetables or 6 ounces of milk. This also includes the amount of food or drink listed as a single serving on a food label.

Program – An early learning and education environment that serves children ranging in age from birth to school-age; includes family child care and center-based settings, Head Start, part-day/full-day programs, and public preschool.

Responsive Feeding – Responsive feeding promotes children’s attentiveness and interest in feeding, attention to their internal cues of hunger and satiety, their ability to communicate needs to caregivers with distinct and meaningful signals, and successful progression to independent feeding.

Routines – Care procedures, such as feeding and eating, that are adapted to each individual child’s needs. Personalized care is carried out by a care teacher who has developed a close relationship with a child and takes into account the child’s individual traits, temperament, family practices and culture.

Self-Regulation – The ability to control one’s attention, manage emotions, and control actions and behaviors.

Serving Sizes – A serving is the recommended measured amount of food or drink, such as a ½ cup of vegetables or 6 ounces of milk. This also includes the amount of food or drink listed as a single serving on a food label.

Small Motor Skills – Also known as fine motor skills; defines those skills that provide the ability to grasp, reach, and manipulate objects in the environment with fingers and hands. Examples include grasping a spoon or holding a cup.

Social Development – Child’s development of an understanding of self and others, the ability to relate to other people and the environment, and to recognize and empathize with the feelings of others; ability to recognize that others have feelings and emotions different from one’s own.

Transition – Intentional, systematic process used to help a child move, emotionally and physically, from one place, activity or routine to another.

Mealtime Conversation Starters

Meal and snack time are prime opportunities to engage children in conversations which is critical to their social, emotional, language and communication development. Conversations also make for an enjoyable mealtime. Adults should take this opportunity to model language skills using a wide variety of descriptive words and simple sentences, asking open-ended questions, and allowing time for children to respond. Adults must be careful not to dominate the conversation and not interrupt children when they are having conversations. It is important to encourage conversation among peers by inviting them to share their ideas and ask them to respond to their peer's comments.

Conversations while eating should not only relate to food. Recap the day's events and talk about what experiences they will be participating in later that day. For example, ask about what they saw on their morning walk as they collected leaves. Also, follow the children's lead when they bring up a topic for discussion. When a child shares he went to his Grandpa's house ask what they did. Restating a child's comment validates his/her contribution to the conversation and often the child or peers will respond. Keep in mind young children do not have an accurate sense of time. What they did "last night" may actually have happened several days ago. Focus on the event the child is sharing and not on the time of the event.

Talk about favorites such as colors, foods, and animals.

"Did you know my favorite color is orange, just like these mandarin oranges."

"What is your favorite food? What color is it?"

Talk about pets, what they eat, what they like to play with.


"Do you have a pet? What does your cat like to eat? What kind of toys does your cat like?"

Talk about the textures, flavors and temperatures of the foods on the table.

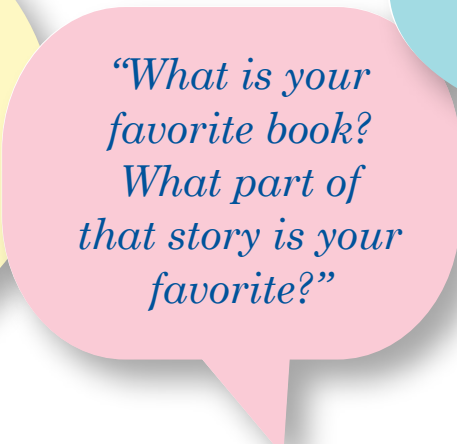
Use descriptive words: chilled, diced, juicy, tart.

"This orange is very juicy and sweet." "This kiwi fruit taste tart"

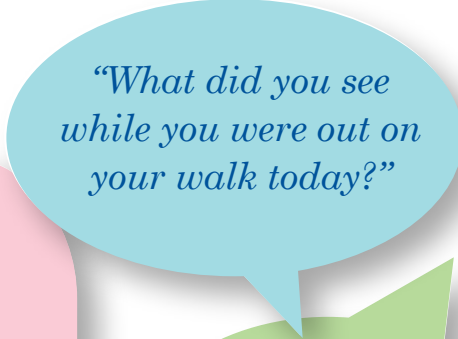
"This soup is very hot. We better let it cool a bit before we eat it."



