

PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD:

HOW TO INCORPORATE FUN
NUTRITION EDUCATION IN
EVERYDAY CHILDCARE

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Why Integrate Nutrition Education Into Childcare Activities?

- Kids learn through play! Food is no exception. Let children first learn about foods through the language that they know best. Fun nutrition activities:
 - Gives healthy eating a positive, fun connotation.
 - Helps foreign foods seem friendly and increases the variety of foods children try.
 - Teaches children how nutritious foods will help them grow healthy bodies.



Incorporate Nutrition Activities:

- At the table
- In the kitchen
- With daily lessons and activities
- Outside the home or center



At the Table

- Facilitate positive conversations at mealtime.
 - As the adult, speak positively about the taste of healthy foods and how fun it can be to eat them.
 - Tell children how certain foods help their bodies.
 - Get kids excited about what's on their plate!
- Minimize negativity, such as just focusing on the consequences if children do not finish a food item.



Positive Table Conversation Statements:

“Did you know that those sweet potatoes keep our skin, hair, and eyes healthy?”



“Mmm I love yogurt, it makes me have strong bones!”

“There are so many fun colors in this salad! What’s your favorite color?”

“These oranges are so juicy, don’t you think?”

Watch Your Wording

Phrases that Hinder:

- “Eat that for me”.
- “See... that didn’t taste so bad, did it??”
- “If you don’t eat one more bite, I won’t be happy”.
- “Look at your sister; she ate all her banana”.
- “You have to take one more bite before you leave the table”.
- “Stop crying and I’ll give you a cookie”.



Ask Interactive Questions:

- Identify colors:
 - *“How many different colors do you see on your plate?”*
 - *“What color are your peas?”*
- Identify textures:
 - *“Are apple slices crunchy or soft?”*
- Compare and contrast:
 - *“Broccoli and cauliflower look similar in shape, but what is different about them?.... They are different colors, but do they taste the same?... Let’s try both and see!”*



Ideas for Fun Mealtimes

With a bit of preplanning, you can create a day's worth of curriculum around just one exciting mealtime!



Hold Themed Days!

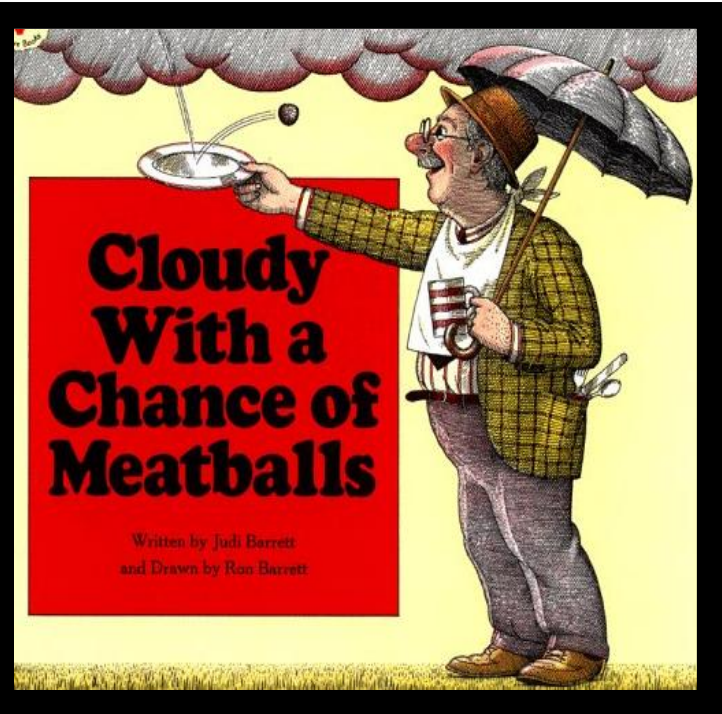


- Make a regular day extra fun! For example, dedicate a whole day to teach the children about one color!
 - Serve an array of same-colored foods at a meal or snack.
 - Pair the color-themed menu with a fun craft, such as a “Color Collage”.



