


FOOD ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

Making mealtimes fun is an important part of supporting children to develop healthy attitudes to eating.

Here are a few tips for you to try at home:

Serve food differently

This is about encouraging children to see food differently and to find it fun. Why not try:

- **Fruit kebabs:** Rather than fruit cut up on a plate, why not put it on a skewer? If your child likes strawberries but not apples, put a strawberry on and then an apple: something they like and something they can try again. It's more fun and interesting for the child – and who knows, perhaps they'll try it and like it!
 
- **Making shapes:** You or your child could make shapes with their food. Could you present the food in a face shape or heart shape? Or perhaps you could shape food with cutters.
- **Get arty:** allow children to explore food through creativity. For example, could you try making people with food? You could offer a variety of fruit and vegetables and let the children use their imaginations: they could make a friend, a grandparent, a footballer or even a pet. Green beans, sweetcorn husk and carrot peelings make great hair. Older children can use a non-sharp knife to cut fruit and vegetables under close supervision.



Grow your own

Runner beans are great for this as they are easy to grow and they grow fast. You can link this activity to the story of Jack and the Beanstalk – or make your own story up.

You could also try growing radishes, tomatoes (don't forget to dice them before giving to small children), potatoes or lettuce in pots or growbags. Cress, or herbs are good to grow if you have limited space. Once they've seen them grown, your children may be more eager to taste them.



Make pictures

Dried pasta, lentils, rice, seeds, or dried herbs can be mixed with glue or paint to make pictures. When dry, this gives wonderful textures to explore.



Get outside

Food is all around us and we can see it growing all the time. What foods can you see if you go on a walk? Perhaps a blackberry bush or an apple tree? From March onwards, around streams or rivers you may find wild garlic – let your children see and smell this. Even those pesky stinging nettles can be a great, healthy food source for soup, pastas or risottos.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Trying asking your little one these questions as you explore food together:

What different vegetables can you see?

Encourage the child to explore the ingredients. Include foods they are comfortable with and some new things and allow them to use their senses. Ask them what colours they see and what things smell like. They will be learning, developing their fine and gross motor skills while having fun and bonding with you.

What does each ingredient add to the dish?

Explaining this to the child will help them develop communication and language skills – even if they aren't going to be the next Gordon Ramsey!

How many different ingredients can you see?

This will help to engage them while they will also be doing some simple maths. Cooking can involve language and communication skills, coordination, maths, and science. It provides opportunities for cognitive development while children connect with healthy foods and with you.