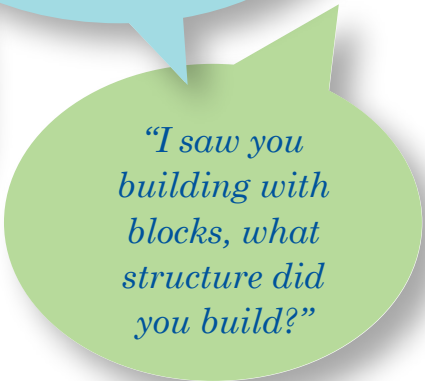
"These peas are good. They grow in a garden like ours. What vegetables could we grow in our garden?"



"What is your favorite book? What part of that story is your favorite?"



"What did you see while you were out on your walk today?"



"I saw you building with blocks, what structure did you build?"

"Tell me about the picture you have on your shirt."

"After breakfast we need to tend to our garden. What will we need to do?"

"Remember that butterfly we saw outside this morning, where do you think she was flying to?"

"What is your favorite color?"

"Who goes to the store to buy food? Who do you go with? What do you buy?"

"What would you like to do after lunch?"

"On my way here this morning, I saw a school bus. Where do you think it was going? What did you see?"

"If snow could fall in any flavor, what flavor would you like?"

"What items in the room is the same color as this tomato?"

"It looks windy outside, the leaves on the trees are moving. Do you think we'll need our jackets?"

"What songs would you like to sing today? Who would like to lead the song?"

"What was your favorite part of the story we read today?"

"What is your favorite activity to do outside?"

"I rode my bike to the park last night, what did you do?"

"Who wants to be the first to try this cucumbers? Who wants to be second?"

My Plate[®] Handout

CACFP Child Meal Patterns

Breakfast (Select all three components for a reimbursable meal)			
Food Components and Food Items¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12
Fluid Milk ³	4 fluid oz.	6 fluid oz.	8 fluid oz.
Vegetables, fruits, or portions of both ⁴	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Grains (oz eq) ^{5,6,7}			
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread	½ slice	½ slice	1 slice
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread product, such as biscuit, roll or muffin	½ serving	½ serving	1 serving
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ⁸ , cereal grain, and/or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (dry, cold) ^{8,9}			
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup
Puffed cereal	¾ cup	¾ cup	1 ¾ cup
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup

¹ Must serve all three components for a reimbursable meal.

³ Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent), unflavored fat-free (skim), or flavored fat-free (skim) milk for children six years old and older.

⁴ Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁵ At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards meeting the grains requirement.

⁶ Meat and meat alternates may be used to meet the entire grains requirement a maximum of three times a week. One ounce of

meat and meat alternates is equal to one ounce equivalent of grains.

⁷ Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of creditable grains.

⁸ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

⁹ Beginning October 1, 2019, the minimum serving size specified in this section for ready-to-eat breakfast cereals must be served.

Until October 1, 2019, the minimum serving size for any type of ready-to-eat breakfast cereals is ¼ cup for children ages 1-2; 1/3 cup for children ages 3-5; and ¾ cup for children ages 6-12.

Lunch and Supper (Select all five components for a reimbursable meal)			
Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12
Fluid Milk ³	4 fluid oz.	6 fluid oz.	8 fluid oz.
Meat/meat alternatives			
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.
Tofu, soy product, or alternate protein products ⁴	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.
Cheese	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.
Large egg	½	¾	1
Cooked dry beans or peas	¼ cup	⅜ cup	½ cup
Peanut butter or soy nut butter or other nut or seed butters	2 tbsp	3 tbsp	4 tbsp
Yogurt, plain or flavored unsweetened or sweetened ⁵	4 oz. or ½ cup	6 oz. or ¾ cup	8 oz. or 1 cup
The following may be used to meet no more than 50% of the requirement: Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds, as listed in program guidance, or an equivalent quantity of any combination of the above meat/meat alternates (1 ounces of nuts/seeds = 1 ounce of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish)	½ ounce = 50%	¾ ounce = 50%	1 ounce = 50%
Vegetables ⁶	⅛ cup	¼ cup	½ cup
Fruits ^{6,7}	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup
Grains (oz eq) ^{8,9}			
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread	½ slice	½ slice	1 slice
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread product, such as biscuit, roll or muffin	½ serving	½ serving	1 serving
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ¹⁰ , cereal grain, and/or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup

¹ Must serve all five components for a reimbursable meal.

³ Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent), unflavored fat-free (skim), or flavored fat-free (skim) milk for children six years old and older.

⁴ Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in Appendix A to Part 226.

⁵ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁶ Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁷ A vegetable may be used to meet the entire fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper, two different kinds of vegetables must be served.

⁸ At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards the grains requirement.

⁹ Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of the creditable grain.

¹⁰ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

Snack (Select two components for a reimbursable snack)			
Food Components and Food Items¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12
Fluid Milk ³	4 fluid oz.	6 fluid oz.	8 fluid oz.
Meat/meat alternatives			
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	½ oz.	½ oz.	1 oz.
Tofu, soy product, or alternate protein products ⁴	½ oz.	½ oz.	1 oz.
Cheese	½ oz.	½ oz.	1 oz.
Large egg	½	½	½
Cooked dry beans or peas	⅛ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Peanut butter or soy nut butter or other nut or seed butters	1 tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp
Yogurt, plain or flavored unsweetened or sweetened ⁵	2 oz. or ¼ cup	2 oz. or ¼ cup	4 oz. or ½ cup
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds	½ ounce	¾ ounce	1 ounce
Vegetables ⁶	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup
Fruits ^{6,7}	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup
Grains (oz eq) ^{7,8}			
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread	½ slice	½ slice	1 slice
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread product, such as biscuit, roll or muffin	½ serving	½ serving	1 serving
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ¹⁰ , cereal grain, and/or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (dry, cold) ^{9,10}			
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup
Puffed cereal	¾ cup	¾ cup	1 ¼ cup
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup

¹ Must two of the five components for a reimbursable snack. Only one of the two may be a beverage

³Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent), unflavored fat-free (skim), or flavored fat-free (skim) milk for children six years old and older.

⁴Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in Appendix A to Part 226.

⁵ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁶Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁷At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards meeting the grains requirement.

⁸Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of creditable grains.

⁹Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

¹⁰ Beginning October 1, 2019, the minimum serving sizes specified in this section for ready-to-eat breakfast cereals must be served. Until October 1, 2019, the minimum serving size for any type of ready-to-eat breakfast cereals is ¼ cup for children ages 1-2; 1/3 cup for children ages 3-5; and ¾ cup for children ages 6-12.

Sample 5-Week Cycle: Breakfast Menu

This is a sample of a 5-week cycle breakfast menu that promotes healthy options. Programs should reduce the number of pre-fried breakfast foods, for example french toast sticks and hash browns. Cereal should contain 6 grams or less of sugar. Water is to be available at every meal and snack and offered throughout the day. CACFP-recommended servings sizes per age group should be followed. Visit the CACFP web page for more information <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Avoid choking hazards by preparing and serving foods that are safe for the age and development of each child.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Week 1	Whole Wheat Banana Bread Grapes Milk	Scrambled Eggs with Tomatoes Whole Wheat Toast Strawberries Milk	Whole Wheat English Muffin Sunflower Butter Banana Milk	Whole Grain Cereal Orange Milk	Oatmeal Blueberries Milk
Week 2	Whole Grain Waffles Peaches Milk	Whole Grain Cereal Strawberries Milk	Whole Grain Bagel Peanut Butter Banana Milk	Scrambled Eggs with Broccoli Whole Wheat English Muffin Orange Milk	Puffed Rice Cereal Blueberries Milk
Week 3	Oatmeal Peaches Milk	Whole Grain Cereal Orange Milk	Whole Wheat Pancakes Cherries Milk	Scrambled Eggs with Veggies Whole Wheat Toast Strawberries Milk	Banana Bread Blueberries Milk
Week 4	Puffed Rice Cereal Grapes Milk	Scrambled Eggs with Mushrooms Whole Wheat English Muffin Orange Milk	Whole Grain English Muffin Banana Milk	Whole Grain Cereal Strawberries Milk	Buckwheat Pancakes Blueberries Milk
Week 5	Whole Grain Bagel Cream Cheese Peaches Milk	Scrambled Eggs with Tomatoes Whole Wheat Toast Strawberries Milk	Whole Grain Waffles Banana Milk	Whole Grain Cereal Orange Milk	Oatmeal Blueberries Milk