Celebrate Food Holidays

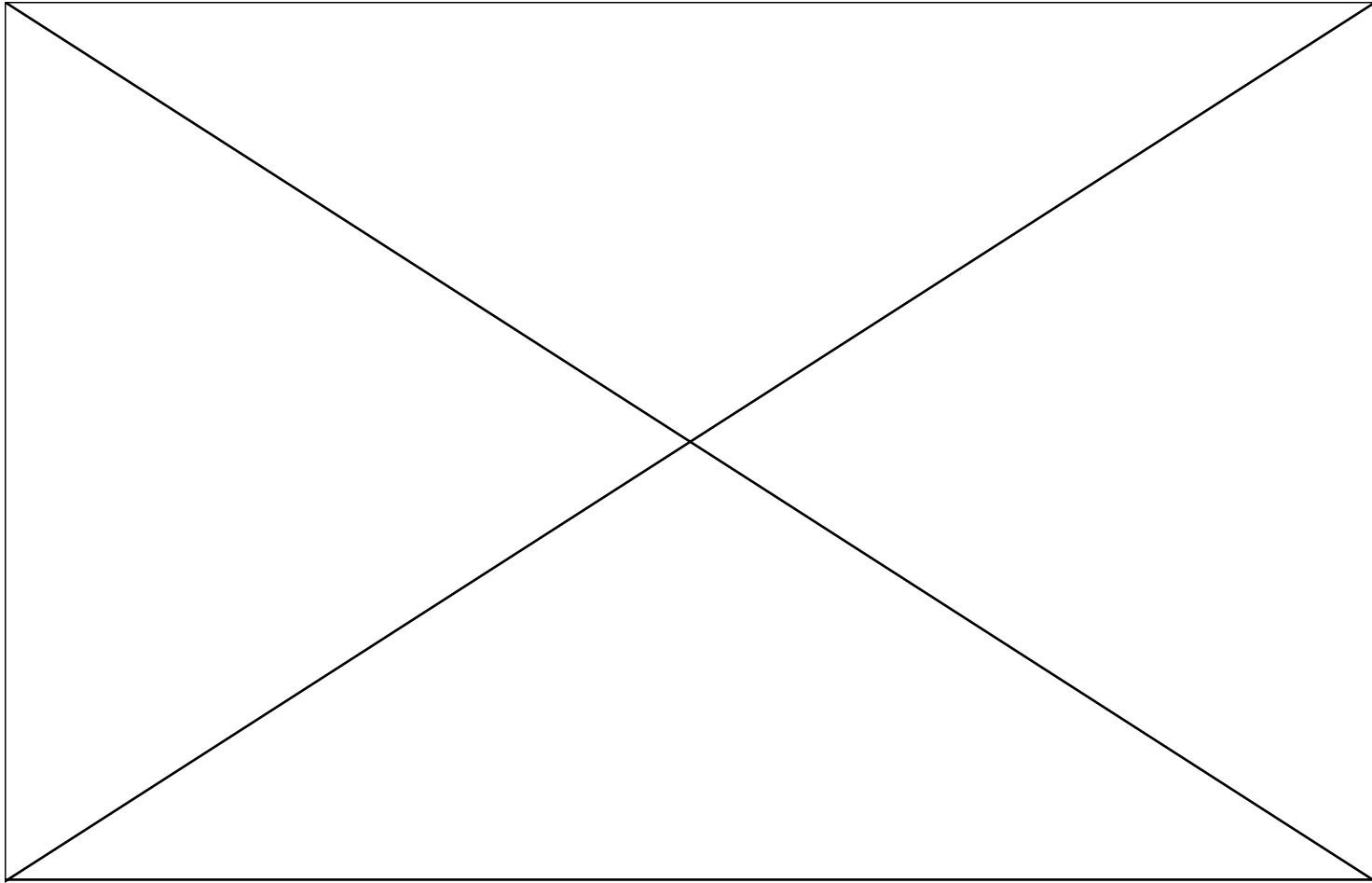
National Meatball Day



- There's always a reason to celebrate. Have fun with food holidays!
 - Teach children about the history of the food item or read a book about that dish. Then, prepare a healthy version of the food to enjoy.
 - Use the internet to find a holiday list, such as:
<http://www.thenibble.com/fun/more/facts/food-holidays.asp>.



