

Snacks in a Snap

Let kids help you make tasty snacks* that will power them through the day.



Avocado Crunch

Let children mash 1 ripe avocado in a bowl. Add juice from half a lemon, 2 teaspoons of sunflower seeds, and a pinch of salt. Spread over Cucumber Sammies (right), or serve with vegetable slices or whole wheat crackers.

Cucumber Sammies

Cut cucumbers into $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch slices. Help children top with egg salad, tuna salad, Avocado Crunch (left), or turkey and cheese. Cover with another cucumber slice.

Baked Apples

Core apples and place in a microwave safe dish. Each child can fill their apple with about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of butter, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Add a few raisins, if desired. Cook for about 6 minutes in the microwave. Allow to cool before serving with toasted whole wheat pita wedges dusted with cinnamon.

Kabobs

Cube different cheeses and slice a mixture of fruits. Invite children to make snack kabobs on coffee stirrer "skewers" or pretzel sticks.

Seasonal Fruit Salad

Let children help you wash and peel fruits that are in season. Cut into bite-size pieces. Combine in a large bowl. Squeeze the juice from half a lime over the fruit. Drizzle with a Tablespoon of honey if you like. Serve family-style with graham crackers.

Banana Crunch

Ask for help mashing one large, very ripe banana in a bowl. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of low-sugar granola, a dash of cinnamon, and mix. Spread onto thin wafers or graham crackers.

Roasted Vegetables

Preheat oven to 375°. Wash and cut several types of root veggies (beets, carrots, parsnips, sweet potatoes, turnips, etc.) lengthwise, into "fingers." Toss in a large bowl with 2 Tablespoons of canola oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of pepper. Place in a single layer on a baking sheet in preheated oven. Roast for 35-45 minutes, until tender. Serve over brown rice.

Smoothie

Have children help add ingredients to a blender. Use 6 ounces low-fat milk, $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of frozen fruit, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of honey, if you like. Little fingers can press buttons to be sure everything is blended well. Pour and serve with whole oat granola bars.

*Snacks are for kids aged 2 and older. Adjust the ingredients as needed so that each child receives the age-appropriate amount to meet CACFP requirements.

Meal Appeal for Kids

Use these tips to make healthy foods that taste great.



Healthy Food or Drink	Ways to Make It Tasty
Broccoli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steam until just tender. It should still be a bright green color. Serve raw with low-fat dressings or dips.
Cabbage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a simple slaw. Grate raw cabbage. Add cider vinegar or citrus juices, salt, pepper, and oil. Serve the slaw as a side dish, on top of salads, or in wraps.
Cauliflower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combine with slowly cooked onions to keep its sweet flavor. Slice, drizzle with canola oil, salt, and pepper, and roast in the oven. Serve as a side dish or snack.
Leafy greens (collards, kale, mustard, spinach, turnip greens)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid overcooking. Steam greens lightly, or sauté with sweet onions. Add to casseroles or soups.
Low-fat milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wean children off of whole milk. Combine whole and low-fat milk in cereal or to drink. Slowly increase the amount of low-fat milk in the mixture.

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Meal Appeal for Kids Continued >>

Healthy Food or Drink	Ways to Make It Tasty
Onions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cook onions slowly over low heat. This will bring out their sweetness and reduce stringiness.
Peas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cook fresh or frozen peas for just 3 minutes to keep their bright color and sweet taste. Add frozen peas straight to cold salads for a slight crunch.
Peppers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peppers take on slightly different flavors depending on their color. Serve them raw or sauté with other vegetables for a colorful medley.
Root veggies (radishes, carrots, turnips, beets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grate root veggies of various colors. Steam and add to cooked pasta with cheese. Combine grated veggies in a wrap. Add a small amount of oil, salt, and pepper to root veggies. Bake in the oven.
Squash (summer and winter varieties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add different types of squash to sweet and savory dishes that will enhance their natural flavors. Cook in the microwave. Season with a small amount of butter, a dab of maple syrup, and salt and pepper.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flavor tap water with fresh fruit slices or mint leaves. Serve in place of sugary drinks.

Cooking with Kids

Help kids develop a love of healthy foods.
Let them help in the kitchen.