Adapted from Ohio Healthy Programs, OCCRA 2015

Sample 5-Week Cycle: Lunch Menu

This sample 5-week cycle lunch menu promotes healthy options. Programs should aim to reduce the number of pre-fried foods at lunch, like chicken nuggets and french fries. Recommended servings sizes per age group should be followed. Water is to be available at every meal and snack and offered throughout the day. CACFP-recommended servings sizes per age group should be followed. Visit the CACFP web page for more information <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Avoid choking hazards by preparing and serving foods that are safe for the age and development of each child.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Week 1	Lean Ground Beef Stroganoff with Whole Wheat Noodles Peaches Tomatoes Milk	Grilled Cheese on Whole Wheat Bread Grapes Yellow Peppers Milk	Baked Chicken Cheesy Brown Rice Blueberries Broccoli Milk	Tuna Salad Sandwich on Whole Wheat Bread Cherries Green Beans Milk	Ham and Cheese Whole Wheat Tortilla Roll-Up Baked Apples Mixed Veggies Milk
Week 2	Baked Chicken Brown Rice and Red Beans Blueberries Cucumbers Milk	Whole Wheat Spaghetti with Lean Ground Beef and Baked Mushrooms Banana Toss Salad* Milk	Turkey and Cheese Whole Wheat Tortilla Roll-Up Orange Peas Milk	Whole Grain English Muffin Pizza Pineapple Baked Zucchini Milk	Lean Ground Beef and Cheese Quesadilla on Whole Wheat Tortilla Baked Sweet Potato Melon Milk
Week 3	Baked Turkey Breast on Whole Wheat Bread Orange Toss Salad* Milk	Lean Ground Beef Stroganoff with Whole Wheat Noodles Peaches Tomatoes Milk	Grilled Cheese and Turkey on Whole Wheat Bread Grapes Red Peppers Milk	Baked Chicken Cheesy Brown Rice Blueberries Broccoli Milk	Tuna Salad Sandwich on Whole Wheat Bread Cherries Corn Milk
Week 4	Whole Wheat Macaroni and Cheese Grapes Mixed Veggies Milk	Baked Chicken Cheesy Brown Rice Blueberries Broccoli Milk	Whole Grain English Muffin Pizza Pineapple Baked Zucchini Milk	Lean Ground Beef Quesadilla with Whole Wheat Tortilla Baked Sweet Potato Melon Milk	Whole Wheat Noodles with Hamburger Peaches Toss Salad* Milk
Week 5	Cheese and Ham Wrap with Whole Wheat Tortilla No Sugar-Added Applesauce Mixed Veggies Milk	Baked Turkey Breast Whole Wheat Bread Melon Toss Salad* Milk	Spaghetti with Whole Wheat Noodles and Hamburger Banana Toss Salad* Milk	Baked chicken Brown Rice and Red Beans Grapes Cucumbers Milk	Tuna Salad Sandwich on Whole Wheat Bread Tomatoes Steamed Carrots Milk