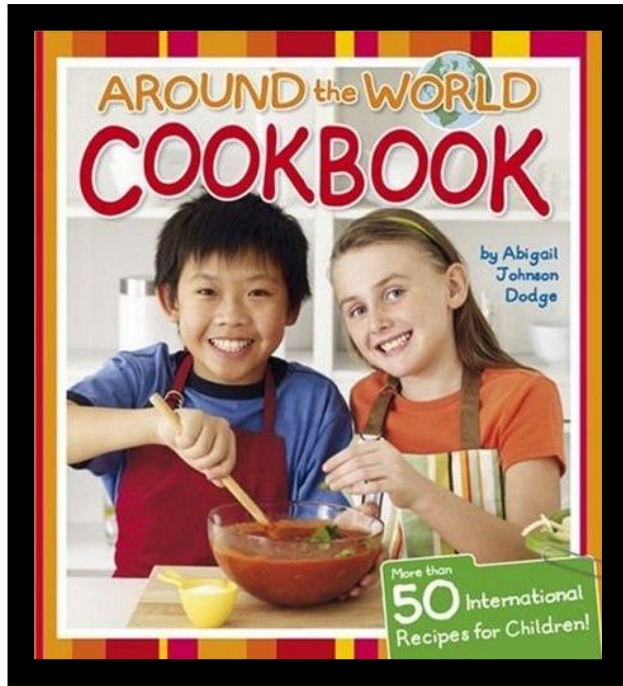
Taste Food From Around the World



Let's first take a look how not to go about doing this cultural activity 😊



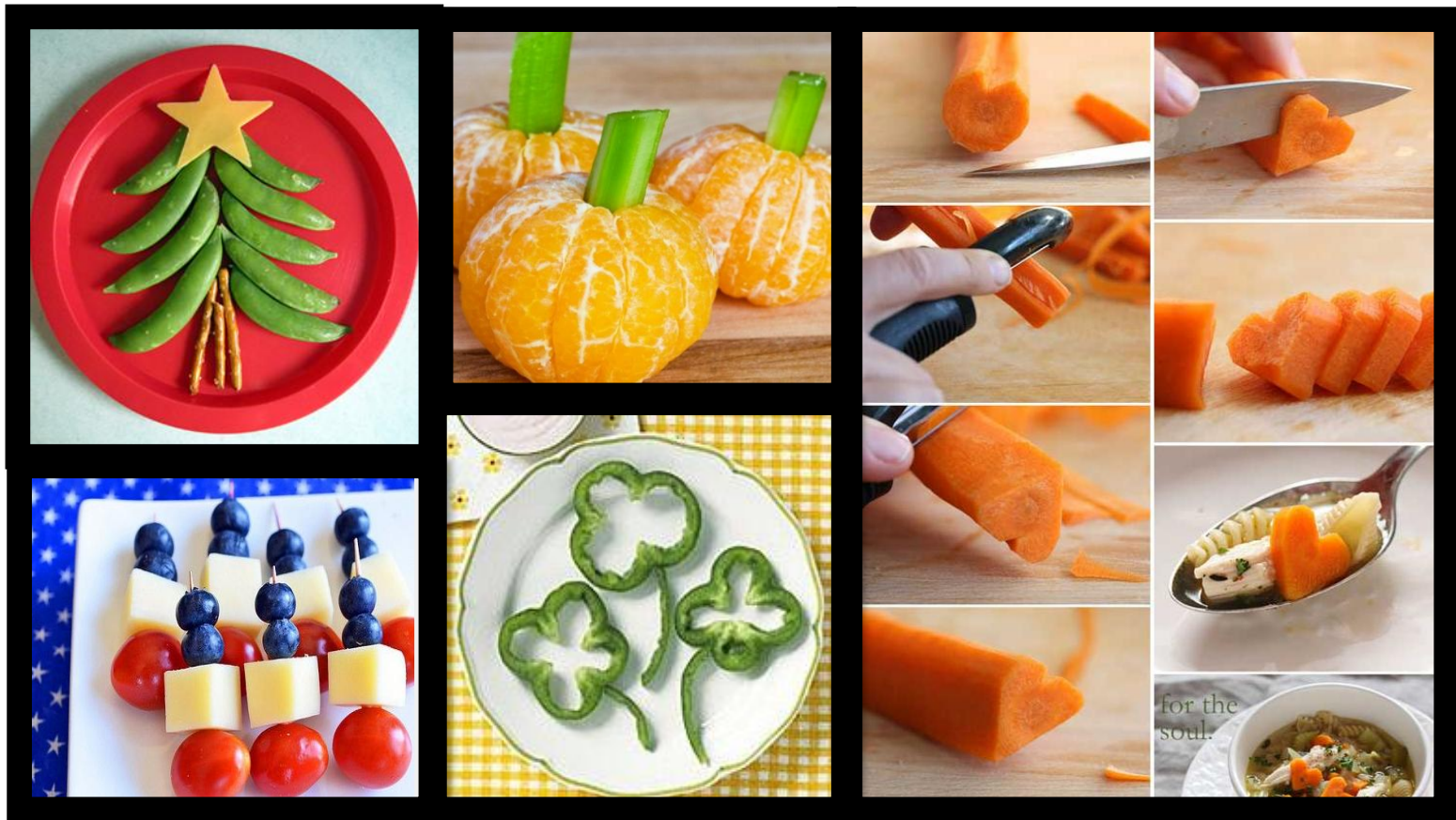
Taste Food From Around the World



- Choose a country to learn all about!
 - Research a country's cultural customs, common dress, national holidays, and popular dishes.
 - Then, either prepare a meal or purchase foods commonly eaten in that country for the kids to sample.

Celebrate the Holidays

- Get in a festive spirit by creating healthy, holiday-themed dishes! Visit ACD's Pinterest Page for more fun ideas:
 - www.pinterest.com/acdkidsorg



Play With Your Food!

- Get creative! For more fun food ideas:
 - <https://www.pinterest.com/acdkidsorg/play-with-your-food/>



Play the “Food Rainbow Game”!

1. Prior to a mealtime, have children create a rainbow with primary colored markers or paints (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple)
2. Pass out the pictures at the table. Have children look at their plate. Ask “*Do you see any fruit on your plate? What color is the fruit? Once you take a bite, put an X in the fruit color on your rainbow picture.*” Repeat the questions with vegetables.
3. Distribute the children’s pictures at each mealtime until all colors are marked with an X.



In the Kitchen

The benefits of having children help to prepare meals are endless!

1. **Cooking teaches basic skills of:**

- Counting
- Pouring
- Measuring
- Listening
- Reading
- Following Directions



2. Cooking encourages an adventurous palate – kids are more likely to eat foods they helped prepare.
3. Cooking gives a child ownership of the food that they helped prepare and provides a sense of accomplishment.
4. Helping in the kitchen gives children something active to do rather than watching tv, etc.
5. Time spent in the kitchen develops cooking skills that children will take into adulthood.



