



# NETA

## **Nutrition Education Training Academy Newsletter For Early Childhood Providers**

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### **The Scoop on Veggie Diets**

**By: Judy Calder, RN**



Many families, for personal or religious reasons, are modifying their diets (including their children's) and choosing not to eat meat or foods of animal origin. A vegetarian diet can be healthful for people of all ages, but they must be well-planned, especially for young children, who need adequate amounts of calories and nutrients to grow and develop to their fullest potential.

#### **Some common questions and concerns**

**Is there a health benefit?** Research shows that well planned vegetarian diets can be healthy, nutritionally adequate and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, some types of cancer and overweight.

**Are all vegetarian diets the same?** The range of vegetarian diets vary from semi-vegetarian, which includes fish and chicken, to those that include milk products and/or eggs, to vegan diets, which only include vegetables, fruit, breads, cereals and nuts. The more exclusive the diet, the more carefully nutritional needs must be considered.

**How to plan for a vegetarian diet?** Planning vegetarian diets is essential, because anytime you're excluding food groups, it's important to make sure you're still receiving all the nutrients needed. A restricted diet can lack calories and nutrients and therefore, compromise growth and development. Choose a variety of foods, including whole grains, vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds and if desired, dairy products and eggs.

**Does a vegetarian diet provide enough calories and fat?** Vegetarian diets are high in fiber and lower in calories; they can fill the stomach, but make it difficult for a child to get all the needed calories. Fat intake may also be low, since some of these diets lack meat and dairy products that have a higher fat content. Encourage consumption of nutrient-dense foods, such as avocado, soy cheese, hummus, nut and seed butters, tahini, tofu, nuts, cheese, dried fruits\*. Provide an omega-3 fatty acid source, e.g. canola oil, soy oil, tofu, soybeans, walnuts or wheat germ. Be sure children get 2-3 nutritious snacks per day, in addition to the three main meals, since they are also great sources of calories and nutrients. *\*Young children, ages 2 to 3 especially, are at risk of choking on nuts, dried fruits and spoonfuls of peanut butter.*

**How does a vegetarian child get protein?** Eating a variety of plant foods and having an adequate intake of calories generally can meet protein needs. Foods higher in protein include legumes, grains, soy products, nuts, dairy products and eggs.

#### **Listed in the table below are foods that can provide adequate sources of some of the vitamins and minerals we need:**

When caring for children on vegan or macrobiotic diets, a nutritionist may need to be consulted, to assure the child is receiving adequate nutritional

Calcium	Calcium fortified soy, rice milks and orange juice; tofu and dark green leafy vegetables
Iron	Whole or enriched grains, iron-fortified cereals, legumes, green leafy vegetables and dried fruits
Zinc	Legumes, whole grain products, wheat germ, nuts, tofu and hard cheeses
Vitamin B12	Fortified soy milk, fortified nutritional yeast and some breakfast cereals
Vitamin D	Fortified cow's milk, fortified soy milk or rice milk and most dry cereals; plus 20 to 30 minutes exposure to sunlight per day on the hands and face

intakes at your program. Any child menu that includes all food groups can be adapted for children on vegetarian diets. Close communication with the parent about the child's preferences will make things go more smoothly.

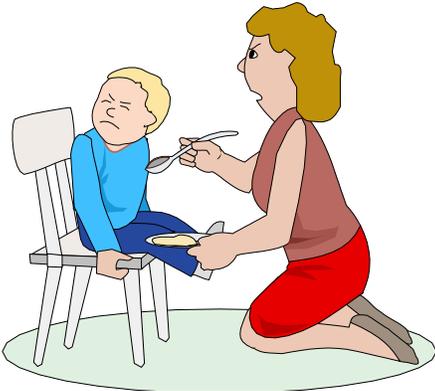
Sources: Vegetarian Diets -- Position of ADA. J Am Diet Assoc. 1997; 97:1317-1321; Raising Children as Vegetarians: Planning and Variety Are the Keys, Says the American Dietetic Association. Press Release, July 15, 1998

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# Child Feeding Practices

## ***Yuck! What's that?***

***By Rita Mitchell, RD***



Have you ever had a child turn up their nose and scream, “Yuck—I **won’t** eat that!!” when you offered a new food? Well, you are not alone. Although it is frustrating for child care providers and parents, it is natural for children to refuse new foods. Kids are sometimes afraid to try new foods just because they are new! Adults will need a lot of patience in these situations!

