What is your role?

Child care providers play an important role in young children’s experiences with food and eating. By setting a good example, creating a pleasant eating environment and providing nutritious choices, you can strongly influence children’s overall health and well-being – now and into the future.

Here are some things you can do:

- Be role models for healthy eating. Children are more likely to enjoy a variety of food and try new foods if they see you doing it.
- Be aware of food allergies and what could trigger allergic reactions, and share the information with everyone who needs to know.
- Respect families’ individual needs and personal choices (ex: medical – allergies, celiac disease; religious or cultural food restrictions; vegetarian diets).
- Create relaxed and pleasant mealtimes that provide an environment for social learning and positive interaction.

• Offer a variety of foods, including foods with different colours, textures, flavours, sizes, shapes and temperatures, as well as different ethnic choices.
• Hold infants during bottle feeding – look at them, talk to them and cuddle them.
• Actively involve children in mealtime activities (ex: setting the table, serving food, cleaning up).
• Sit with children in small groups during snack and mealtimes whenever possible and start conversations.
• Encourage communication and peer interaction between younger infants by arranging their chairs to face one another.
• Allow each child to decide if, and how much, they eat from the healthy choices that are served. Encourage children to eat but allow them to decide when they are finished.
• Do not use food as a reward or consequence.
Involving children in food preparation

Kids can cook!

Taking part in preparing meals is a great activity that can increase children’s ability to follow instructions and co-operate with others. It is also a great way to encourage children to try a variety of foods, because they are more likely to eat foods they have helped prepare.

Here are some food preparation tasks you can try with children in your care.

Children under two

Children at this age are usually not able to actively participate in meal/snack preparation. You can involve them by:

- talking about what you are doing as you prepare meals and snacks
- naming kitchen utensils and foods
- talking about foods they like to eat
- allowing them to feed themselves (when ready)

Beginner (age two to six)

Young children learn through seeing, touching, smelling, hearing and tasting. With supervision, you may want to have them try:

- gathering ingredients and equipment
- helping with gardening tasks (ex: planting, watering, picking)
- washing vegetables and fruit
- peeling fruit (ex: bananas, oranges)
- opening packages
- rinsing
- stirring/whisking
- mashing soft vegetables and fruit
- greasing pans
- pouring cold liquids or batter
- spreading butter or spreads
- putting foods together (ex: sandwich, pizza, salad, yogurt parfait)
- arranging food on a serving plate
- setting and clearing the table

Intermediate (age six to nine)

Children at this stage can follow simple recipes that have few ingredients, and are able to share and take turns. In addition to the tasks listed above, try having them help with these supervised tasks:

- writing a grocery list
- measuring ingredients
- cutting with small, blunt knives or kitchen scissors
- opening cans
- cracking eggs
- grating (ex: cheese or carrots)
- serving
Advanced (age nine and older)

Children at this stage are usually more co-ordinated and able to understand how to use appliances safely. Have these children do the tasks listed above, and, if they are ready, have them try:

- planning a meal
- using small appliances (ex: microwave, food processor, blender, standing mixer)
- following simple recipes with few ingredients
- inventing and preparing simple recipes (ex: salad, smoothie)
- using a timer and thermometer
- storing food safely after grocery shopping or meal preparation
- reading and making sense of food labels to make healthy choices

Family-style dining

Family-style dining is when food is placed in serving dishes on the table and children are encouraged to serve themselves with, or without, help from an adult. Child care providers sit at the table with the children (and eat the same food, when possible). This creates a pleasant, social occasion for positive interaction. Staff can start conversations about the food, mealtime manners and the day’s activities.

What are the benefits of family-style dining?

- Children learn and practise many social skills.
- Mealtime can become a teachable moment and an opportunity for discussion about where food comes from and basic nutrition.
- Children learn to serve themselves. They are allowed to take as much or as little as they want, and can have more if they are still hungry.
- Children often want to try new foods when they see other children and adults eating them.
- Children enjoy eating with adults and imitate their behaviours.
- Child care providers do not have to act as servers, so they can spend quality time with the children.
Menu-planning Tips

Creating a menu that includes a variety of healthy choices, while staying on budget, requires planning. Consider these tips when developing your menu:

Plan ahead

- Prepare parts of some meals ahead of time (ex: cook meat like ground chicken or roast beef and freeze it in packages for a later date).
- Try using a slow cooker or a crock pot.
- Make planned leftovers or double batches, freeze for a later date, and re-purpose in creative ways. For example, use leftover roast chicken in a noodle casserole or an omelet; use leftover tomato sauce as a pizza sauce; use extra rice in a rice pudding or in homemade soup.
- Develop a menu and try to stick to it – but allow for some flexibility to make use of seasonal foods and store sales. (Post all menu changes so families are aware.)