Choose Age-Appropriate Cooking Tasks: Ages 2-5

2-3 years old	4-5 years old
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wash produce• Tear lettuce• Wipe counters• Place garbage in trash• Rinse a can of beans• Add ingredients and stir• Mash soft fruits or vegetables• Put bread in the toaster• Spread peanut butter or jam on bread• Move premeasured ingredients from one place to another• Wrap potatoes in foil	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whisk eggs• Mix and roll dough• Wash fruits and vegetables• Set the table• Peel hard boiled eggs• Find ingredients• Cut soft foods with a dull butter or plastic knife• Measure liquid and dry ingredients• Form round shapes with hands

Choose Age-Appropriate Cooking Tasks: Ages 6-12

6-8 years old	9-12 years old
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clean surfaces before and after use• Gather utensils and ingredients• Grease baking pans• Peel onions and garlic• Grate cheese• Open cans or containers• Peel fruits and vegetables• Knead dough• Break eggs• Crush crackers in a bag with a rolling pin• Wash dishes• Put away ingredients and utensils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open cans or containers• Use a microwave to heat foods• Follow a recipe• Moderate cutting, chopping and dicing• Work with timer and thermometer• Knead dough• Steam rice• Roast vegetables• Plan and prepare simple meals• Sauté, steam, broil, boil, and bake• Read and interpret ingredient and food labels• Operate small appliances

Cook at the Table Too!

Smiley Face Lunch

Choose a Base

Tortilla

Bread Slice

Waffle

Bagel

English Muffin

Pick a Glue

Hummus

Peanut Butter

Yogurt

Low Fat
Cream
Cheese

Marinara

Create the Face

Grated Carrot
Hair

Black Olive
Eyes

Red Pepper
Smile

Cucumber
Ears

Tomato Nose



Daily Lessons and Activities



Remember... Children learn through play! So let's teach them about how fun nutritious foods can be!



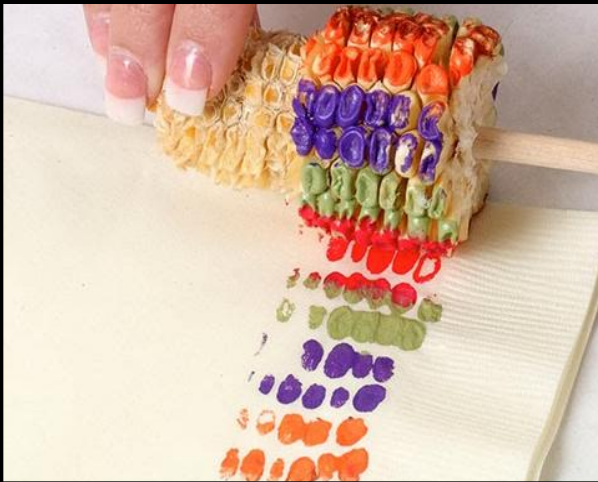
Arts and Crafts

- **Use your noodle... to make some art!**
 - Are your children hesitant to try whole grains? Allow them to interact with a new food item through crafts- this will help something “foreign” seem more friendly!
 - Make a “spaghetti lion” with whole-wheat pasta before introducing this fiber-rich grain at mealtime.



Arts and Crafts

- Recycle produce to make fun paint stamps!



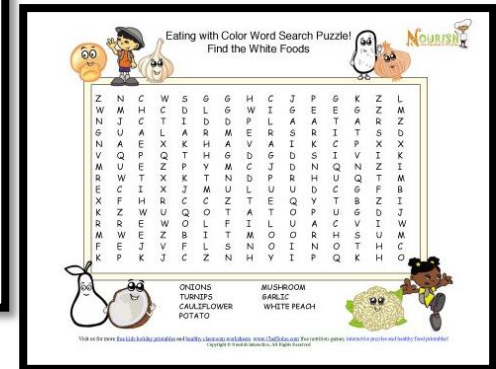
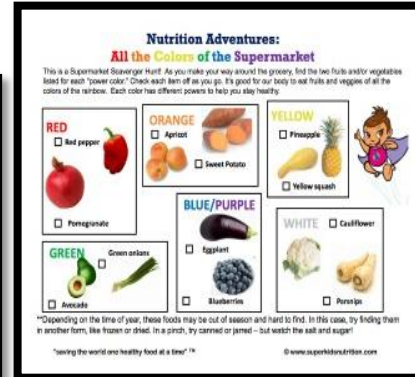
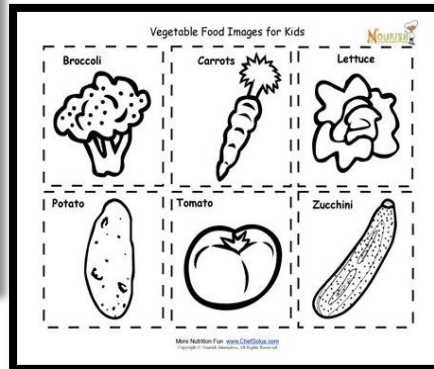
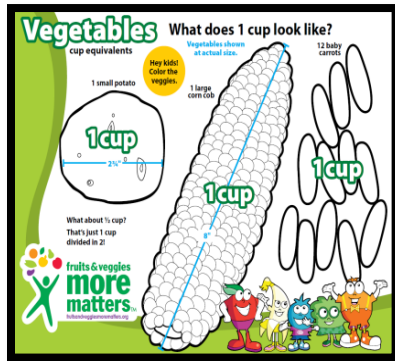
Arts and Crafts

- Have children use stamps to create their own placemats to eat with at mealtimes.
- Allow children to decorate a fish by using a celery stalk to stamp fish scales.