The best advice we can give is to keep trying! Don’t get discouraged. Experts in child nutrition and child development say that it can take 5 or 10, or even 20 “exposures” for some children to be willing to try new foods. Even then, they may try a tiny bite

but not eat much at all. This doesn’t mean they don’t like the food, it’s just that they’re not sure yet. Offer it again in a few days.

The good news is that there are things child care providers and parents can do to help kids try new foods.

- First of all, set a good example by eating new foods. If kids see the adults around them eating and enjoying the new foods, they will be more likely to try them.
- Let the child help grow or prepare the new food if possible. Kids who are involved in simple gardening or cooking tasks will be more eager to try the foods.
- Let the child look at the new food and touch and smell it. This is how kids learn about things in their world, so this is how they will learn about new foods, too.
- Offer new foods when the child is hungry.
- When introducing a new food, make sure there are other things the child likes, so if they are hungry, there will be something for them to eat.

It is important that adults don’t pressure or bribe a child to eat the new food. It’s tempting to make them “clean their plate” or at least try just one little bite. However, experts warn against this. If a child doesn’t want to try a new food, that’s okay. Try not to make a big deal of it; we don’t want to turn mealtimes into an unpleasant experience because of this issue.

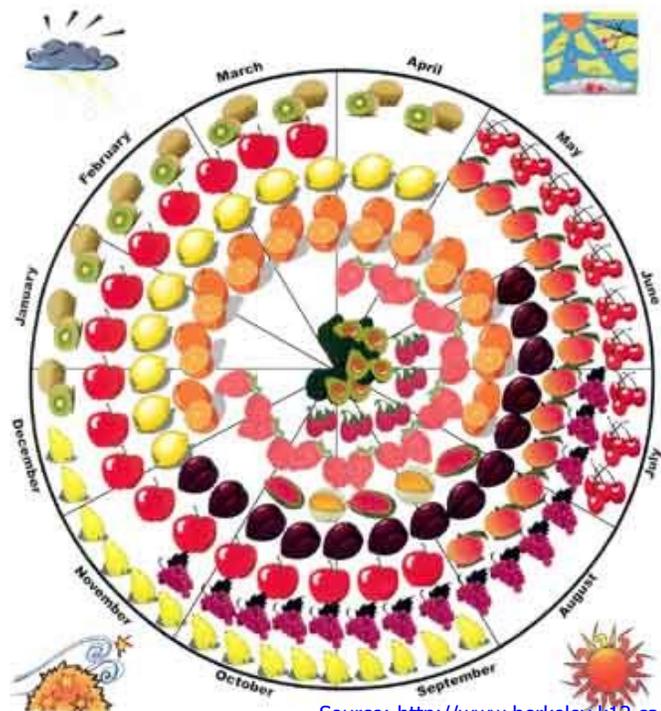
If adults have patience, present healthy foods in a positive way and encourage, but not force, children to try new foods, finicky children will likely grow up enjoying a variety of healthy foods.



# Seasonal Healthy Foods

At the Farmer's Market you will find produce that has been freshly picked, which results in higher quality of freshness than can't be found at the local corner store. Prices are often lower because the cost of the middleman is eliminated. The food available at the local Farmer's Market is dependent on the season. Take a look at these charts to have an idea of all the fresh fruits and vegetables you can find in April-May-June:

## Seasonal Availability of Fruits at the Berkeley Farmers' Market



## Seasonal Availability of Vegetables at the Berkeley Farmers' Market



Source: <http://www.berkeley.k12.ca.us/PSS/nutrition/cnn/vol1iss1/inseason.html>

## Nutritious Seasonal Recipes

### Crunchy Vegetable Burrito

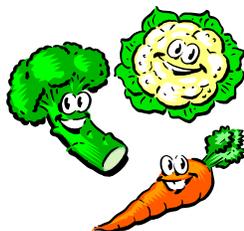
#### Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup shredded carrots
- 1/2 cup chopped broccoli
- 1/2 cup chopped cauliflower
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced
- 4 ounces shredded low-fat cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup nonfat ranch salad dressing
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 4 (7 inch) flour tortillas
- 1 cup torn lettuce bite size pieces

#### Method:

1. In a mixing bowl, combine carrots, broccoli, cauliflower and onions with cheese, dressing and chili powder.
2. Lay tortillas flat on the counter and spoon about 1/2 cup vegetable mixture and 1/4 cup of lettuce down the center. Wrap each tortilla around the vegetable mixture.