Kids aged two and younger can:

- Play with plastic measuring cups, spoons, containers, or a bowl of water and a whisk
- Learn to say names and colors of foods being used
- Smell foods and, depending on the food, taste small amounts

As children get older,
they can take on
harder tasks.

Let three-year-olds try to:

- Rinse and scrub fresh produce
- Tear, snap, or break foods
- Use a cookie cutter to cut shapes in dough
- Pluck fruits or leaves from stems
- Dip foods into dips
- Arrange foods on a plate
- Help stir ingredients together in a bowl



Let four-year-olds try to:

- Measure ingredients
- Cut with a plastic or dull butter knife
- Squeeze juice from fruits
- Shake small containers, such as jars or zip-top bags, to mix ingredients



Let five-year-olds try to:

- Help grate cheeses and vegetables
- Crack and beat eggs
- Peel oranges

Kids can also help:

- Set and clear the table
- Clean up
- Get out ingredients and equipment and put them away

Cooking With Many Kids

Cooking with large groups of children requires lots of planning, but the results are well worth it! Review the three approaches below to find what works in your setting. Whichever approach you choose, keep these tips in mind:

- Start by describing or demonstrating the recipe steps for children.
- Always have plenty of adult supervision.
- Insist that children follow good hand-washing and food safety practices.
- Have fun with the process. Enjoy eating your classroom creations!

Basic: No-cook assembly

Best for: classrooms with limited cooking equipment; cooking with kids prohibited by licensing regulations

Cooking in the classroom may not work for your group, but don't be discouraged! Get kids involved in some meal preparation right at the table. Let kids try these basic tasks:

- Spread toppings on toast
- Assemble sandwiches and salads
- Peel hard-boiled eggs
- Thread fruit pieces on sticks to make kebabs

Ask food service staff if you can get unassembled meal components.



Example: Spinach Salad With Eggs (page 90)

- Set out bowls of spinach, chopped hard-boiled eggs, cranberries, cheese, and dressing.
- Let kids assemble their own salads.
- Let kids pour a small amount of dressing on top and stir.

Intermediate: Individual-portion or "cup cooking"

Best for: classrooms with limited cooking equipment; working with younger children

Kids move through an assembly line of ingredients. They put together their own portions of ready-to-eat foods or foods that need further cooking. Each child has a chance to experience each step of the cooking process. Try these tips to make it work:

- Determine what parts of the preparation kids can participate in (e.g., chopping, washing produce, etc.). Consider the ages of the kids, their ability to follow food safety instructions, and any local regulations. Stick with no-cook recipes as needed.

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Cooking With Many Kids Continued >>

- Calculate individual portions of each ingredient. Place enough for all children in serving bowls. Set the ingredients out in the correct order. Place appropriate utensils or measuring tools in each bowl.
- Add a little extra of each ingredient to allow for spills or measuring errors. Remember, the kids are still learning!
- Try making picture cards (or “rebus cards”) for each recipe step. The cards should include a picture of the ingredient, the measurement needed, and any motions required such as stirring or shaking. Be sure to rehearse the sequence of steps in your mind many times to be sure you have created a smooth, simple process for kids.



Example: Mini Pizzas (page 66)

- Set out a tray of English muffin halves and bowls of tomato-veggie sauce, pepperoni slices, and cheese.
- Let children assemble their own pizzas. Have them take their pizza to an adult for baking.
- Line baking trays with aluminum foil or parchment paper. Pencil each student's initials next to their pizza so you can match them easily later.

Advanced: Large-group cooking projects

Best for: classrooms with access to cooking equipment; working with older children

Kids help prepare food for everyone to share. Make it work with these tips:

- Break down the recipe into detailed steps.
- Determine how you will assign tasks to groups of kids.
- Make sure everyone has a chance to be involved. Kids don't want to just watch a demo—they want to do the cooking!

Check out these resources for ideas on creating your own rebus cards:

“Cook and Learn: Pictorial Single Portion Recipes”
by Beverly Veitch and Thelma Harms. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1981.