Arts and Crafts

- Use free resources for nutrition-related activity pages.
 - <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/get-kids-involved/coloring-activity-pages-for-kids>
 - <http://www.superkidsnutrition.com/nutrition-resources/kidsactivities/>
 - <http://www.nourishinteractive.com/nutrition-education-printables>



Games and Activities

- Play the “What Am I?” Food Guessing Game
 - Have grade-school age children write out clues about food items. Alternatively, you can write clues prior to beginning the activity.
 - Allow older children to take turns reading clues aloud and have the group guess what they think the food item is.
 - This activity can also be done during mealtimes to teach children about the food on their plates.



Games and Activities

○ Have a “Food Group Relay Race”

Instructions:

1. Collect various food pictures (magazines clipping, printed pictures, hand-drawn, etc.)
2. Label 2 sets of brown paper bags with all the food groups.
3. Split children into 2 teams, giving each an equal stack of food cut-outs.
4. Line the bags and children at opposing ends of the room.
5. Have teams race as the kids take turns running and placing pictures in the correct bags.



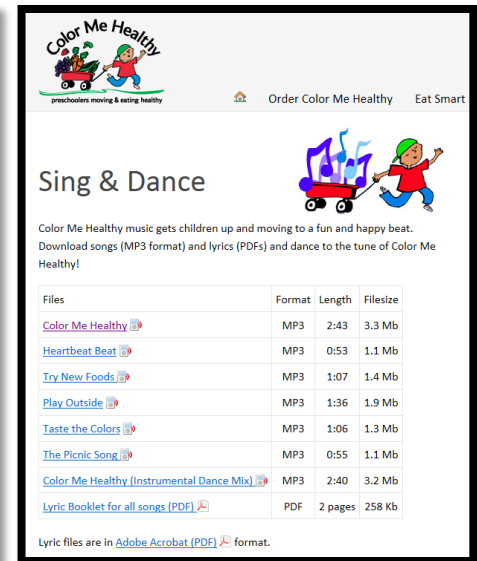
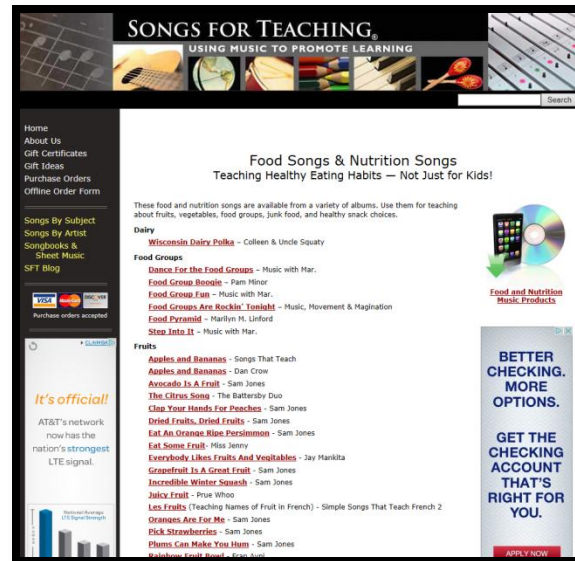
Learning Exercises

- **Glue & Learn: Using magazine cut-outs or printed food pictures, either:**
 - Divide a paper plate into 4 sections and label with the food groups. Have children glue food pictures where they belong on the plate.
 - For a writing exercise, glue food pictures onto paper and allow children to practice spelling the names of the items.



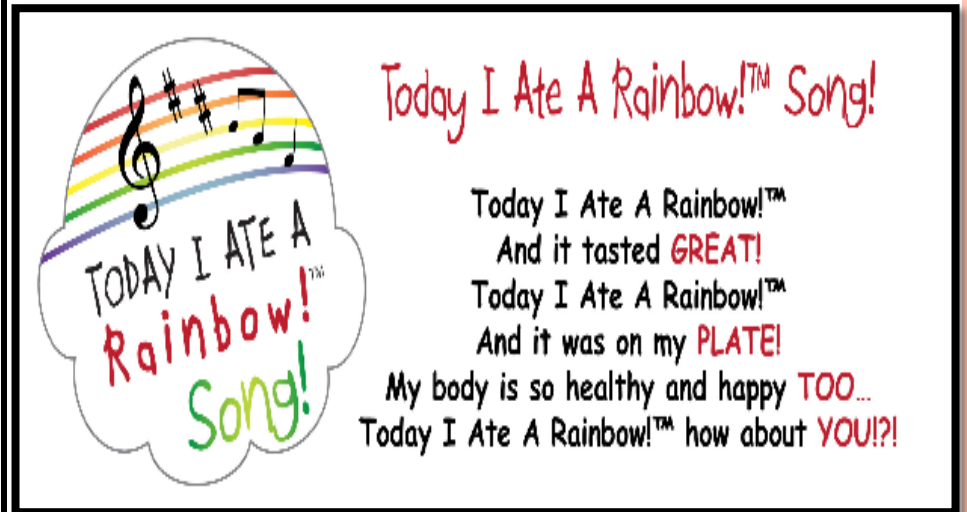
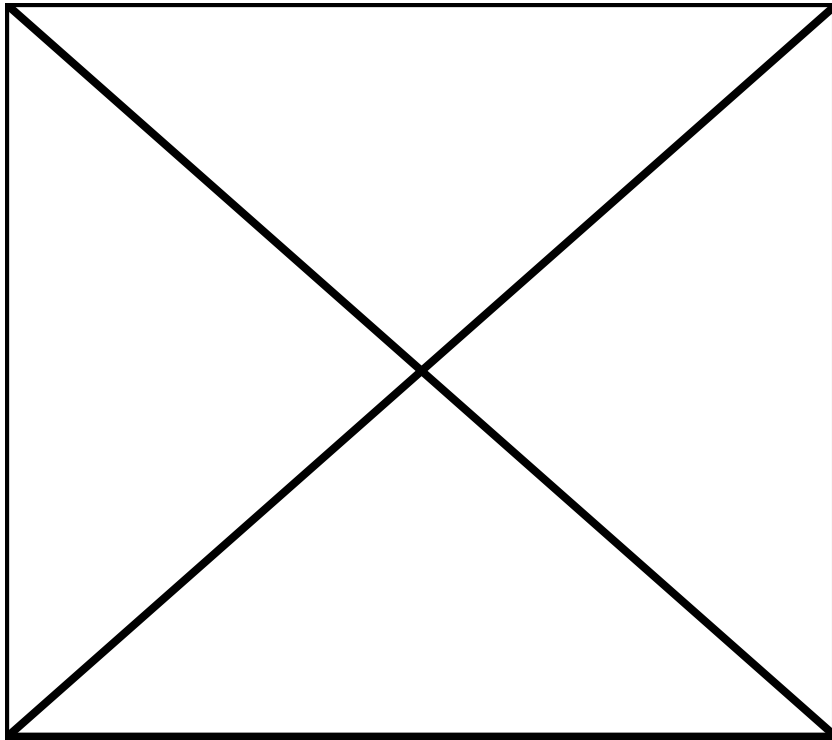
Music Time