Adapted from Ohio Healthy Programs, OCCRRRA 2015

*Toss salad = Shredded Lettuce, Carrots, Cucumber

Sample 5-Week Cycle: Snack Menu

This sample 5-week cycle snack menu promotes healthy options. Programs should reduce the number of pre-fried foods – for example chips – and sweets like wafers and cookies. Include more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy and/or lean proteins instead. Water is to be available at every meal and snack and offered throughout the day. CACFP-recommended serving sizes per age group should be followed. Visit the CACFP web page for more information <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Avoid choking hazards by preparing and serving foods that are safe for the age and development of each child.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Week 1	Cheese Slice Apple Water	Whole Wheat Pita Hummus Cucumbers Water	Peanut Butter on Banana Water	Graham Crackers Pears Water	Plain Yogurt Blueberries Water
Week 2	Whole Wheat English Muffin and Peanut Butter Water	Whole Grain Cereal Orange Water	Turkey Roll-Up on Whole Wheat Tortilla Water	Cheese Slice Tomatoes Water	Hard-Boiled Egg Mixed Fruit Water
Week 3	Plain Yogurt Strawberries Water	Rice Cake with Sunflower Butter Pears Water	Whole Grain Black Bean Chips Cheese Water	Whole Wheat Pita Shredded Carrot Hummus Water	Whole Wheat Waffles Cherries Water
Week 4	Turkey Roll-Up on Whole Wheat Tortilla Water	Peanut Butter on Banana Water	Graham Crackers Apple Water	Whole Grain Cereal Orange Water	Whole Grain Crackers Mixed Fruit Water
Week 5	Cheese Slice Pears Water	Whole Wheat Toast Peaches Water	Plain Yogurt Cherries Water	Whole Wheat Waffles Blueberries Water	Whole Wheat Pita Hummus Cucumbers Water

Adapted from Ohio Healthy Programs, OCCRRRA 2015

OH Baby[®] Snack Card



Snacks for Kids 1–3

At this age, children have appetites that change throughout the day. They need healthy snacks between meals to provide energy, vitamins and minerals. Remember to vary choices, control portions and don't force a child to clean his plate.



Ideas!

Fruits



Cut up in small pieces: bananas, watermelon, peaches (peeled), mandarin oranges, grapes, cantaloupe, strawberries. Older toddlers can also have cut up apples and pears.

Beverages



Milk and water are healthy drinks. Juice is not recommended.

Veggies



Diced tomatoes, diced and cooked green beans or potatoes and cooked soft peas

Protein



Peanut butter or hummus thinly spread on cracker, bread or tortilla. Scramble or hard-boil an egg.

Dairy



Grated or diced soft cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese and milk

Grains



Non-sugary cereal (with or without milk), whole grain crackers, pasta, rice, tortillas or rice cakes

This is not a complete list of foods that infants and toddlers may eat.

Choking Hazards

Supervise meal and snack time. Choking is a silent accident. Avoid foods that are round, hard, small, thick, sticky, smooth or slippery like:

- Raw vegetables including carrots, peanuts, nuts, seeds
- Whole or round cut hotdogs
- Whole grapes
- Sticky, hard or round candy, like suckers
- Chewing gum
- Popcorn
- Chips and hard pretzels
- Marshmallows
- Spoonfuls of peanut butter

Quick Tips

Snacks are not for when children are bored, tired or cranky.

Snacks are any healthy foods, even leftovers.

Keep snack portions small (the size of child's fist) – they aren't meant to replace meals.

Sit down to eat and drink. Walking, running and playing during meals/snacks is dangerous and teaches unhealthy habits.

Limit sweet, sticky snacks to keep teeth healthy.

Necessary vitamins and minerals are found in fruits and vegetables without the unwanted sugars in juice that can lead to obesity and tooth decay.

Follow your doctor's advice about nutrition and feeding. Ask questions if you have concerns.



Content provided by Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association
Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, www.healthychildren.org
USDA Food & Nutrition Service; Child & Adult Food Care Program: bit.ly/basicmeals

Copyright © 2015

OH Baby[®] Snack Card courtesy of the Ohio Department of Health

Equipment Guide

Child-friendly items for family style meals include items that make family style dining manageable and rewarding for children and adults.

