



# Fuel Their Minds

Ideas for Better Eating and Active Play with Young Children



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## Free Nutrition Curriculum for your School

Cooperative Extension offers **free** curriculum to preschools in Yolo County to encourage children to consume healthy foods and engage in regular physical activity.

Lessons are easy to use and require only a few supplies. Many of the supplies, books, and materials are provided by the Cooperative Extension staff, and delivered to you.

Free teacher trainings are included to familiarize your staff with the material before they engage



*Start healthy habits early to last a lifetime.*

the children, and provide other ideas on how to make your preschool

environment healthier.

There is no minimum or maximum time commitment, and many schools integrate daily lessons into their program.

We can also help you start a garden, set up parent trainings, provide guidance on meal planning, and attend school fairs.

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## Overcoming "Picky Eating"

The top concern most parents and early childhood educators have in regards to food is "picky eating". Usually, they are referring to the annoying habit children have of wanting to eat from a very short list of foods. And having these foods prepared in a very specific way (triangle cut sandwiches, not rectangles, sliced apples not whole, etc). While this

can seem downright rebellious, it is nature's way of keeping your children safe. They have learned what is safe to eat, and anything new is instinctively scary.

The best thing to do is to introduce a variety of foods early on in their lives, be patient, and don't push or bribe with food.

It may take a child 10 to 15 times to be exposed to a food before they will try it or like it, so don't give up. Introduce new foods in familiar ways or with familiar foods.

This newsletter will provide you some easy ways to introduce more fruits and vegetables to your children, so read on.

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## New Spins on Old Favorites

### Snacks

Snacking is important for children. It can introduce them to new foods, help keep them from over or under eating, and is a great way to increase their fruit and vegetable consumption. Here are some quick and easy snack ideas.

For children 4 and older:

- ◆ Frozen bananas, grapes, blueberries, or raspberries
- ◆ Celery sticks with peanut butter or low fat cream cheese.
- ◆ Dry whole grain cereal and dried cherries

For children 2 and older:

- ◆ Bananas and apples dipped in low fat yogurt.
- ◆ Fruit smoothies made with fresh, frozen, or canned fruit in it's own juice plus ice and low fat yogurt.
- ◆ 100% Fruit Juice Bars, try coconut or lemon.
- ◆ Cinnamon raisin bagels with low fat cream cheese or peanut butter.
- ◆ Corn quesadillas with low fat cheese and

fresh mango salsa.

- ◆ Peanut butter and banana sandwiches on whole wheat bread.
- ◆ Whole wheat crackers topped with low fat cheese and sliced apples.
- ◆ Baked tortilla chips and guacamole.
- ◆ Broccoli and cauliflower florets dipped in low-fat cheese sauce.
- ◆ English muffin pizzas with low-fat cheese, olives, and green peppers.
- ◆ Corn and veggie puffs.
- ◆ Sweet potato chips.



### Fruits and Vegetables

There is more than one way to prepare fruits and vegetables. And while a piece of whole fruit is easy and delicious, it can get repetitive and boring, and doesn't stretch children's food preferences. Try these new spins on old favorites to expand children's taste buds.

#### **FRUITS:**

- ◆ Baked apples
- ◆ Sautéed bananas
- ◆ Frozen grapes (cut in half for young children)
- ◆ Watermelon juice
- ◆ Mandarin oranges
- ◆ Strawberries dipped in balsamic vinegar
- ◆ Pears spread with blue cheese

#### **VEGETABLES:**

- ◆ Broccoli salad
- ◆ Carrot muffins
- ◆ Lettuce wraps (in place of tortillas)
- ◆ Corn bread
- ◆ Mashed potatoes and cauliflower
- ◆ Sweet potato chips
- ◆ Vegetable juice

## The Hidden Fruits and Vegetables

Another more tricky way to introduce new produce, or increase fruits and vegetables in the diet is to hide them. Hiding fruits or vegetables in familiar foods can be a good way to add extra nutrition to your child's meal or snack.