- Singing and dancing about nutritious foods can be a great way to keep kids active and moving! There are numerous free resources for song ideas:
 - <http://www.songsforteaching.com/foodnutrition.htm>
 - <http://colormehealthy.com/songs-and-lyrics/>
 - <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/kids/VideosSongs.html>
 - <http://freesongsforkids.com/food-nutrition>



Music Time

- Use free resources for nutrition-themed music:
 - Ex: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9QCrUJj3TQ>

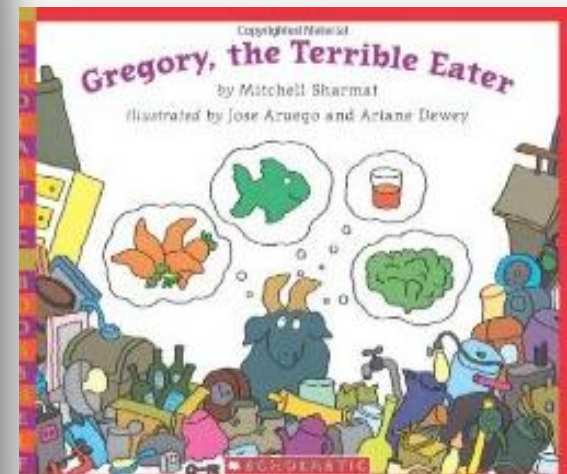
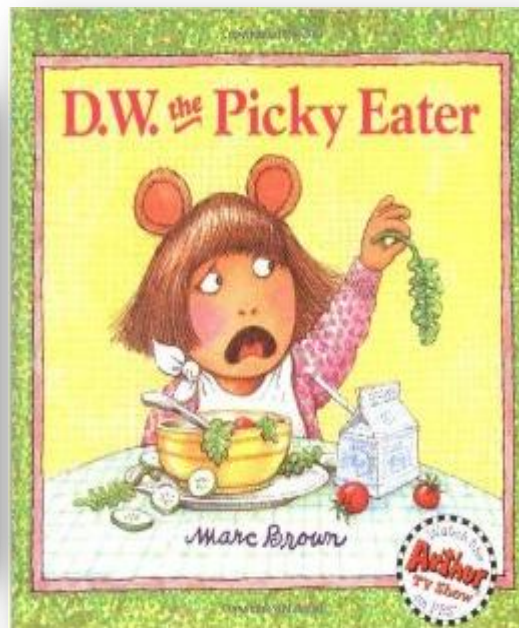


