

Reducing Food Waste in Child Care

MANY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS feel very uncomfortable about wasting food and have questions about how they can meet the requirements of the Child Care Food Program (CCFP) without wasting food. While feeding children may involve *some* food or plate waste, the CCFP can actually help providers *reduce* food waste while still serving a variety of healthy foods and even introducing children to new foods.

Timing

It is very important to serve meals to children when they are ready to eat. Children should feel hungry when they sit down at the table; however, not so hungry that they are upset, crying or have a stomach ache. When a regular meal-time schedule is followed with two or more hours between a meal and a snack, even young children learn to predict when they will eat again and it helps them learn to eat enough at each sitting to be comfortable yet hungry for the next meal.

Portion Sizes

The CCFP indicates minimum portion sizes for the various food groups at meals and snacks with



consideration for the ages of the children. Serving meal components scooped with a measuring cup ensures providers serve the minimum amount and helps them avoid serving portions that are too large. It is not uncommon for children to be served plates of food with double and triple the amount recommended. Small children have small tummies, therefore meals and sit-down snacks with reasonable portions, served at regular intervals, will help reduce food waste. It is important to let children eat until

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did you know...

- ▶ About 40% of all edible food in the United States gets tossed out in the garbage.
- ▶ About 25% of the food we bring home does not get eaten.
- ▶ January is National Soup and Slow-Cooking Month.
- ▶ January is Birth Defects Awareness Month.
- ▶ Folic acid is very important because it can help prevent 50% to 70% of major neural tube birth defects, malformation of a baby's brain and spine (anencephaly and spina bifida).

Sources: www.msnbc.com, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Quotable Quotes

“You learn to cook so that you don't have to be a slave to recipes. You get what is in season and you know what to do with it.”

—Julia Child

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- ◆ Rainy Day Activities
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they are satisfied and some children may want an additional serving. Having additional food available for children who are still hungry will help tide them over until the next scheduled meal time.

Family Style Meals

Serving meals “family style” means teaching children to pass plates of food, scoop from a common platter and serve themselves the portion size that they are hungry for and is appropriate. Food waste is decreased when children are allowed to pass on a food or serve themselves less of a food that they do not want. Food that has not been contaminated can be properly stored and served again.

New Foods

Preparing and serving a new or disliked food at the same time as foods that are familiar and well accepted makes a meal more appealing and insures children will have something on their plate that they will eat. This approach also presents the new food with little stress and no pressure. Allow children to serve themselves a small portion or even pass on the unfamiliar or less accepted food as long as there is more available if it is, in fact, gobbled up. Children also accept new foods better when they have had a hand in some part of the preparation. Can they help wash, peel, cut, stir or serve it? Teaching children about a new food, reading a story, smelling it, handling or seeing it in differing states (raw, peeled, cooked), is another way to help make a food more approachable.

Supportive Environment

Children eat better when foods are served with a positive attitude and in a pleasant atmosphere. A small routine such as washing hands and passing out napkins can help children focus on the meal ahead. Providers can help by turning off distractions such as music or a television. Children can be taught to decline food politely or leave unwanted food on their plate without making a fuss. Adults can be positive role models when they enjoy sitting down and eating meals with the children. Children eat best when they feel in control of their eating. Allowing children to choose from what is available, with no pressure, leads to an improved appetite and enjoyable meal times.



Policy

Some child care providers feel that parents expect them to make certain their children eat all their food at every meal, which may lead them to serving just a few meals that they know children will readily accept. Help parents appreciate the bigger picture by having a written nutrition policy that includes encouraging healthy eating by serving a wide variety of foods. Let parents know that you will challenge children to become more adventurous eaters without letting them “starve.”

When providers attempt to limit food waste by only serving the foods they know the children will eat they are not only limiting the foods they can serve and perpetuating picky eating but they are also depriving the children of an opportunity to learn to accept a larger variety. Children learn lifestyle and eating habits at a young age and we can help them know and love many foods by exposing them to as much variety as possible.

— Catherine Stafford
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 Contra Costa Child Care Council

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Why are Folate and Folic Acid so Important?

FOLATE OR FOLIC ACID is the common name for Vitamin B9, a water-soluble vitamin essential for human growth and development:

FOLATE is frequently used as the word to describe the vitamin naturally found in foods.

FOLIC ACID is the synthetic form of the vitamin that is found in vitamin supplements and is added to fortify foods such as cereals and breads.

MOST IMPORTANT ROLES INCLUDE:

1. Red blood cell production—which can help prevent anemia, and keep us feeling energized.
2. Disease prevention. Folate helps lower blood homocysteine levels, which is important for the prevention of heart disease. Folate may also help prevent certain types of cancer and stroke.
3. Prevention of neural tube defects. These birth defects result in malformations of the spine (spinal bifida) and brain (anencephaly).