EQUIPMENT ITEMS	VISUAL EXAMPLES
<p>CHILD-SIZE PLATES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not tip easily • 7" diameter (about 2" smaller than adult plate) 	
<p>CHILD-SIZE BOWLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not tip easily 	
<p>CHILD-APPROPRIATE SILVERWARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-size • Will not break easily • Easy for child to manage 	
<p>CHILD-APPROPRIATE GLASSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-size • Various sizes from 4–8 oz • Will not break easily • Easy to grip 	 <div data-bbox="933 1094 1276 1178" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p>VISUAL CUES HELP CHILDREN POUR THE CORRECT PORTION.</p> </div>
<p>SERVING DISHES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ribbed bowls for easier gripping • Wide rim to help prevent spilling • 9" plate and 32 oz. bowl recommended 	
<p>SERVING UTENSILS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-handle serving spoons and measuring cups • Short-handle tongs • Squeeze bottle for condiments 	

Equipment Guide – Continued

EQUIPMENT ITEMS	VISUAL EXAMPLES
<p>PITCHERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-size • Various sizes from 8 oz.–32 oz. • Metal creamers may be used for smaller amounts • Easy to grip 	
<p>TABLE DECOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durable acrylic or plastic vase and flower • Add warmth to a pleasant mealtime 	

Sample Program Policy

(PROGRAM NAME) FAMILY STYLE DINING POLICY

Family style dining is a meal service approach that early care and education programs implement to address childhood obesity prevention and support children in developmentally appropriate mealtime experiences. All foods that meet the meal pattern requirement are placed on the table where children and adults sit together to share the meal. Children are encouraged to serve themselves independently or with adults' help.

(Program Name)

provides family style meals and snacks.

WHEN WE SERVE MEALS AND SNACKS FAMILY STYLE, ADULTS AT THE PROGRAM:

- Serve as a role model eating and enjoying healthy foods
- Sit with children enjoying a relaxed and pleasant eating experience
- Engage children in interesting, language-building conversations
- Create play and learning experiences that support skills used in family style dining

CHILDREN ENGAGED IN FAMILY STYLE MEAL SERVICE HAVE MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- Try healthy foods
- Learn portion sizes
- Control how much they eat
- Engage in relaxed, pleasant mealtimes
- Develop positive food attitudes
- Build self-confidence, self-help and social skills

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:

We value and understand the importance of engaging families within our program. We welcome families to participate in a family style meal with their child, and we will discuss with families the mealtimes that work best to meet the needs of families and the program.

TABLE MANNERS:

Research has shown that when children are taught manners at an early age, they will be more confident and comfortable when in public situations.

https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/4h/Cloverbuds/handout_secret_table_manners.pdf

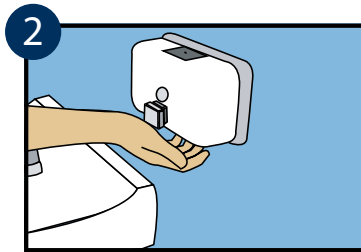
Handwashing Steps

How to Wash Your Hands

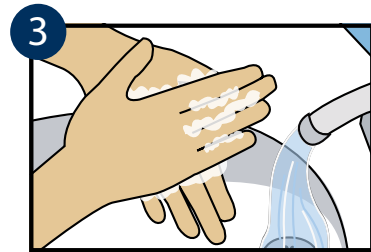
Wash hands including wrists following steps below.
Wash for 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday TWICE).



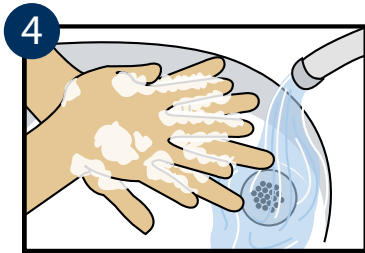
1 Get paper towel ready for drying.



2 Wet hands with clear, warm water. Apply soap.



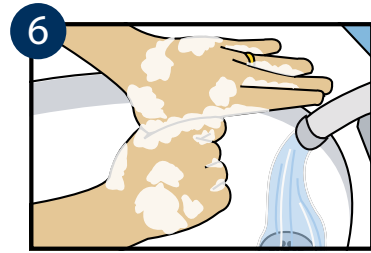
3 Wash palm to palm.



4 Back of hands. Ring.



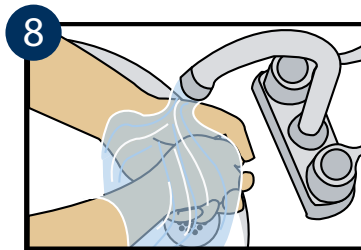
5 Back of fingers.



