

LUNCH TIPS, IDEAS and Approaches to EATING with children

Variety: Children do well with small portions and several appealing choices.

Fresh: Include fresh fruit and vegetable at every meal.

Left-overs: Pasta, soup, rice and beans, can be heated up in the morning and packed in a thermos.

Protein: Boiled egg, cheese cubes, sausage, deli meat roll ups, hummus, nut-butter, sandwiches, quesadillas or nuts are a few healthy suggestions.



Reusable containers are good for the planet and children gain self-help skills and motor strength by opening and closing their container and taking care of their belongings. Try to find containers children can practice opening and closing independently, but remember teachers are always sitting close by to help and to share meals alongside children.



We present all components of the meal at once. We do not require children to eat food in a certain order. If lunch includes a “treat” such as a cookie or sweet item, keep it proportional. By serving all components of meal together, we avoid making “dessert” a big deal which can potentially send unhealthy messages about good food and bad food and viewing food as reward or punishment



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Meals represent relationship: Children feel very attached to their items from home – so when they open their lunches, it represents family. At school, it is our responsibility to create a pleasant climate with good conversation and an emotional atmosphere that is like a happy nourishing family style meal.

Young children are building their relationship with food and the attitudes surrounding food are just as important as the nutritional content. Praising, bribing or cohering children to eat can quickly turn into power struggles and can have deleterious effects on life-long attitudes about health and food.

During the preschool years children pass through picky eating stages. It is helpful to remember that they are at the beginning stage of their relationship with food, and experimenting with many different new flavors and textures. It is important to allow children to develop autonomy and self-awareness about hunger and satiation.

Early childhood teachers model and teach table manners. Teachers show respect for each child’s eating competency and food acceptance, viewing these things as skills that develop over many years.