Include variety

- Include a variety of tastes, textures, colours and temperatures.
- Include a variety of foods from all four food groups (vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives, meat and alternatives).

Consider cultural and dietary needs of all children

- Ask families for meal ideas or ask them to come in and teach children and staff about their culture’s foods. Include the recipes that contain tasty, fresh, whole foods in your menu on a regular basis. See page 18 for more information about culture, religion and food.
- Be aware of allergies and other food restrictions when planning menus. See page 14 for more information about protecting children with food allergies.

Menu planning on a budget

Serving healthy foods does not have to cost more.

Try these ideas to keep your food costs down:

- Buy generic or store brands.
- Check advertisements and store flyers (online or in the store) for sales and coupons.
- Discuss with your local grocer, the possibility of receiving an incentive for your business (ex: a discount or free delivery).
- Get together with other facilities in your area to start a buying club. When you buy larger amounts of food, you can often get a better price.
- Buy large amounts of food and store or freeze what you don’t use right away.
- Make meals from scratch using “whole” foods or basic ingredients.
• Serve tap water. Check with your municipality to determine the safety of your water for drinking.

• Stay away from recipes that call for “one-time only” ingredients that you’re not likely to use again.

• Buy vegetables and fruit that are in season or use frozen vegetables and fruit. When using canned varieties, rinse vegetables before eating and choose fruit canned in juice.

• Offer smaller portions so there is less waste (ex: cut up an apple and share it among two or three children instead of giving each child a whole apple, which they will likely not finish).

DID YOU KNOW?
Nutrition is not about “good” food and “bad” food. It is about moderation, balance and choosing a variety of foods that are tasty, nutritious and affordable.

• Use these high-protein, low-cost meat and alternatives often: eggs, canned or dried beans, lentils, frozen edamame (soy beans), canned light tuna, ground meat/poultry, whole chicken, roast beef or pork.
  - Use eggs to make an omelet, frittata or egg salad for lunch; add chopped boiled eggs to salads; offer a boiled egg as part of a snack.
  - Use canned light tuna or salmon in sandwiches, pasta and salad.
  - Add canned beans or frozen edamame to quesadillas, burritos, soups or pasta salad.
  - Cook a beef or pork roast, or a whole chicken, and use it for sandwiches, soups or casseroles.
Menu ideas: meal by meal

**BREAKFAST**

- Prepare and freeze muffins such as raisin bran, blueberry oatmeal or whole-wheat banana. Thaw and serve for a quick and healthy breakfast.
- Keep a variety of breakfast cereals on hand (such as whole wheat or oat squares or toasted oat ‘O’s). Choose the ones that have less sugar and more fibre. Add milk and some sliced bananas.
- Make a double batch of whole-wheat pancakes or waffles. Freeze half and toast them for breakfast. Add some fresh fruit or frozen berries and a yogurt drink.
- Serve oatmeal mixed with nut or seed butter, and sliced strawberries or bananas.
- Spread multigrain toast (thinly) with nut or seed butter, such as almond, peanut, sunflower seed or soy butter. Serve with unsweetened apple sauce and a glass of milk.

**MORNING SNACK**

- Offer a variety of cut-up fruit, such as strawberries, pineapple, cantaloupe or apple, with yogurt for dipping.
- Make colourful snack platters (ex: orange cheese, sliced purple grapes, brown bread, yellow peppers and green cucumber).
- Spread nut or seed butter (thinly) on whole-grain crackers. Top them with banana slices and a chocolate chip or two.