Food Based Modules from the Garden of Eatin’, North Bay Children’s Center:
www.nbcc.net/garden-of-eatin/early-ed

“Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers and Up”
by Mollie Katzen and Ann Henderson. Tricycle Press, 1994.

Example: Black Bean and Vegetable Quesadillas (page 86)

- Assuming 12 children in the class:
 - 1 child opens, drains, and rinses a can of black beans
 - 2 children rinse and grate zucchini
 - 4 children rinse and chop spinach and herbs
 - 1 child opens and drains a can of corn
 - 4 children grate cheese
- Teams of 2 children each spread cooked veggies on the 6 tortillas, sprinkle with cheese, and fold for cooking.
- Adjust tasks as needed for a larger group.

Taste Test Success

Sampling small bites of unfamiliar foods is a non-threatening way for children to broaden their taste horizons. Keep your taste test fun with these tips:

Follow up any of the activities in the Activity Bank (page 93) with a taste test!

1 Choose your group size.

- Decide whether you're going to do the taste test as a small group activity or with the larger group (e.g., at "circle time").
- To keep things moving in a large group, you'll need help from several staff members to pass out food samples and assist children.

2 Pick a theme.

- You may want to tie it to something kids are already learning, like a color or shape. Ideas include:
 - Different varieties of the same food (e.g., red, green, and yellow apples)
 - Different forms of the same food (e.g., raw, canned, and frozen green beans)
 - Different foods in a similar category (e.g., 3 kinds of leafy greens, 4 spices common in a culture you're studying)
 - Different foods relating to a theme (e.g., 3 red foods)

3 Keep it simple.

- For young children, choose no more than 3 foods to taste.

4 Get the food.

- Coordinate with food service staff to get food samples for tasting. Or, work together to test new ingredients or new dishes being added to your center's menu.
- If possible, invite food service staff to take part in the activity.

5 Organize the tasting area.

- If using fresh fruits and vegetables, wash them first.
- Cut the food into bite-size pieces, reserving one whole piece for the beginning of the activity. Place cut pieces in a serving container with a spoon or tongs.
- If your group is large, pre-plate samples for the children. Do so before the children gather to avoid long wait times. You'll need to ask them to wait to eat the foods until you've given them the signal.

6 Enforce food safety.

- Have the children wash their hands before the activity.
- Remind them that they may only touch their own food samples.

7 Show the whole food first.

- Start by passing around an uncut version of the first food you will taste. This lets the children learn to recognize the food and its characteristics.
- Ask them to tell you about its color, texture, weight, temperature, and smell. Have them guess what color it will be inside. Ask if any of the children have eaten the food before.
- Consider recording responses on a chart.



8 Let them taste the samples.

- Pass out small samples of the first food.
- Ask them to smell the sample and describe it before tasting. Then, as they taste, ask questions like, "Is it sweet? Salty? Sour? Does it remind you of something you have eaten before?"
- Repeat with each food sample. Have children compare the taste to previous samples.
- At the end, you can have children vote for their favorite "taste." Record their votes on a chart.

Be patient with kids as they taste. Let them know they are invited to try the sample, but no one will be forced to eat it. If children seem hesitant, use accepting phrases like "maybe later" or "maybe next time." They may change their minds when they see their friends enjoying it!

Set Goals: Meals that Appeal to Kids

Key Messages

- Serve foods of many different colors, shapes, and textures to the kids in your care.
- Prepare healthy foods in a variety of tasty ways.
- Find safe kitchen tasks for each of the kids in your care.
- Fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables are all healthy choices.

Challenge Yourself

My goal is to...

Introduce a healthy food I normally do not serve to the kids in my care.

Which healthy foods do I usually choose not to serve because I think kids won't like them? _____

How can I prepare one of these foods using ideas from class? _____

How can I serve it in a way that's fun for kids (arrange it in fun shapes, talk about the colors, etc.)? _____

Plan and prepare a meal using kids' input on the menu and their help in the kitchen.

Which recipe from class would I like to make this week using my take-home groceries? _____

What activity can I do with kids to get their input on a vegetable to use in this recipe or to serve on the side? (HINT: Check the activity bank in the back of your book!) _____

How can the kids help me prepare this meal? _____