Prep: 15 min.  
Makes servings for 4  
Source: [www.dole5aday.com](http://www.dole5aday.com)



### Quick Honey Strawberry Tart

#### Ingredients:

- 1 ready made pie crust
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 Tbs. lemon juice
- 4 cups strawberries, hulled and halved
- 1 sprig of fresh mint (optional)

#### Method:

1. Bake pie shell according to package directions.
2. Combine honey and lemon juice in a bowl and mix well.
3. Just before serving, brush bottom of prepared pie shell with honey mixture. Fill shell with strawberries and drizzle remaining honey mixture over fruit. Serve garnished with mint sprigs, if desired.

Prep: 10 min, Cook: 10 min.  
Makes servings for 8  
Source: [www.seasonalchef.com](http://www.seasonalchef.com)



## Community Events

1. **April: National Garden Month** Celebrate this month with your class: Take your students to a local farmers' market tour; have them read books about gardening; take a field trip to a botanical garden; green up your street or a local park by picking up trash; celebrate other important "green" holidays: Earth Day (April 22) and National Arbor Day (April 26); go on a sniffing tour of your neighborhood when bloom is at its peak, and try to catch an aroma in the air to a specific flower.
2. **May 9: Provider Appreciation Day** This is a special day to recognize child care providers, teachers and educators of young children everywhere. Begin to notify parents, community groups and government leaders so that they too, can participate in this important recognition event throughout your community. For more information, visit: <http://www.providersfirst.com>
3. **June: National Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Month** Take this opportunity to do some cooking and tasting activities with the kids. Ask them to bring different fruits and veggies each week and help them make salads, fruit or vegetable kebabs and/or smoothies.

## Children's Storybooks

1. **Prudence's Book of Food (Baby - Preschool) By: Alona Frankel**  
Little ones can learn about healthy eating from a familiar face. Prudence's mother talks about what her daughter eats, why she needs food, what she has for lunch and where foods she eats come from. Children are introduced to fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy and other foods from all over the world. Setting a good example, Prudence does not drink Kool-Aid or have chips and cookies for snacks. Instead, she enjoys a wide variety of naturally good foods. 
2. **El gusto del mercado mexicano/A Taste of the Mexican Market (4-8 yr old) By: Nancy Maria Tabor, Scott Foresman**  
Come along on a trip to the Mexican market. Along the way you can compare, weigh, count and learn about culture and customs. From bunches of hanging bananas and braids of garlic, to pyramids of melons and baskets of sweet cheese, this market is full of fun and surprises. Matching bilingual text.
2. **Eating Fractions (4-8 yr old) By: Bruce McMillan**  
A math book that whets the appetite, the bright color photos in this book show two kids eating delicious fractions of food illustrating math concepts. The author carries his math and food message one step further by including recipes, which provide delicious practice learning fractions. 

## Websites

1. **Food Safety Coloring Book:** This is a website from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety & Inspection Service that has full page drawings about "Food Safety at Home, School, & When Eating Out" for the kids to color when printed. [www.foodsafety.gov/~dms/cbook.html](http://www.foodsafety.gov/~dms/cbook.html)
2. **Great Plant Escape:** Join Detective LePlant and his partners Bud and Sprout as they uncover the mysteries of plant life. <http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/gpe/>
3. **National Network for Child Care:** This is a great site for early childhood providers and teachers working with children of all ages. It offers information, activities and resources on food, nutrition, child feeding and cooking topics. Click on "Articles & Resources", then on "Activities and Learning". In the "Nutrition and Cooking" section, there is information on teaching kitchen safety to young children along with developmentally appropriate activities. Information is included on how to teach young children about their bodies and also the foods and nutrients needed for growth, health and much more. <http://www.nncc.org/>

### Comments & Suggestions

If you have any comments or suggestions, please e-mail us at [cealameda@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cealameda@ucdavis.edu)

Please take a moment to complete our survey. We look forward to hearing from you.

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