Check out creative nutrition activities at <http://www.todayiatearainbow.com/>



Story Time

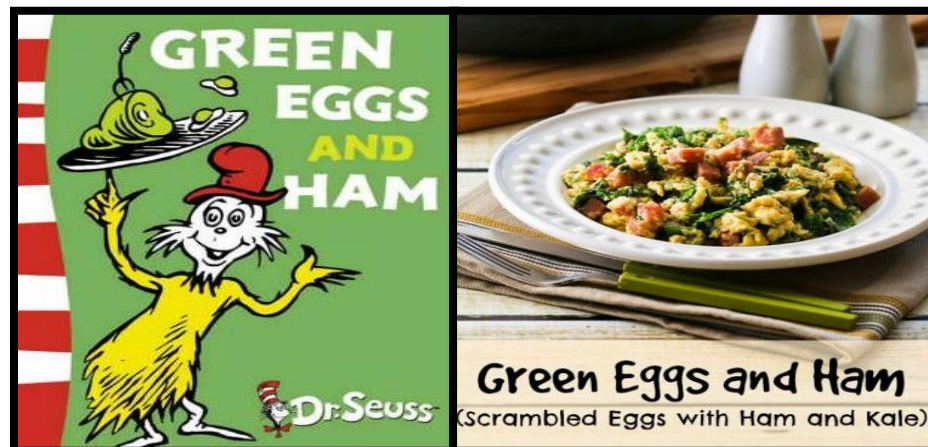
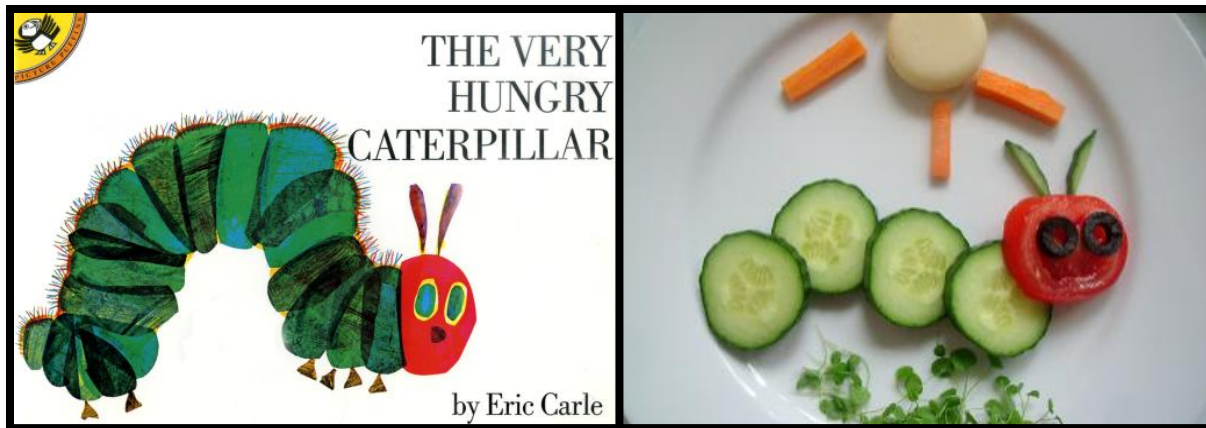
- Make story time count and select books that:
 1. Teach lessons about trying new foods.
 - *The Two Bite Club*- USDA (Spanish and English)
 - *DW the Picky Eater*- Marc Brown
 - *Gregory, the Terrible Eater*- Mitchell Sharmat



Story Time

2. Inspire fun mealtimes.

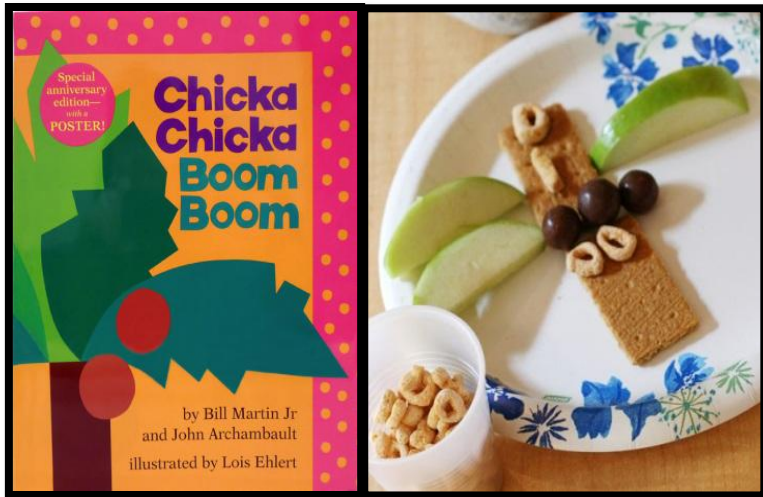
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*- Eric Carle
- *Green Eggs and Ham*- Dr. Seuss