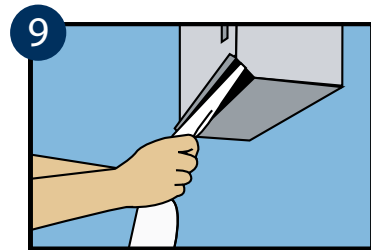
6 Thumbs.



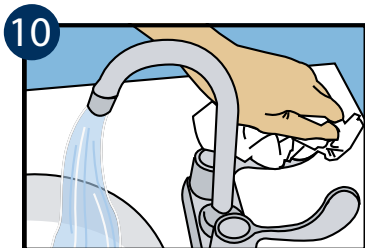
7 Fingertips.



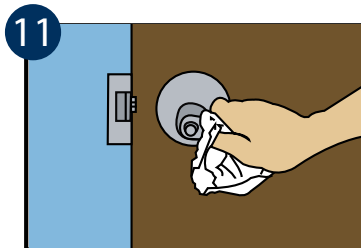
8 Rinse with clear, running water.



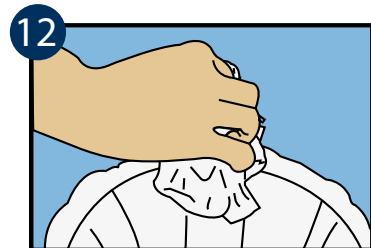
9 Dry thoroughly with clean paper towel.



10 Turn off water with paper towel.



11 Open rest room door with paper towel.



12 Dispose of paper towel in a hands-free trash can.

Reprinted with permission by CCA Global Partners, Inc. 2016

© 2012 CCA Global Partners, Inc.
To purchase posters, email: Posters@CCAforSocialGood.com

Family Style Dining List of Web Resource

HEALTHY EATING • MENU PLANNING • FAMILY STYLE DINING • CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The American Academy of Pediatrics
www.healthychildren.org

Developmental Milestones -
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/>

Family Style Dining and Infants
http://www.cditeam.org/table/family_style_dining/infants.htm

Let's Move! Child Care: For child care providers to help get our youngest children off to the healthiest start
<https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/>

National Healthy Eating Guidelines and Resources
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

Nurture Healthy Eaters: Nemours Best Practices for Healthy Eating Guide
<https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/5-healthy-goals/nurture-healthy-eaters/>

Nutrition education for children and their caregivers, and school and community support for healthy eating and physical activity
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition>

North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines
<https://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childcare/guidelines.html>

Sample Menus – The Table Project
http://www.cditeam.org/table/family_style_dining/menus.htm

USDA Menu Planning Tools for child care programs
<https://healthymeals.fns.usda.gov/menu-planning/menu-planning-tools/menu-planning-tools-child-care-providers>

Monthly Celebration Ideas
USDA National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month
<https://healthymeals.fns.usda.gov/features-month/june/national-fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-month>

USDA National Whole Grains Month
<https://healthymeals.fns.usda.gov/features-month/september/whole-grains-month>

USDA National Dairy Month
<https://healthymeals.fns.usda.gov/features-month/june/national-dairy-month>

References web links were live and accessible as of October 2018

Best Practices for Healthy Eating. Nemours 2013 <https://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/preventive/nhps/heguide.pdf>

Caring for Our Children. National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition
<http://nrckids.org/CFOC>

Obesity Facts. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/facts.htm>

Developmental Milestones. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/>

Crediting Handbook for the Child Adult Care Food Program. United States Department of Agriculture. https://www.cacfp.org/files/9914/4240/2457/CACFP_creditinghandbook.pdf

Children receive 2/3 of daily food from meals served in child care Citation: Modeling the cost effectiveness of child care policy changes in the US. Wright, et al., 2015. Am J Prev (49) 1: 135-147.

