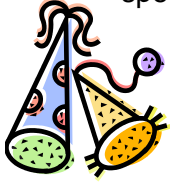




Healthy Celebrations for Child Care

Celebrations are an important part of a child's social development. They are a fun way to mark special occasions, honour customs and culture, and children look forward to the change in routine. However, celebrations often include food and drinks that may not fit into Canada's Food Guide. With a few easy changes most food and drinks can support healthy eating and still be fun. Plan celebrations to include a variety of activities, games, and crafts that the children enjoy so that food is not the main event. Don't use food as rewards or prizes.



Why Celebrating With Healthy Food Is Important

- Eating habits are learned at a young age
- Teaches kids that healthy foods can be "fun foods"
- Sends a consistent message about healthy eating to kids
- Helps to keep teeth healthy

"But it's only once in a while"

Treats from birthdays, holidays, and other special occasions add up quickly. Did you know that children (and adults) get 22% of their calories from foods that are high in calories, sugar, fat, and salt and contain few or no nutrients?

Healthy Food Options for Celebrations

- **Friendship Fruit Salad** – make a fruit salad with fruit contributed by each child.
- **Make Your Own Yogurt Parfait** – mix plain yogurt with equal parts of vanilla yogurt. Layer yogurt with fresh fruit and granola.
- **Make Your Own Trail Mix** – mix together whole grain wheat square cereal, oat ring cereal pretzels, dried fruit, and shelled pumpkin seeds.
- **Make Your Own Pizza** - use whole wheat English muffins or pitas as the pizza crust. Set out tomato sauce, chopped vegetables, pineapple, ham, cooked chicken, black beans and shredded cheese.
- **Healthy Fruit Punch** – mix together your favourite 100% fruit juices and add sliced strawberries and kiwi. For some fizz add carbonated water.

Celebration Ideas

Birthdays



Let the birthday child be "leader" for the day, plant a flower or vegetable/herb seed in the child's honour, or create your own birthday ritual such as wearing a special badge.

Decorations, music and party games can make healthy food such as a fruit platter fun. Birthday cake can be a special treat, but keep portions small. Instead of celebrating each child's birthday individually, consolidate birthdays into monthly celebrations.

Holidays



Easter: Decorate eggs. The Easter bunny can hide plastic eggs filled with age appropriate toys such as play dough, bubbles, whistles, toy cars, stickers, and crayons instead of candy. Or plan an Easter egg scavenger hunt with clues in the eggs. Serve “Sunny Bunny Salad”. Mix together 5-6 peeled and grated carrots with ½ cup raisins and 1 cup vanilla yogurt.



Valentine’s Day: Decorate small flower pots or disposable cups with hearts; fill with potting soil and plant sweet pea seeds. Make a friendship fruit salad.



Halloween: Focus on activities like a costume parade, making masks, pin the nose on the witch or making slime. Serve pumpkin muffins or make witches brew (soup). For more great ideas and recipes see <http://www.cspinet.org/new/pdf/halloween.pdf>



Christmas: Have a sledding party, sing Christmas carols, or take a walk around the neighbourhood to look at Christmas lights. Make “apple tea”. Have the kids add apple slices, cinnamon, nutmeg or cloves, and vanilla to warm water. Steep for five minutes and enjoy.



St. Patrick’s Day: Have a dance party. Teach an Irish jig (or make up your own song with actions). Today is the perfect day to tempt picky eaters with something green.

End of the Year Parties



Arrange a field trip to a local park, library, beach, or farm. Take along a healthy lunch or snacks.

Develop a Celebrations Policy

A “celebrations policy” that is part of a broader nutrition or healthy living policy can help parents and staff agree on guidelines to make celebrations healthier. Some examples of policy statements include:

- We plan ahead to combine birthdays and other celebrations into monthly events.
- We plan celebrations around activities, not food.
- When food is part of a celebration, celebrations are scheduled around routine meal and snack times, so that celebration foods are not extra calories.
- When parents are asked to provide food, clear guidance is given about what foods are recommended and those that are discouraged.

For more information:

Call HealthLink BC, Dietitian Services toll free 8-1-1
See http://www.interiorhealth.ca/Healthy_Eating.aspx