Story Time

2. Inspire fun mealtimes.

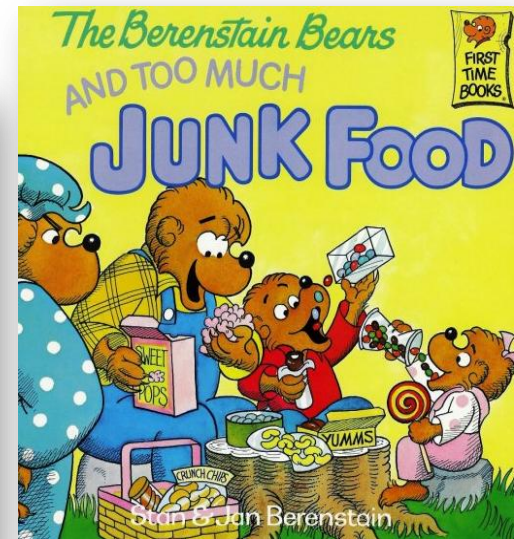
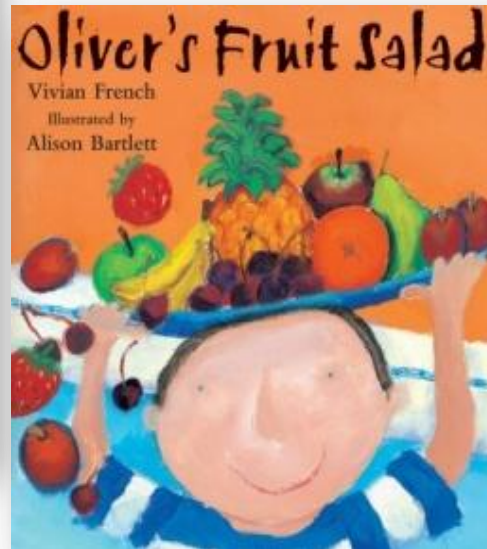
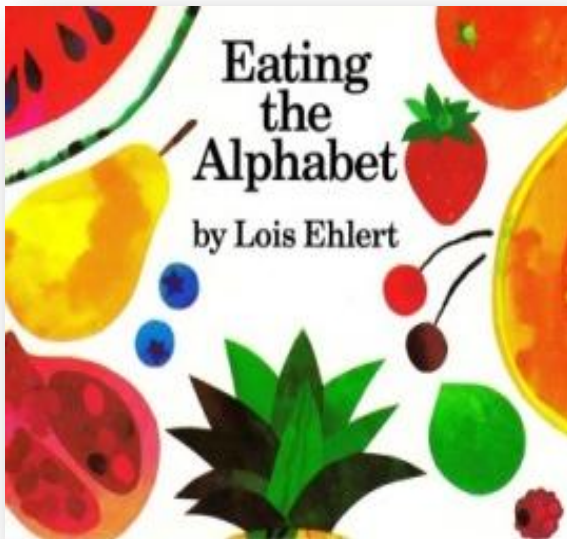
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*- Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
- *Growing Vegetable Soup*- Lois Ehlert



Story Time

3. Educate about food items and nutrition.

- *Eating the Alphabet*- Lois Ehlert
- *Oliver's Fruit Salad*- Vivian French
- *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food*- Stan and Jan Berenstain



Take It Outside the Home or Center

- Farmer's Market
- Community Garden
- Fruit Picking
- Grocery Store
- Class Garden



Give Kids a Green Thumb

- Try planting your own garden!
The benefits are endless...
 - To say “I grew this tomato” boosts a child’s likelihood of eating that healthy food and increases their overall self-confidence.
 - Gardens teach children about the science of the growing process, the environment, and where food comes from.
 - Activities like weeding and watering a garden promotes physical activity and time spent outdoors.



Give Kids a Green Thumb

- Choose a type of garden that is best for you:
 - A raised bed garden
 - Small pots
 - An herb garden



Milk Jug Planters

Materials Needed:

- Plastic milk carton, washed and label removed
- Scissors
- Craft paint, paint brushes, markers, craft supplies (optional)
- Planting soil
- Plant/seeds of choice



Step 1:

- **Cut the top off a clean milk jug.** Do this by stabbing into the side of the jug with sharp scissors. Then cut around the jug, leaving as big of an opening as you would like (ensure there is enough base left to hold the soil).
 - You can either cut below the jug handle or leave it attached for an easy-to-hold planter.



Step 2:

- Using the scissors, make **3-5 small holes** in the bottom of the jug to allow for drainage.
- Stab a hole in the base, then turn the scissor blade to create the opening.
- Make the holes large enough for drainage but not too large so that soil drops out of the bottom.



Step 3:

- Let the children **decorate the jugs** (optional).
 - This can be done with craft paint, permanent markers, or various other craft supplies.



Step 4:

- **Fill the planter with potting soil.**
 - Do not pack the soil, but fill the jug until the soil nearly reaches the top.



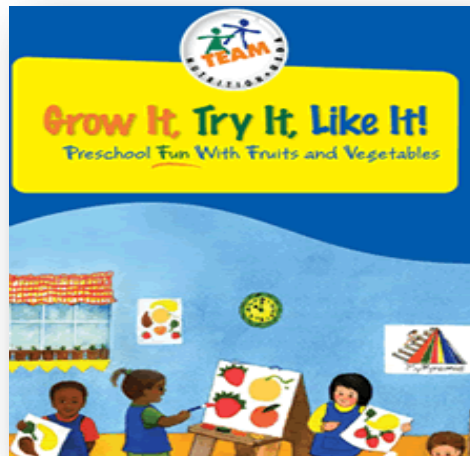
Step 5:

- Allow the children to **create a hole in the center of the planter**. Set the plant in the hole, top it with a bit more soil, and then pack soil tightly around the base of the plant. Water the plant generously.
- If starting with seeds, do not make a hole but simply press seeds underneath the dirt.



Give Kids a Green Thumb

- Check out this free resource: ***Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit***
 - This garden-themed nutrition material is free for child care center staff through the *USDA Food and Nutrition Service: Team Nutrition*.
 - Content is available online in PDF form or hard-copy upon request from *Team Nutrition*.
 - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-try-it-it>



What Will You Try First?

- The opportunities to teach children about nutrition are endless... don't let the amount of options intimidate you!
- Choose ONE activity you would like to try first. It's not about doing it all... but about doing something!



Let's feed children's desire
to learn, experiment, and
have fun with nutrition
education!



Thank you for attending “Play With Your Food”!

Please contact me with any questions or comments. I'd love to hear from you!

- Email: jmortimer@acdkids.org
- Phone: (800) 284-5273, ext. 207

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