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**FISCAL YEAR 2008  
CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM  
OPERATIONAL MEMORANDUM #10**

**TO:** Child and Adult Care Food Program Institutions

**FROM:** Mary Ann Chartrand, Director  
Grants Coordination and School Support

**DATE:** March 13, 2008

**SUBJECT: Mealtime Memo for Child Care**

Attached are three issues of the *Mealtime Memo for Child Care*. The titles are, "Cooking with Fresh Vegetables: Focus on Sweet Potatoes," "Creative Menu Planning," and "Drinking Water for Good Health."

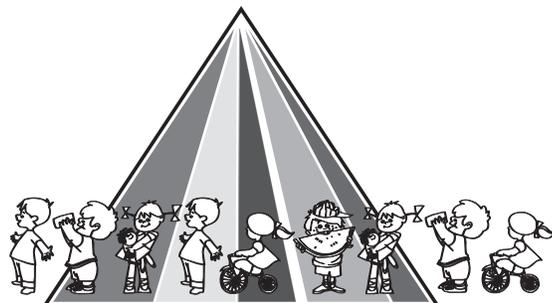
Developed by the National Food Service Management Institute, these publications reinforce the importance of the Food Guide Pyramid and include menus, recipes, and activities related to child care. Subsequent issues of the *Mealtime Memo for Child Care* will be provided when published.

If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, you may contact the Child and Adult Care Food Program staff at (517) 373-7391.

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## Cooking with Fresh Vegetables: Focus on Sweet Potatoes



Fresh vegetables are an important source of vitamins and minerals for children. Sweet potatoes are rich in vitamins A, C, and E, beta-carotene, folic acid, and potassium. They are also a good source of complex carbohydrates and fiber. This issue we

will focus on various ways to serve sweet potatoes to children.

### Sweet potatoes are versatile:

- Bake and serve as a side dish.
- Dice and add to soups and stews.
- Cut and bake french-fry style.
- Mash boiled sweet potatoes and use in breads or muffins.

### Sweet potatoes can also be substituted in some recipes that call for white potatoes.

- Sweet potatoes can be used in soups and stews that call for white potatoes.
- Sweet potatoes can be served mashed. To add variety to regular mashed potatoes, use half white potatoes and half sweet potatoes.

### Prepare to cook sweet potatoes:

1. Store unwashed sweet potatoes in the refrigerator separately from fruits if possible.
2. Wash sweet potatoes with water using a vegetable brush.

3. Sweet potatoes can be cooked with the skin on to take advantage of important vitamins that are stored right under the skin.

### Methods of preparing sweet potatoes:

#### 1. Boiling

Bring water to a boil in a pot; add fresh peeled sweet potatoes cut in chunks. The water should partially cover the sweet potatoes. For 1 pound of sweet potatoes, boil for 30-35 minutes.

#### 2. Baking

Place unpeeled sweet potatoes on a cookie sheet. Bake long enough for sweet potatoes to be easily cut with a fork. Baking time will vary depending on the size of the sweet potato. Sweet potatoes can be wrapped in foil to steam them, but foil is not necessary.

#### Seasonings:

You can use cinnamon, nutmeg, brown sugar, and/or orange juice to season sweet potatoes. Refer to *Mealtime Memo* No. 7, 2007, for tips in seasoning vegetables. Young children do not need added salt. Sweet potatoes taste great. There is no need to add any fat for flavor.



# Mealtime Memo FOR CHILD CARE



**Nutrition Education Activity:** In this activity, children will learn how sweet potatoes grow and why they are a healthful food choice.

## Activity Instructions:

1. The teacher or older children can stick tooth picks around the middle of a raw sweet potato.
2. The teacher should fill paper or styrofoam cups with water (one cup per child).
3. The teacher or older children can suspend the sweet potato in a cup of water using the toothpicks. The bottom half of the sweet potato should be in the water.
4. The teacher should place the cup holding the potato near a window to get light.
5. The teacher and/or older children should add water as needed to keep the cup full of water. Children can watch the potatoes sprout.

