Dear Child Care Provider,

You know how important it is for children to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables for good overall health. You also know that providing a variety of fruits and vegetables to the children you care for may be easier said than done. One of the most commonly reported barriers for not choosing fresh fruits and vegetables is the cost. In this issue of Tasty Times, we will discuss the idea of “in season” foods, and how they not only offer enhanced health benefits and flavor, but can also be within your budget.
—Lacey Pezley, Dietetic Intern (for John R. Gadient, RD/LDN, Supervisor)

What Does ‘In Season’ Really Mean?

Foods that are “in season” refer to the foods that grow naturally in a given season and climate. Seasons have historically shaped the way we eat. Think back to a time before supermarkets existed, when families would grow and raise their food throughout the year. They depended on the season, the weather, and the growing conditions to produce food.

Our world has changed a lot since then, with a high demand for convenience and consistency we now see produce such as strawberries and asparagus in the supermarket year-round. We have the option to purchase practically any food at any time of the year. However, we pay for the convenience through taste, quality, and cost.

Benefits of Eating Foods in Season

1. Contains the most nutritional value

Plants are able to provide quality nutritional value when they have been exposed to natural sunlight and have been grown in season. Fruits and vegetables that are picked at their peak freshness contain the most nutrients. These nutrients such as potassium, vitamin C, calcium, fiber, folic acid, magnesium, and vitamin A are essential for our health.

2. Provides the most flavor

In order for produce to arrive at the supermarket ripe, or appearing ripe, distributors must pick fruits and vegetables before they are actually ripe. This means companies spray ethylene gas on the plants to ripen them after they have been picked. The process of ripening the plants after they have been picked can have a huge impact on taste. Fruits and vegetables

SPRING VEGETABLES
Artichokes
Arugula
Asparagus
Beets
Carrots
Chard
Fava beans
Fennel
Green onions
Kohlrabi
Leeks
Lettuce
Mint
Morels
New potatoes
Parsley
Pea greens
Peas
Radishes
Spinach
Sweet onions
Turnips

SPRING FRUITS
Apricots
Avocados
Cherries
Grapefruit
Kiwis
Kumquats
Lemons
Navel oranges
Rhubarb
Strawberries

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Healthy Food Program Number
For the Out of Home voicemail, payment information or to speak to a customer service representative:
Call: (773) 564-8861

Welcome New Providers
Michael Bragg Sr.
Rochelle Heard
Qutester Henry
Jorge Merino
Sheveece J Montgomery
Pauline Saunders

What Does ‘In Season’ Really Mean? Continued
are most flavorful when the time between picking and eating is the shortest.

3. Better for the environment and local economy
In order for supermarkets to offer the same produce year-round, it must be mass produced in non-traditional ways or they must get it from all over the world. It is estimated that the average American meal travels 1500 miles to get from the farm to your plate. This long-distance transportation generates a lot of unhealthy emissions and air pollution. Buying in season fruits and vegetables supports local farmers and a healthier environment.

4. Most affordable
Long-distance travel for fruits and vegetables combined with a smaller supply of certain produce throughout the year is also responsible for a higher price at the supermarket. When produce like strawberries and asparagus are available all year it is because the food was shipped from thousands of miles away, or mass produced. The transportation and production costs are then passed on to you in the supermarket.

Cereals Need to Be ‘Iron Fortified Infant’
Providers must write IFI (iron fortified infant) before all cereals served to infants. Menus with just “oatmeal” listed for infant cereal will NOT be reimbursed.

Hold On to Your Healthy Food Files for Three Years
The United States Department of Agriculture requires providers keep all Child Care Healthy Food Program related materials on-site in your child care home for three years. We suggest you keep all current forms and documents in your Provider Handbook binder for easy reference, and to share with your Nutrition Advocate and/or ISBE monitor at the time of a Home Review. Providers who claim on-line (Web Kids) will have their attendance and menus automatically saved for three years. All other forms including menus written (when they have not been submitted online), must be maintained for three years. Any forms over a year old, should be placed in a box and marked for the applicable year. All forms over three years old can be discarded.

Be Prepared for Unannounced Child Care Home Reviews
The Illinois State Board of Education will be conducting unannounced child care home reviews during mealtimes this spring. If you receive a visit, always check for identification and feel free to call us if you are doubtful of the person at your door. You or your assistant cannot ask the ISBE monitor to come back later; you or your assistant must conduct the review. The purpose of the ISBE review is to monitor Illinois Action for Children’s Healthy Food Program. ISBE is required to do this for all food programs by the United States Department of Agriculture. Be sure to call us if you are going to be closed or away during a mealtime, and we will inform the ISBE monitor if he or she is at your door and you do not answer.

April claims are due in our office by May 5th!
Warning! Late claims WILL result in late payment!

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