

Serving Quality Foods

The items you serve to children are only as good as the quality of ingredients put into each recipe. Set high standards for taste, appearance, temperature, and nutrient value. To ensure the best results it is important to purchase the finest quality available, check your cooking techniques, and store and handle food carefully.

Ways to Ensure Quality

- Make sure foods are fresh. Purchase fruits and vegetables when they are in season. Buying from local farmers and farmers' markets is a great option.
- Carefully select how you prepare and hold each food. Batch cooking may be necessary to retain flavor, color, nutrients, and temperature.
- Do not overcook. If this happens, do not serve foods that are burned.
- Always taste before serving. This makes certain that the food has been prepared and seasoned well.
- Keep foods at the proper temperature. Keep hot foods hot (140 °F and above) and cold foods cold (below 40 °F). This is important for safety and taste.
- Make foods eye-appealing. This can have a big influence on how enjoyable the foods are because children tend to eat with their eyes first.

Serving quality foods also means serving foods that are healthy and still have many of their original nutrients. Here are some tips to prevent nutrient loss:

- Be careful when using water. Soaking food in water dissolves water-soluble vitamins and minerals. When cooking vegetables, use the smallest amount of water possible and then use the leftover cooking liquid in a soup or casserole.
- Heating food causes nutrient loss; therefore, it is important to avoid prolonged overcooking.
- Store milk in a light-obstructing container, such as a cardboard carton, to prevent the destruction of riboflavin.



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- Do not wash rice before cooking. Rice is enriched by spraying with vitamins and minerals so washing would cause the enrichment to be washed off.
- Do not add baking soda while cooking green vegetables. It does retain their color during the cooking process, but it also makes the cooking water alkaline, destroying thiamin and vitamin C.
- Vitamins A, C, E, K, and B vitamins are destroyed by exposure to air. To avoid this, vegetables should be cut in pieces that are as large as possible, cooked as soon as possible after cutting, and cooked until just tender. It is best to serve the vegetables raw when possible.



Proper storage also ensures quality foods.

Store fruits and vegetables at the temperature and humidity that allow each to stay their freshest.

Store at 32 °F -40 °F

Apples, grapes, berries, strawberries, peaches, carrots, celery, lettuce, and mushrooms

Store at 40 °F-50 °F

Lemons, melons, pineapples, okra, oranges, cucumbers, peppers, and summer squash

The produce that requires the lowest temperature should go on the bottom shelf and in the back of the refrigerator. Produce that tolerates a warmer temperature can be stored nearest to the door.

Store at 60 °F-70 °F (room temperature)

Bananas, potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash, pumpkins, and tomatoes

The ideal storage also provides

- Enough space to allow air to circulate.
- Separation of those fruits and vegetables that give off odors. These items—for example, onions, garlic, shallots, green onions—may be placed in plastic bags or stored outside of the refrigerator.

Recipe to Try

Great way to toss up a great lunch.

Pasta Toss with Vegetables D-14¹

| | | | |
|--|------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| Water | 1 gal 1 qt | White vinegar | ¼ cup |
| Salt | 1 tsp | Granulated garlic | 1 tsp |
| Enriched elbow macaroni | 12 oz | Dried chives, minced | 1 tsp |
| Vegetable oil | ¼ cup | Dried basil | 1 tsp |
| Fresh broccoli florets | 1 lb 10 oz | Sugar | 2 tsp |
| Fresh carrots, peeled, shredded | 7 oz | Salt | 1 tsp |
| Reduced fat mozzarella cheese, ½ inch cubes | 1 lb 3 oz | Ground black or white pepper | ½ tsp |
| Prepared yellow mustard | 1 tsp | Vegetable oil | 1 cup |

Boil water and salt in a stock pot. Cook pasta in boiling water until tender, but still firm (al dente), about 10 minutes. Drain and toss with vegetable oil in a large bowl. Cool to room temperature, stirring occasionally.

Cook broccoli in steamer for 2-3 minutes until just tender. Quickly cool in ice water and drain.