**LUNCH**

- Make your own macaroni and cheese. Add frozen peas when boiling your macaroni.
- Try this recipe for pita pizza. Use pita bread as your crust. Spread with pizza sauce and add toppings (ex: pineapple, bell peppers, mushrooms, ground beef, shredded chicken). Sprinkle with shredded cheese and bake in the oven. Get the children to help and call it a pizza party.
- Offer variety in your sandwiches by using different types of flat breads, buns, tortillas, pitas or bagels.
- Eggs don’t just have to be for breakfast. They are an economical and easy source of protein. Try them scrambled with toast and sliced tomatoes; in french toast with berries and yogurt; or in a frittata – just add vegetables and cheese.
- Nut or seed butter, with bananas or fresh strawberries, can make the standard peanut butter and jelly sandwich a little more interesting.
- Serve whole-wheat naan bread with mild curry chickpeas, cooked vegetables and plain yogurt.
- Spaghetti with meat sauce or meat balls is usually a hit with children. Try different shapes of whole wheat pasta.
- Try making vegetarian chili and serve with whole grain buns.
- Make baked quesadillas. Spread some mild salsa, chopped peppers, black beans and shredded cheddar cheese on a whole-wheat tortilla, fold in half and toast in the oven until cheese is melted.
AFTERNOON SNACK

- Serve yogurt parfaits: yogurt sprinkled with granola and berries.
- Prepare a plate of colourful vegetables (ex: carrots, red peppers, snap peas), and serve with a Greek yogurt dip.
- Serve whole grain crackers and cheese with sliced cherry tomatoes. Choose lower salt (sodium) versions of crackers.
- Make oatmeal raisin cookies and serve with pear slices.
- Offer raw or steamed broccoli and cauliflower with hummus dip.
- Make a frozen fruit salad (ex: slice and freeze grapes, bananas, blueberries or strawberries) and serve with a yogurt drink.
- Try this recipe for Crunchy Chickpeas: Mix one can of chickpeas (drained and rinsed) with 30 ml (2 tbsp) vegetable oil and seasonings of your choice (ex: dill, paprika, chili powder, garlic powder, cinnamon). Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 30 to 45 minutes in a 400°F (200°C) oven. Stir half-way through to ensure even cooking.
Healthy snacks

Snacks are a necessary part of eating for young children. Children have small stomachs that tend to fill up quickly. Small, healthy meals and snacks during the day will give them the nutrition they need to grow healthy minds and bodies. Children will need larger portions as they grow.

For the best nutritional value, offer a variety of choices from different food groups. Allow children to choose what they want to eat.

Remember that snacks should be served in small portions and spaced out between meals. If children fill up on snacks, they will not be hungry for their meals. When possible, provide snacks at least two hours before a meal.

Children will develop eating skills at their own rate. Observing children as they eat will help you learn where they are in the range of eating ability. As they become more skilled eaters, you can introduce different foods and more textures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables and fruit</th>
<th>BEGINNER</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE</th>
<th>EXPERIENCED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh, frozen or canned are all healthy choices.</td>
<td>Cooked, soft, ripe or puréed vegetables and fruit, such as carrots, sweet potato, squash, broccoli, avocado, green peas, pears, melon, bananas or berries</td>
<td>Bite-size pieces of vegetables like cucumber, tomato or bell peppers</td>
<td>Cut up vegetables like broccoli, turnip, celery, carrots or snap peas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose canned fruit in juice.</td>
<td>Unsweetened applesauce or other unsweetened puréed fruit</td>
<td>Cut-up fruit like grapes, strawberries or kiwi</td>
<td>Whole or sliced apple, pear or orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinse canned vegetables before serving.</td>
<td>Fruit blended into a smoothie</td>
<td>Frozen grapes, blueberries or raspberries</td>
<td>Dried fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to include a variety different colored vegetables and fruit each week.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grain products

Choose whole grains most often.