- ◆ Grate carrots or zucchini into meatloaf or meatballs.
- ◆ Puree vegetables into soups for a uniform color but added vitamins.
- ◆ Puree vegetables like zucchini or carrots into spaghetti sauce.
- ◆ Use frozen or fresh fruits in smoothies.
- ◆ Grate celery into tuna or chicken salad for sandwiches.
- ◆ Mash up bananas and mix them into pudding or pancake mix.
- ◆ Grate peppers, onions, and zucchini and mix with cheese for super veggie



quesadillas.

- ◆ Mash bananas and mix with peanut butter, spread onto sandwich bread and top with honey.
- ◆ Add dried cherries, mangos or blueberries to the normal raisin mix.
- ◆ Serve spinach or tomato pasta.
  - ◆ Replace hamburger patties with vegetable patties.
  - ◆ Add frozen corn to their macaroni and cheese.
  - ◆ Sneak onions onto a cheese pizza.
  - ◆ Add cooked pureed cauliflower to mashed potatoes.
  - ◆ Add corn, diced tomatoes, and green peppers to chili recipes.
- ◆ Hide strawberries, banana slices, orange segments, or raspberries under a layer of chocolate sauce.

## Eye Appeal and Container Fun

We eat with more than just our mouth, we use other senses like our nose and eyes. Children are the same way. Make meal and snack time more appealing by presenting the same foods or even new foods in different looking ways.

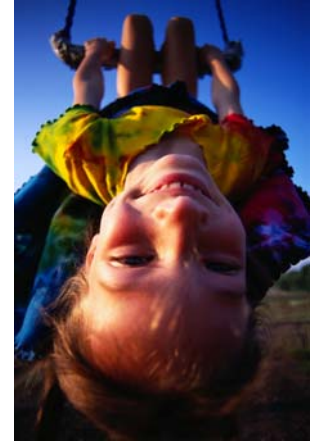
- ◆ Use cookie cutters to cut out sandwiches or quesadillas into animals or hearts.
- ◆ Use special straws or cups for smoothies.
- ◆ Serve soup in a mug or cup instead of a bowl.
- ◆ Use Dixie cups for salad dressing. This keeps the dressing better contained and kids can dip carrots or celery sticks into their favorite characters.
- ◆ Garnish soups or stews with goldfish crackers or your child's favorite snack size crackers.
- ◆ Give your child a special spoon or fork to use at dinner time.
- ◆ Use bamboo skewers or colored, plastic toothpicks for cut up fruits or vegetables. Just make sure to cut off the sharp end before serving to your child.
- ◆ Add a bowl of letter cereal for spelling words on top of fruity low-fat yogurt.
- ◆ Make faces on brown rice cakes with peanut butter, raisins, shredded carrots, and berries.
- ◆ Add letter shaped pasta to soups and pasta sauces for alphabet fun.
- ◆ Using a can of squeezable cheese spell out the child's name onto apple segments.
- ◆ Teach shapes by serving an all square meal (square cut kiwis, pizza, and jicama), triangle meal (pineapple wedges, quartered banana and honey sandwiches, and cheese triangles) or a circle meal (peas, cornmeal muffins, sliced hard boiled eggs, apple rings).


## Curriculum Choices for Preschools

**Go Glow Grow** This curriculum is designed to meet the specific needs and abilities of preschoolers. Children will learn how eating healthy foods will help them to Go, Glow, and Grow.

**Happy, Healthy Me.** . . This curriculum provides opportunities for young children to explore nutrition and physical activity concepts in a fun and interactive way. Children will learn about good nutrition, physical activity, and how to have a healthy body.

**Food and Me** The goal of Food and Me is to improve the health of children by empowering them to: eat a variety of foods, eat more fruits, vegetables, and grains, eat lower fat foods more often, and be physically active.



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