Cultural Sensitivity – National Childcare Accreditation Council. Extract from Putting Children First, the NCAC magazine. Issue 32 December 2009

Developmental Steps to Self-Feeding in Young Children: Healthy Portions for Preschoolers. Temple University, Pennsylvania State University United States Department of Agriculture. http://www.extension.org/sites/default/files/Self-feeding%20skills%20development%20chart%20_FINAL.pdf

Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies (2011). Committee on Obesity Prevention Policies for Young Children. Leann L. Birch, Lynn Parker, and Annina Burns, Editors. Institute of Medicine. Chapter 4, page 99. Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies: Goals, Recommendations, and Potential Actions. Institute of Medicine. Goal 4-4 State child care regulatory agencies should require that child care providers and early childhood educators practice responsive feeding. 2011.

Eat Right. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics <http://www.eatright.org/resource/food/nutrition/dietary-guidelines-and-myplate/eating-right-isnt-complicated>

Family Day Care Monitor Handbook. A Child and Adult Care Food Program Handbook. United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. 2012

Family Style Dining Fact Sheet. Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. 2009

Food Jags. National Institutes of Health Medical Encyclopedia <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002425.htm>

Happy Mealtimes Grab and Go Lesson: Family Style Meal Service. National Food Service Management Institute

Healthy Children. Healthy Weights. Policy Guideline Handbook for Early Learning Centers. Columbus Public Health. 2009

Helping Children to Serve Themselves. Extension. <http://www.extension.org/pages/65010/helping-children-to-serve-themselves#.VUwLJ4tgnj0>

In The Hands of a Child: The Importance of Play and The Right Play Materials <http://www.environments.com/community/landing.aspx?campaignid=1994>

Independent Child Care Centers. A Child and Adult Care Food Program Handbook. United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. 2014

Mealtimes Matter for Healthy Brain Development. Better Brains for Babies and the University of Georgia. <http://www.bbbgeorgia.org/physicalMealtimes.php>

**Mealtime Procedures. National Food Service Management Institute
National Toxicology Program. Bisphenol A (BPA)**

Nemours Children's Health System – Healthy Eating <http://www.nemours.org/service/health/growuphealthy/eating.html>

North Dakota Early Learning Standards – <https://ndchildcare.org/providers/tools/elg.html>

Ohio's Early Childhood Core Knowledge & Competencies, Early Childhood Ohio 2015. <http://earlychildhoodohio.org/files/resources/CoreKnowledge.pdf>

Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards, <http://www.earlychildhoodohio.org/elds.php>

Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards for Pre-Kindergarten Research Summary. Early Childhood Ohio. 2013

Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards for Infant Toddler Research Summary. Early Childhood Ohio. 2013

Ohio's Infant & Toddler Field Guide, OCCRRRA, 2012 <https://occrra.org/wp-content/occrra/spec/spec-infant-toddler-field-guide.pdf>

"Pairing Vegetables with a Liked Food and Visually Appealing Presentation: Promising Strategies for Increasing Vegetable Consumption among Preschoolers" Correia Danielle C.S., O'Connell Meghan, Irwin Melinda L., and Henderson Kathryn E. *Childhood Obesity*. February 2014, 10(1): 72-76. doi:10.1089/chi.2013.0115. <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/chi.2013.0115>

Pass the Peas Please: The Benefits of Family-Style Meals. Altarum Institute. 2015. <http://altarum.org/health-policy-blog/pass-the-peas-please-the-benefits-of-family-style-meals#sthash.30A8brdN.dpuf>

Standards of Care & Teaching for Ohio's Infants & Toddlers, OCCRRRA, 2008 <https://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/docs/ITStandards.pdf>

The American Academy of Pediatrics' website, www.healthychildren.org

The Developmental Progression of Eating Skills Identification of Early Feeding Issues. Rappaport, K. *Journal of the California Dental Association*. Vol. 32(1) winter 2015

The Basic Guide to Family Style Dining – Part 1. National Food Service Management Institute

The Basic Guide to Family Style Dining – Part 2. National Food Service Management Institute

The Child and Adult Care Food Program <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>

The Child and Adult Care Food Program. CACFP Requirements for Family Style Dining: Portions, Service, Choice. The Table Project. Community Development Institute http://www.cditeam.org/table/family_style_dining/requirements.htm

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/distortion.htm>

United States Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3040905/>

United States Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. MedlinePlus <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/obesity.html>

