

tasty times

important updates for success and more resources from the child care healthy food program



Dear Child Care Provider,

Mealtime with infants and young children can be messy. More food can end up on the floor and on the child than in their mouth. Did you know that during this messy food time, children are actually learning? Yes they make a mess, but who said all learning had to be neat and clean? Studies have shown playing with food helps children learn. This issue of *Tasty Times* will discuss how children learn when playing with their food. So let's dig in!

—Jasmine Johnson, Dietetic Intern (for John R. Gadiant, RD/LDN, Supervisor)

The Healthy Food Program Has a New Phone System!

Now you only need to call one number to reach the Healthy Food Program.

Call 773-564-8861 and follow the prompts to report being out of home, check your payment or leave a general message in English or Spanish!



Remember!

Providers are required to re-enroll the children annually. If you have children in your care and have received a re-enrollment worksheet, please send it in.

What Kids Learn While Playing with Food

Young infants do not know much about food, they have not experienced all of the tastes, smells, and textures of food. The fastest (and easiest) way children learn that a grapefruit is wet inside and cooked spinach is slippery is by playing with these foods. Playing with food allows children to “get to know” their food by using their senses. It can be messy and they may try weird combinations like crackers dipped in milk. This is ok. They are learning what foods taste good to them. When they squeeze a grape they learn what happens and the strength of their hands. Also, if a child plays with food, they will be more willing to eat it after exploring it.

Playing with their food can teach young children a lot, but is it useful for older children? Older children will not play with their food in the same way. Older children may play with food by creating new food combinations or shapes. Teaching older children to cook simple recipes can be fun and a form of “playing” with their food. Children are also more likely to eat a food if they have prepared it themselves.

Ways to incorporate learning into food

- 1) Once the child is old enough to have mixed dishes without risk of allergies, let them make their own food combinations.
- 2) Let older children use their imagination to serve food in creative shapes and designs.
- 3) Have younger children close their eyes to smell food and guess the name. You can do the same guessing game with the texture and taste of food. To get the older kids involved, have them be in charge of the guessing game.



Continued

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in any program or activity conducted or funded by the USDA. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to the USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136(Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.





Tips for Submitting Menus

DO NOT bend, fold or staple your menus. Stained menus cannot be processed.

It is important to send in your menus flat so that they can be read properly and ensure you do not lose money!

February claims are due in our office by **March 4th!**
Warning! Late claims WILL result in late payment!

Welcome New Providers

Nina Bowen
Almo Burton
Rekieta Terrell
Janeen Wingo



Illinois Action for Children,
4753 N. Broadway, Suite 1200,
Chicago, IL 60640
main: 312-823-1100
direct: 773-564-8861
fax: 773-564-8721
web: www.actforchildren.org

This institution is an equal opportunity provider

What Kids Learn While Playing with Food *Continued*

4) For older children, have them help cook a recipe. Take a small recipe and have the child double or triple the recipe. Make sure to give them enough time to do the math to increase the amount of ingredients. This way the child is learning how to cook and doing math at the same time!



5) For younger children just learning how to count, have them count fruits, vegetables, beans, etc. They can also help older children measure ingredients by keeping track of the number of teaspoons the older child has added to the dish.



6) For older children who know how to divide, have them take a large recipe and divide it into a smaller amount.

7) Teach older children the conversions of measuring cups and spoons:

- 1 teaspoon = 1/3 tablespoon
- 1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons
- 2 tablespoons = 6 teaspoons
- 1/4 cup = 4 tablespoons = 12 teaspoons
- 1/2 cup = 8 tablespoons = 24 teaspoons
- 3/4 cup = 12 tablespoons = 36 teaspoons
- 1 cup = 16 tablespoons = 48 teaspoons
- 2 cups = 32 tablespoons = 96 teaspoons



Teach them the easier conversions such as 1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons and 1/4 cup = 4 tablespoons and have them calculate the larger amounts. They can use these conversions when trying out recipes or making recipes smaller and bigger.

When to stop them from playing with food

There is a fine line between playing with food and just making a mess. If you think the child is making a mess and not actually learning while playing with food, it is ok to end the mealtime. Give children at least 30 minutes per meal. Be flexible to allow the child to use their sensory skills during mealtime, but do not let them start a food fight.



Make sure children wash their hands before playing with their food so they can still eat it. To help avoid a big mess at the end of mealtime put old newspapers or paper towels underneath the child's chair while they play with their food.

Additional information on how children learn about food through play:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/desc.12147/abstract>

