

tasty times

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



Dear Child Care Provider,

For some people, “seasoning” food means adding salt and pepper. However, there is a whole world of other flavors that can be enjoyed by you and the children in your care. Using a variety of herbs and seasonings can demonstrate the growth journey of herbs from plants to your table. Growing an indoor herb garden creates great teachable moments on the life cycle of plants. Plus, herbs and spices are great ways to introduce children to new flavors and cultures! Experimenting with herbs and spices is a fun and inexpensive way to entertain and educate children on the world of possibilities for adding flavors to foods. This issue of Tasty Times has all the information you need to get started.

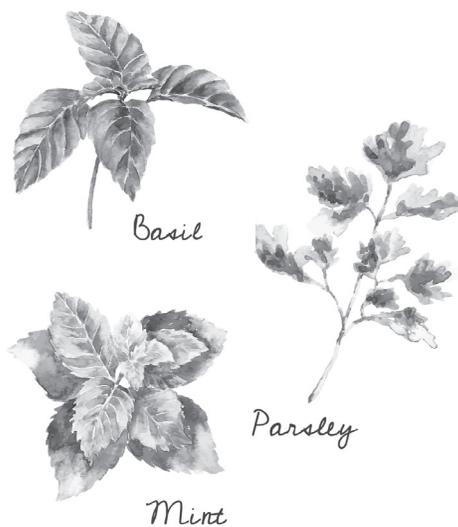
—Tran Huynh, UIC Dietetic Intern

Creating an Indoor Herb Garden

Growing herbs indoors is a fun and educational activity for kids. Through indoor gardening, children can learn about nature and see first-hand where their food comes from. This kind of an activity is also a great way to encourage children to try new foods, as they get to see it go from a seed to their plate. Indoor gardening creates opportunities for you to bond with the kids and gives the kids new knowledge they can share. Furthermore, home grown food tends to taste better and is free of harmful pesticides compared to store bought or processed foods. Not everyone has access to open space for gardening; thus, herb plants are the most convenient because they are easy to grow inside and don’t take up a lot of space!

There are important key points you need to remember when planning your indoor garden:

- **Temperature:** 65 to 70 degrees is the ideal. However, this depends on the type of plant. The plant may prefer cooler or warmer temperatures. Remember that the air next to a window will be cooler in winter (or hotter in summer) than your average indoor temperature, so place your plants accordingly.
- **Light:** Look for a spot that the herbs can get as much natural light as possible or at least 6 hours of sunlight daily.
- **Water:** On most seed packets, you can find watering instructions. A tip to see if



your plant needs water is to dip a finger lightly into the soil. If the soil is dry, it’s generally time to water.

- **Nutrients:** Add liquid fertilizer (plant food) in water and use it once a week to make sure the plant receives enough nutrients.
- **Cutting/harvesting:** This step helps stimulate new growth and should be done often to keep the plant from maturing too much or too soon. However, you should not cut more than 1/3 of the plant at one time because it might go into shock and take longer to recover.
- **Materials:**
 - **Planter pots:** Have drainage and something to allow excess water to seep out into and protect the surface underneath.
 - **Soil:** You should use potting soil and not soil from outside because it is too heavy and compact which will suffocate the roots of the plant

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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



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Reminder: Unannounced Child Care Home Reviews

The Illinois State Board of Education will be conducting unannounced child care home reviews during meal times this spring and summer. 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 meal time and we will inform the ISBE monitor if he or she is at your door and you do not answer.

Save yourself any unnecessary headaches and call our Out of Home Voicemail at 773-564-8861.

Attention Providers! New Change— Reduced Number of Infant Groups

Effective October 1st, 2017, the new CACFP meal pattern went into effect for the Healthy Food Program. As part of these changes, the USDA has reduced the number of infant groups from 3 (0-3 months, 4-7 months, and 8-11 months) to 2 (0-5 months and 6-11 months). Infants 6-11 months are expected to receive foods from all food groups at meals and snacks once the child is developmentally ready to receive them.

It is the expectation that children 8 months and older are developmentally ready to receive all foods. If you have a child that is not developmentally ready or a child whose parents do not believe is developmentally ready at 8 months of age, please notify the Healthy Food Program.

Creating an Indoor Herb Garden *Continued*

- **Seeds or plants:** Growing from seeds costs less, but it takes longer than young plants. Growing from seeds can teach children different stages of a plant's development and patience.
- **Watering can:** A small bucket or a cup works just fine, but a spouted can makes watering easier and avoid mess.



You can incorporate your new herbs into your recipes either fresh or dried. Here is a list of herbs that are great for growing indoors and some ideas on how to use them:

- **Mint:** Fresh mint is great to add to lemonade, greek yogurt with fruits, smoothies, salads, pesto, and dips. Dried mint can be used as tea which can help ease digestion.
- **Basil:** It is often used fresh and compliments tomato especially well; thus, it is used in dishes like lasagna, pasta, and pizza. It is also used in

desserts, lemonade, salads, and meat dishes.

- **Thyme:** It goes well with roasted chicken, roasted or sautéed vegetables, home-made bread, pasta, and soups. Dried thyme can be used to make tea which can aid digestion and relieve a sore throat.
- **Chives:** It is usually used to flavor eggs, mashed potatoes, soups and salads.
- **Lemon Balm:** This herb can be used to substitute lemon peel in recipes and flavor soups, sauces, vinegars, and seafood. Dried lemon balm makes tasty tea which helps reduce anxiety and sleeping problems.
- **Cilantro:** It is often used fresh to season savory dishes.
- **Oregano:** Dried oregano is commonly used to season vegetables, meat, and seafood.
- **Parsley:** It could be used fresh or dried to flavor many vegetable and meat dishes.
- **Rosemary:** It goes well with roasted vegetables, soups, meat dishes, lemonade, and homemade bread. Dried rosemary can be used as tea which help alleviate muscle pain and boost immune system.
- **Sage:** It is often used dried and goes well with fall vegetables, including squash, pumpkin, zucchini, and carrot, soups, pasta, and meats.

These herbs can be used to flavor many dishes. Experimenting and pairing different herbs is recommended.

Welcome New Providers

Charles Boone
Sandra Harris
Nancy Hopkins
Kandanise Ramseur
Denisha Terry
Patti Walker

Remember, **April** claims are due **May 6th!**
Warning! Late claims WILL result in late payment!



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