



Nutrition for Early Learning and Child Care

Transform Your Menu

Try these cost-effective and child-friendly ideas to boost the nutrition in your current menu.

Cook from scratch and include whole foods

Try making menu items from scratch or simply switch out processed ingredients for whole foods.

Examples:

- Instead of boxed macaroni and cheese, make whole wheat pasta with a simple cheese sauce (with milk and shredded cheese)
- Instead of frozen pizza, make pizza with pita bread crust, sauce, vegetables and cheese.
- Make homemade granola bites, hot oatmeal or quinoa pudding instead of sugar-sweetened breakfast cereals and boxed granola bars

Incorporate whole grains

For at least half of your menu items, use a whole grain option

Examples:

- Use whole grain flour for your recipe or mix half white flour with half whole wheat flour
- Choose whole grain options of tortillas, English muffins, pitas, crackers, couscous, bread, muffins, rice and many more. Look for the word 'whole' in the ingredient list.

Add extra fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit

Look for opportunities to add vegetables and fruit to your homemade recipes and pre-prepared foods.

Examples:

- Mash frozen fruit on pancakes, toast or waffles instead of using syrup or jam
- Add fresh, frozen or canned vegetables to premade canned soup or pizza.
- If you are serving ice cream top with fresh, frozen or canned fruit

Use beans, lentils, chickpeas or split peas

Pules are high in protein and fibre and will help to ensure children stay full longer. They are also budget-friendly and very nutritious.

Examples:

- Add beans to taco/burrito meat, and chili
- Add beans or lentils to homemade or canned soups
- Add split peas to tomato or cream based sauces (they'll melt right into the sauce)
- Use pureed beans, peas or lentils to thicken sauces or soups