Folate is especially important during times of rapid cell growth as in the first month of pregnancy. It is estimated that 50% of pregnancies are not planned and so most women are not aware they are pregnant until after the first month, a critical time to prevent neural tube birth defects. For this reason, it is recommended that **all women of childbearing age** obtain 400 microgram per day of Folic Acid from dietary supplements or fortified foods, in addition to the Folate present in a varied diet. In January 1998, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration began requiring manufacturers to add Folic Acid to enriched cereals, breads and other grain products. Since the fortification program took effect neural tube defects have declined by 25–30%.



Pregnant women should talk to their health care provider about nutrition and vitamin supplements.

The recommended intake (daily value) of Folate is 400 micrograms for ages 14 and above, (300 micrograms, ages 9–13; 200 micrograms, ages 4–8; 150 micrograms, ages 1–3). As noted, this can easily be achieved by eating foods, which are fortified with Folic Acid, such as many cereals and

breads. The Nutrition Facts label is designed to help consumers make conscious decisions and specifies the percent of the daily value supplied in one serving. If the label indicates 100% of the daily value of Folic Acid, it contains 400 micrograms.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S DIETARY GUIDELINES note that nutrients should come primarily from food. Consuming Folate rich foods in their natural form can provide an array of health benefits! Foods that are naturally high in Folate also tend to be high in other important nutrients like vitamins, minerals, fiber and protein.

Some excellent sources of Folate include lentils, garbanzo beans, black beans, split peas, asparagus, dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach and romaine lettuce, beef and chicken livers, oranges, orange juice, strawberries, almonds, peanuts, corn and enriched breads and cereals.

For more information about building a healthful diet, refer to Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food guidance system, MyPlate.gov.

Adapted from: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USDA

Slow Cooker Red Lentil & Carrot Soup with Coconut

Olive oil	2 Tbsp	Tomatoes, chopped	1 (28 oz) can
Onions, chopped	2	Red lentils, well washed	1 pound
Garlic cloves, minced	2	Carrots, chopped	2
Turmeric	2 tsp	Lemon juice	1 Tbsp
Cumin	2 tsp	Chicken or vegetable	
Salt	1 tsp	broth	6 cups
Pepper	½ tsp	Coconut milk	1 (13.5 oz) can

1. In a large skillet, sauté onions in olive oil until very soft, but not browned, about 15 minutes. Add garlic and spices and continue cooking 1 minute. Add tomatoes and bring to a boil, breaking them up while stirring.
2. Spoon mixture into a slow cooker, add lentils, carrots, lemon juice and broth. Cover and cook 5 hours on high or 8–10 hours on low, until vegetables are tender and lentils are soft.
3. Stir in coconut milk and continue cooking on high for 20 minutes.

Yield: 12 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable & protein/meat alternate

— food.com

Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup

Chicken breast halves, skinned	4	Cumin	1 tsp
Tomatoes, diced with green chilies	2 (14.5 oz) cans	Chicken broth	3 (14.5 oz) cans
Black or pinto beans, cooked	1½ cups	Lime juice	½ cup
Onions, diced	2	Tortilla chips (optional)	
Garlic cloves, minced	2	Cilantro, chopped	3 Tbsp
Serrano chilies, minced	2	Monterey Jack cheese, shredded	1 cup
		Avocado, cubed	1
		Corn tortillas	10

1. Combine the chicken, tomatoes, beans, onions, garlic, chilies, cumin and chicken broth in a 5–6 quart slow cooker. Cover and cook on low 7 to 8 hours.
2. Remove chicken and cool slightly. Remove and discard bones, shred chicken and return to slow cooker. Add lime juice and check for seasoning.
3. Crush a few tortilla chips in each bowl, ladle soup into bowls. Top with cilantro, cheese and avocado. Serve with warmed corn tortillas.

Yield: 10 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable, grains/breads & protein/meat alternate

— Adapted from *Simmering Solutions*

Activity Corner

FUN RAINY DAY ACTIVITIES TO GET THE KIDS UP AND ACTIVE INDOORS!

HIP WADDLE

Pull out a beach ball or blow up a balloon to create this challenging walk across the room. Have children pair up and place a ball between their hips. Now send them across the room and see if they can get there without dropping the ball. It will be easier if they link arms, but they will figure that out. If the ball drops, have them start over.



STAND TOGETHER

Have two children sit on the floor, back to back with arms linked at the elbows. Have them work together to get themselves into a standing position. To make it more challenging see if they can stay linked while walking across the room, picking up toys from the floor and then going back to their starting spot.

— Active Families Newsletter

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Food Funny Q: Why couldn't the sesame seed leave the casino?
A: Because he was on a roll!