Choose products that are lower in added fat, sugar and salt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grain products</th>
<th>BEGINNER</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE</th>
<th>EXPERIENCED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fortified infant cereal</td>
<td>Mini bran or oatmeal muffins</td>
<td>Air-popped popcorn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot cereals like oatmeal, quinoa or Cream of Wheat™</td>
<td>Whole wheat toast, pita wedges, bagels, naan bread, roti or tortillas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold cereals like oat 'O's or whole wheat squares or flakes</td>
<td>Whole wheat baked bannock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby rice crackers</td>
<td>Whole grain crackers or unsalted pretzels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Milk and alternatives

Serve whole milk (3.25% MF) until two years of age.
Reduced-fat milks (2%, 1% or skim) and fortified soy beverages can be introduced after two years of age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEGINNER</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE</th>
<th>EXPERIENCED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole milk</td>
<td>2%, 1% or skim milk, fortified soy beverage or chocolate milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yogurt (cups, tubes or drinks)</td>
<td>Sliced or cubed hard cheese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage cheese</td>
<td>String cheese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grated hard cheese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kefir (a fermented milk drink found in the dairy section of the grocery store)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meat and alternatives

Serve meat alternatives, such as beans, lentils and tofu, often.
Choose meat and alternatives with little or no added salt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEGINNER</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE</th>
<th>EXPERIENCED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soft or partially mashed beans, chickpeas or lentils</td>
<td>Hard-cooked eggs cut into small pieces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft pieces of cooked tofu</td>
<td>Bite-size pieces of roast chicken, beef or pork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hummus or bean dips</td>
<td>Nuts or seeds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrambled eggs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nut or seed butter, spread thinly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned tuna or salmon (without bones)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DID YOU KNOW?

Children should brush their teeth after eating foods that are sweet and sticky, such as dried fruit (ex: raisins, cranberries, apricots). If they are not able to brush their teeth, you can serve a small piece of cheese, a glass of milk or a glass of water after they eat the sticky food. By doing this, they will be less likely to develop cavities.
Pre-prepared foods

Meeting the needs of children can leave little time to shop and prepare meals. This is why people may serve pre-prepared foods and meals made outside the child care setting.

Some types of pre-prepared foods can be convenient and healthy, such as frozen or canned vegetables, fruit, beans or fish. Using these products can save on preparation time and are often economical. However, sometimes processing involves adding salt, fat and sugar to a food, making it a less healthy option.

With a little planning and practice, you can learn to cook delicious foods from scratch.

Here are some suggested substitutes for processed foods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of this...</th>
<th>Try this...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boxed macaroni and cheese</td>
<td>Cooked pasta tossed with a simple sauce (made with milk and cheese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pasta with tomato sauce and sprinkled with shredded cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed cheese slices</td>
<td>Sliced hard cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed cheese spread</td>
<td>Nut, seed or soy butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramen noodle soup or canned soup</td>
<td>Low-sodium (low-salt) chicken broth with whole wheat, egg or soba noodles,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>frozen vegetables and pulses (such as dried or canned beans, peas, chickpeas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or lentils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar-sweetened cereal</td>
<td>Oatmeal, shredded wheat squares, puffed wheat, unsweetened oat 'O's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granola bars</td>
<td>Homemade granola bars or whole grain muffins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White bread</td>
<td>100% whole-wheat or whole-grain bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit leathers, gummies or roll-ups</td>
<td>Unsweetened dried fruit (ex: apricots, raisins) or cut-up fresh fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juice</td>
<td>Fresh, frozen or canned (in juice) fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen french fries</td>
<td>Sliced potatoes or sweet potatoes, baked in the oven with vegetable oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot dogs, sausage, deli-meat, frozen chicken nuggets or fish sticks</td>
<td>Cooked lean ground beef or turkey, sliced roast chicken, beef or pork, canned light tuna or salmon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dips, sauces and condiments

Using dips, sauces and condiments (ex: mustard, salsa) can be a great way to add flavour to a meal or snack. Many children love to dip their food, and may be more likely to eat the food, when served with a dip. However, some popular condiments can be high in salt or sugar.

When buying and serving dips, sauces and condiments in your facility:

- Compare the Nutrition Facts tables on different products, and choose the product with lower sodium (salt) and lower sugar. For information on reading food labels see appendix.
- Serve small portions (ex: 15 ml or 1 tbsp).

