

Teaching Kids How to Make Healthy Food Choices

Our House Family Child Care and Early Education

How is Summer teaching kids to eat healthy?



Kids help plan menus. As a group, Summer and her kids decide what's on the menu for the week. Kids help come up with ideas for meals and snacks that use nutritious ingredients and fruits and vegetables in season.

Summer takes kids on trips to the grocery store. To get ready for the trip, kids make their own grocery lists of healthy foods and glue together pieces of construction paper in different colors.

At the store, they get what's on their lists and hunt for a vegetable or fruit that matches each of their colors (like purple cabbage, red peppers, orange tangerines and yellow squash).

To encourage kids to be adventurous, Summer points out vegetables and fruits they haven't tried yet. Summer found child size shopping carts for the children to push and fill up with the vegetables, fruits and healthy foods they pick.

Kids help out in the kitchen. Using the foods they picked at the grocery store, kids help prepare their own healthy meals and snacks. When soup is on the menu, kids wash the vegetables and put them in the pot. Kids also enjoy baking. Summer shows her kids recipes with pictures so they can "read" how many scoops of flour or milk they need. She color codes the recipes and puts out different colored measuring cups. So, if there's a picture with two red scoops, kids know that they need two scoops with the red measuring cup.

Summer makes nutrition fun. Meals are served family style so kids get to choose what they want to eat and how much to serve themselves. Summer talks with her kids about which foods belong to which food group – fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods or dairy. Sometimes, Summer leaves one food group off of the table and

plays “What’s missing?”. Kids have fun figuring out which food group they need to complete their plates.

How does Summer turn challenges into opportunities?

Summer teaches kids what to do about food allergies. One of Summer’s kids has multiple food allergies. When kids are helping out in the kitchen, Summer teaches them about safe food handling and shows them how to prepare dishes so that their friend with allergies can eat the food too.

Even picky eaters eat vegetables at home. “My child doesn’t eat vegetables” is a concern that Summer sometimes hears from families. To Summer, this challenge is an opportunity. First, she offers families resources on healthy eating. Then, she brings kids into the kitchen to create a “Rainbow Soup” of green, yellow, orange, red, purple, and white vegetables. Kids take samples of the “Rainbow Soup” home to their families and eat the soup together. Summer says, “The children love the soup! The more invested the kids are in their food,

Tips for Success

- **Bring kids into the kitchen.** When kids get to be chefs, they want to know what their food creations taste like. They might be delighted at the taste of fruits and vegetables and proud of what they’ve made! For ideas to help kids learn in the kitchen, check out Kids Can Cook – and Learning is the Secret Ingredient. Remember, kids should wash their hands before they touch the food!
- **Get everyone involved in cooking.** When preschoolers are tearing lettuce or assembling a pizza, let infants be in the room to see what’s going on, hear the chatter, smell the ingredients, and touch or play with cooking instruments that are safe.
- **Try simple recipes like roasted veggies, bean soup, or baked chicken.** You don’t need a recipe with a lot of ingredients to create a delicious dish. Plus, when you choose a simple recipe, you can spend more time teaching kids to prepare healthy foods and enjoy your meal together. Find an assortment of meal and snack ideas on KidsHealth.org.
- **Buy in season.** Fruits and vegetables are often tastier and less expensive when they’re in season. You can use them in a recipe to add freshness or offer them raw as a healthy snack. Check out the Fruits & Veggies – More Matters website to find out what fruits and vegetables are in season.

We want to feature your story of progress and success working on the five *Let’s Move!* Child Care goals. Please email a brief description of your story with your contact information, including program name, city and state, to eeobesity@cdc.gov with the subject heading “Program Success Story.”