

# Food for Thought: Some simple and easy ways to engage children and young people in food

- Get them involved in the meal prep where possible and safe – from chopping, preparing, cooking to serving. Don't forget the washing up too – this is an important part of serving food.
- Variety is absolutely key – change things up every day to keep the kids interested and so they try lots of different foods during the programme.
- Eat together and all have the same meal (where possible)
- Each week taste and discuss foods which start with the chosen letter of the week. For example, for the letter 'M' try mushroom, milk and mango.

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- Taste tests can be fun and encourage children to try new foods. Encourage children to take turns tasting new foods and describing to the group what the food tastes like. Children can also discuss the foods' appearance, smell and texture. You could also get the children to make their own rainbow fruit skewer with their favourite fruits. Offer different kinds of foods to try on a special theme day. For example, on apple day offer green apples, red apples, dried apples, pureed apple and canned apples to show them how one ingredient can be used in multiple ways and taste different ways!

# Food for Thought: Some simple and easy ways to improve the nutritional quality of the food provided

- Stick to tap water or low-fat milk where possible – avoid sugar sweetened drinks, even Fruit Shoots!
- Include a portion of fruit AND a portion of veg with each meal. Variety is key – try to mix it up as much as possible – think ‘eat the rainbow’!
- Remember, fruit can be fresh, tinned or dried – just make sure to limit dried fruit to 30g portions and ensure children eat them as part of a meal. Tinned fruit is really convenient and can be used exactly the same way as fresh or frozen – just try to choose fruit in natural juice rather than sticky syrup.
- Easy veg options could include carrot, cucumber, red pepper or celery sticks served with low fat dip i.e. houmous OR adding broccoli, sweetcorn or peas to pasta bakes or frittatas.
- Don’t forget baked beans count as a portion of veg! Why not add some sauteed mushrooms or tomatoes and serve on top of wholemeal toast for a filling breakfast or lunch.

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- Create a veggie patch and encourage children to water and care for the plants. Use the exercise as an opportunity to discuss where food comes from and how it grows. Some easy to grow, edible produce includes tomatoes, peas, beans, snow peas and herbs. This may be suitable for the summer clubs however, when there is more time to see the produce grow.
- Place some vegetables in a bag (e.g. pillow slip). Ask children to feel inside the bag and guess which vegetables are there. As a variation, blindfold children and place a vegetable in their hands. Ask them to guess what the vegetable is by feeling, smelling and even tasting it.

# Meal ideas

## A sandwich, bagel, wrap, chapatti or pitta

There are hundreds of sandwich fillings you can choose from, and variety is definitely a good idea. Try to use wholemeal versions if you can – if your child prefers white bread etc., why not try using 50/50 versions instead, or one slice each of white and wholemeal. Try to make sure to add some vegetables to your sandwich fillings, some ideas include:

- Grated lower-fat cheese mixed with grated apple, sliced spring onion and a tablespoon of low-fat mayonnaise (v).
- Salmon pâté with salad leaves, chopped tomato and cucumber (to make the pâté: mix a can of tinned salmon with two tablespoons of low-fat yoghurt and two teaspoons of lemon juice)
- Falafel, grated carrot, lettuce leaves, reduced fat hummus or tzatziki (ve with hummus, v with tzatziki)
- Spiced chicken, red onion, spinach and a tablespoon of yoghurt or low-fat mayonnaise.
- Mixed vegetable omelette (v) served in a roll.



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# Meal ideas

## Pasta, rice or cous cous salads

There are many ingredients you can mix together to make a pasta, rice or cous cous salad. Try to use wholemeal pasta if you can. Try mixing half white pasta with half wholemeal pasta and see if they notice the difference. These recipes would also work well with cooked and cooled rice, boiled and sliced potatoes, couscous or quinoa. Some options include:

- Canned tuna, sweetcorn and grated carrot – add a tablespoon of low-fat mayonnaise or low-fat plain. yoghurt if you like it a bit creamy.
- Roasted vegetables (peppers, red onion, aubergines and/or courgette all work well) and grated cheese (v).
- Chopped ham, grated cheese, diced peppers and spring onion.
- Diced and cooked green veg such as green beans, courgettes and peas, halved cherry tomatoes, cooked chicken or prawns and pesto mixed with a little low-fat mayonnaise.



# Meal ideas

## Frittatas

Frittatas are a delicious option at lunchtime. You can add any vegetables, beans, pulses, meat and cheese that you have and mix it up every week. They are great cooked in a muffin tray to make individual portions (which can be frozen) or in a cake tin and sliced into wedges. Some favourite flavour combos include:

- Ham, cheese, mushroom and onion
- Mediterranean veg (peppers, courgette, onion, aubergine) with a sprinkle of cheese (v)
- Potato, pesto, green beans and tuna
- Pea, feta and mint (v)
- Tuna and sweetcorn
- Mackerel, pea and lemon