Use some of the suggestions below as healthy alternatives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of</th>
<th>Try</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>dipping food in:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketchup</td>
<td>Homemade yogurt and herb dip*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet chili sauce</td>
<td>Canned or homemade salsa*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepackaged creamy dip</td>
<td>Hummus*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey dill dip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>topping toast and bagels with:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>Nut, seed or soy butters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jam, jelly or marmalade</td>
<td>Unsweetened apple or fruit sauces, crushed pineapple, sliced bananas or strawberries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed cheese spread</td>
<td>A slice of cheddar cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Butter or non-hydrogenated margarine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>flavouring casseroles, soups and stir-fries with:</strong></td>
<td>Onion powder, garlic powder, ginger, horseradish, pepper, salt-free herbs and spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table salt, seasoning salt, onion salt, garlic salt, celery salt, seasoning mixes containing salt Powdered soup-base Soy sauce, teriyaki sauce or pre-made stir-fry sauces</td>
<td>Low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth Homemade stir-fry sauce: whisk together garlic, ginger, orange or pineapple juice, low-sodium broth or low-sodium soy sauce and corn starch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>seasoning salads or vegetables with:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-made salad dressing</td>
<td>Homemade salad dressing*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed cheese sauce</td>
<td>Pepper, herbs and spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vinegar, lime juice, lemon juice or orange juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melted butter or non-hydrogenated margarine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>topping sandwiches, wraps and burgers with:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBQ sauce</td>
<td>Avocado or guacamole (avocado based dip)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketchup</td>
<td>Slices of hard cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relish</td>
<td>Mustard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickles</td>
<td>Butter or non-hydrogenated margarine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A variety of vegetables (tomato, onion, lettuce, cucumber, bell peppers)</td>
<td>Hummus * Tzatziki *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*see recipes on pages 32-32
**Recipes**

**YOGURT DIP**

Start with 250-500ml (1-2 cups) of plain yogurt (depending on how flavourful your children like their dip), mix in any of the following seasonings and serve. Use plain Greek yogurt if you prefer a thicker texture.

**Garlic and Dill:** 5 ml (1 tsp) garlic powder, 2.5-5 ml (⅛-1 tsp) dried dill, 15 ml (1 tbsp) lemon juice, 1 ml (¼ tsp) pepper, 1 ml (¼ tsp) salt (optional)

**Italian:** 5 ml (1 tsp) dried oregano, 5 ml (1 tsp) dried basil, 5 ml (1 tsp) dried thyme, 1 ml (¼ tsp) pepper, 2.5 ml (½ tsp) garlic powder

**Ranch:** 2.5 ml (⅛ tsp) dried dill, 5 ml (1 tsp) garlic powder, 5 ml (1 tsp) onion powder, 5 ml (1 tsp) dried onion flakes (or minced fresh onion), 1 ml (¼ tsp) pepper, 1 ml (¼ tsp) salt (optional)

**Tzatziki:** 250 ml (1 cup) cucumber (peeled, seeded and grated), 15 ml (1 tbsp) olive oil, 30 ml (2 tbsp) lemon juice, 1 ml (¼ tsp) pepper, 1 ml (¼ tsp) salt (optional), 1 clove minced garlic (optional), 30 ml (2 tbsp) fresh chopped dill (optional)

**Fruit:** 125 ml (½ cup) thawed frozen berries (mashed with its own juices), 15 ml (1 tbsp) maple syrup or liquid honey

Refrigerate for up to 5 days.

**FRESH SALSA (PICO DE GALLO)**

500 ml (2 cups) firm tomatoes, diced (fresh or canned; choose low-sodium varieties, when possible)

60 ml (¼ cup) finely diced onion

45 ml (3 tbsp) chopped fresh cilantro (optional)

½ lime, juiced (or 30-45 ml (2-3 tbsp) lime juice)

1 ml (¼ tsp) salt (optional – if using regular canned tomatoes, don’t use salt)

Mix all ingredients together and serve.

**HUMMUS**

1 – 540 ml (19 oz) can chick peas (garbanzo beans) - drained and rinsed

60 ml (¼ cup) oil (canola, olive or vegetable)

30 ml (2 tbsp) lemon juice

1 clove garlic (optional)

60 ml (¼ cup) tahini (sesame paste) or 5 ml (1 tsp) sesame oil (optional)

Add all ingredients to a food processor or blender and blend until smooth (you may need to add a little water).

Refrigerate for up to 5 days.
HOMEMADE SALAD DRESSING

125 ml (½ cup) vinegar (any variety)
250 ml (1 cup) oil (vegetable, canola or olive)
15 ml (1 tbsp) Dijon or honey Dijon mustard*
Mix all ingredients together and whisk in one of these seasoning combinations (or create your own).