In a bowl, combine cooked pasta, broccoli, carrots, and cheese. Mix thoroughly. Spread 2 lb 15 oz (approximately 1 qt 2 ¼ cups) into each pan (9 x 13 x 2 inch). For 25 servings use 2 pans.

In a bowl, whisk together mustard, vinegar, granulated garlic, chives, basil, sugar, salt, and pepper. Continue to whisk while slowly adding oil.

Pour dressing over pasta and vegetables and mix thoroughly. Cool to 41 °F within 4 hours. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Number of servings: 25

Serving size: ½ cup (No. 8 scoop) provides ¾ oz of cheese, ¼ cup of vegetables, and the equivalent of ½ slice of bread.

¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org.

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Breakfast Menus

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| ½ cup orange sections (½ cup fruit) ½ slice cheese toast (½ slice bread, ½ oz cheddar cheese) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) | ½ cup banana slices (½ cup fruit) 1 Oven-Baked Whole Wheat Pancake A-06A ¹ (½ slice bread) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) | ½ cup diced peaches (½ cup fruit) ½ cup unsweetened whole-grain cereal variety (½ cup dry cereal) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) | ½ cup grape juice (½ cup fruit) ½ cup oatmeal (½ cup cooked cereal) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) | ½ cup pineapple tidbits (½ cup fruit) 1 Baked Whole Wheat Doughnut A-07 ¹ (1 ¼ slice bread) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) |

Lunch Menus

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| ½ cup Lentil Soup H-07 ¹ served over brown rice (½ oz cooked lean meat, ¼ cup vegetable, ½ slice bread) ¼ cup fresh apple slices (¼ cup fruit) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) | 1 ½ oz oven-baked chicken (1 ½ oz cooked poultry) ¼ cup broccoli (¼ cup vegetable) ¼ cup mixed fruit, in light syrup (¼ cup fruit) 1 piece Corn Muffin Squares A-02A ¹ (¾ slice bread) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) | 1 Tuna Salad Sandwich F-11 ¹ on whole wheat bread (2 oz cooked fish, ½ cup vegetable, 2 slices bread) ¼ cup peas and carrots (¼ cup vegetable) ¼ cup banana slices (¼ cup fruit) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) | 1 serving Tiny Meat Loaves D-04C ¹ (2 oz cooked lean meat, ½ cup vegetable, ½ slice bread) ¼ cup stir-fried zucchini with 1 tsp Parmesan Cheese (¼ cup vegetable) ¼ cup fresh pear slices (¼ cup fruit) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) | ½ cup Pasta Toss with Vegetables D-14 ¹ (¾ oz cheese, ¼ cup vegetable, ½ slice bread) ¾ oz roasted turkey (¾ oz cooked poultry) ¼ cup apricot halves (¼ cup fruit) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk) |

Snack Menus

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| Ants on a log ½ cup celery sticks with 1 Tbsp peanut butter ² and 1 Tbsp raisins ³ (½ cup vegetable, 1 Tbsp peanut butter) Water ⁴ | ½ cup kiwi (½ cup fruit) ½ oz graham crackers (2 crackers) (½ oz grains/bread) Water ⁴ | 1 portion Strawberry Yogurt Shake ⁵ (½ cup fruit, 2 oz yogurt) ½ cup milk (½ cup milk) Water ⁴ | ½ ham sandwich (½ oz cooked meat, 1 slice bread) Water ⁴ | ½ oz cottage cheese, lowfat (½ oz cheese) ½ cup grape halves (½ cup fruit) Water ⁴ |

¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org. Ages 3–5.

²Sunflower butter may be substituted for peanut butter.

³Raisins can be a choking hazard to young children.

⁴Water is suggested as a beverage for all snacks even when other beverages are offered to encourage children to drink water.

⁵*a Day Quantity Recipe Cookbook*. Available online at www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/programsupport/bnps/cookbook.pdf.

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Sources

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services. (2000). *Building blocks for fun and healthy meals: A menu planner for the child and adult care food program.*

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