Garlic and Dill: 2.5 ml (½ tsp) garlic powder, 2.5-5 ml (½ -1 tsp) dried dill, 15 ml (1 tbsp) lemon juice, 1 ml (¼ tsp) pepper, 1 ml (¼ tsp) salt (optional)

Italian: 5 ml (1 tsp) dried oregano, 5 ml (1 tsp) dried basil, 5 ml (1 tsp) dried thyme, 1 ml (¼ tsp) pepper, 1 ml (¼ tsp) garlic powder

Ranch: 125 ml (½ cup) plain yogurt, 2.5 ml (¼ tsp) dried dill, 5 ml (1 tsp) garlic powder, 5 ml (1 tsp) onion powder, 5 ml (1 tsp) dried onion flakes (or minced fresh onion), 1 ml (¼ tsp) pepper, 1 ml (¼ tsp) salt (optional).

* Mustard helps keep the salad dressing from separating. If a mustard allergy is a concern, you can leave it out but you will need to mix the dressing before serving.
Refrigerate for up to 5 days.

GUACAMOLE

Peel and mash one ripe avocado and mix in the following ingredients.

30 ml (2 tbsp) prepared salsa
10 ml (2 tsp) lemon or lime juice
1 ml (¼ tsp) garlic powder (optional)
1 ml (¼ tsp) salt (optional)
Chopped cilantro, chopped onion (optional)
Throw out any leftovers, as they will go brown very quickly.
Lunches and snacks from home

Some child care facilities do not provide food; instead, children bring their own food from home.

Here are some tips for you to help families pack lunches and/or snacks:

- Be sure families are aware of facility policies and guidelines for food allowed in the child care facility.
- Provide suggestions for suitable food choices (see Snack Ideas and Lunch Ideas in appendix).
- Offer an information event, a newsletter and other opportunities for families to gather and share ideas for healthy lunches and snacks (in-person or online).

If you notice that the food coming from home is not meeting a child’s nutritional needs on a regular basis, try these steps when working with families:

1. You can try sitting the child beside another child who enjoys a variety of foods for lunches and snacks. Children learn from their peers and usually want to eat what their friends are eating.
   
   You can also try sharing print information as a handout, on a bulletin board or in a newsletter (ex: information from this handbook, a collection of healthy snack and lunch ideas).

2. If you do not notice any changes, try doing a taste test or cooking a recipe with children in your facility. This could be part of a special event or as part of your curriculum. Focus the food activity on the issue that you are experiencing (ex: no vegetables in a child’s lunch – try a vegetable-based recipe or a vegetable dip). Send a note home to all families about the activity. Tell them the foods their children tried, and include the recipe for all families.

3. If you still haven’t noticed any changes, have a private conversation with the family. Ask about the child’s eating patterns at home and share with them what happens at child care (ex: Is their child interested in what their peers are eating? Have they tried any new foods on special occasions?). Turn to the food and nutrition questions for families (in appendix) to help guide your conversation with the family.

4. If you have tried all the above suggestions, and still see no improvements in the food coming from the child’s home, you’ll need to accept that things may not change. Be sensitive, because most families try to do the best they can. You can continue to share information (if, and when, the time is right), and occasionally cook recipes at your facility to encourage healthy eating behaviours.

Additional foods may be needed to supplement the child’s diet. If possible, try to keep some basic healthy foods on hand, like milk, fruit, whole grain crackers and cereal.
Special occasions and celebrations

Food often plays a significant role in celebrating many special occasions. It is okay to change the way we celebrate these occasions. Here are some ideas:

- If parents want to send a treat for their child’s birthday, ask them to send non-food items such as stickers, pencils or notepads.
- Decorate the room.
- Sing songs or read special books.
- Play games.
- Find out about how children from other cultures celebrate, and include these traditions in your celebrations (ex: a cultural dance or song).
- Celebrate birthdays only once a month.
- Healthy snack ideas:
  - serve homemade muffins (respect all food allergies)
  - offer the children’s favourite vegetable or fruit
  - allow children to choose a lunch or snack item on their birthday (from a selection of healthy choices)
  - prepare a fruit spritzer (mix 125 ml (1/2 cup) of 100% fruit juice with sparkling water)