## Teaching Points:

Use the following teaching points to talk to children about sweet potatoes as they watch their plants sprout.

- Talk about how sweet potatoes grow. Tell them that sweet potatoes grow in the ground like the roots of a tree. Tell them that the sprouts on sweet potatoes can be planted in the ground and will produce more sweet potatoes.
- Tell children that sweet potatoes are harvested August through October.
- Tell children that sweet potatoes are a native American plant.
- Tell children that sweet potatoes are rich in vitamins and minerals. Tell them that the vitamins in sweet potatoes do many important things for their bodies, such as helping them to see and helping prevent infection.

## Lunch Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Beef Vegetable Soup H-11A <sup>1</sup> Grilled cheese sandwich Diced pears Milk	Sliced turkey breast Steamed broccoli Whole grain roll Sweet Potatoes and Apples I-08 <sup>1</sup> Milk	Peanut butter <sup>2</sup> and jelly sandwich Low fat mozzarella string cheese Carrot-raisin salad <sup>3</sup> Fresh apple slices Milk	Fish Nuggets D-09A <sup>1</sup> Green beans Baked sweet potatoes Whole grain bread Milk	Chili Con Carne D-25 <sup>1</sup> Diced apricots Cornbread Milk

<sup>1</sup>USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org). Sweet potatoes can be substituted for white potatoes in Beef Vegetable Soup H-11A to increase nutrients.

<sup>2</sup>Sunflower butter can be substituted for peanut butter.

<sup>3</sup>Raisins can be a choking hazard for young children.

## Sources:

American Dietetic Association. (2004, August 9). *Sweeten nutrition with sweet potatoes*. Retrieved November 28, 2007, from [http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/home\\_4436\\_ENU\\_HTML.htm](http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/home_4436_ENU_HTML.htm)

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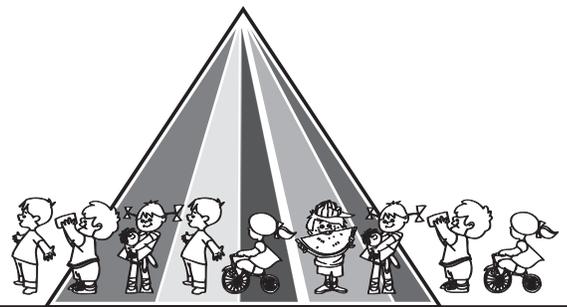
National Food Service Management Institute. (1997). *CARE Connection*. Retrieved November 20, 2007, from [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org)

National Food Service Management Institute. (2004). *More than mudpies: A nutrition curriculum guide for preschool children (4th ed)*. Retrieved November 29, 2007, from [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org)

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## Creative Menu Planning

Creative menu planning that involves children in food activities can give children positive experiences with healthy foods. Here are some tips for involving children in meal preparation, fun food activities, and stories about food.



### Menu Planning Tips

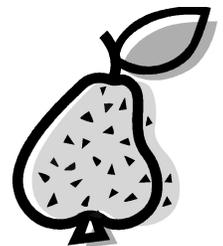
Menu planning is one of the most important jobs of food preparation. Careful planning ensures that meals are healthy, tasty, and eye appealing.

1. Offer a variety of foods. Plan to serve a variety of foods throughout the day and week. Be sure that the same foods are not offered too often.
2. Increase fiber and nutrients by including fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products. Include foods that provide vitamin A, vitamin C, and iron.
3. Limit fried foods, high fat foods, sweets, and high sodium foods.
4. Include a variety of shapes, colors, textures, and tastes.
5. Include some foods in each meal that children easily accept.
6. Introduce new foods to children alongside familiar, well-liked foods.

### Creative Ideas for Connecting Menus to Classroom Activities

Go beyond basic menu planning; use creative ideas to teach children about food and nutrition. Try the following ideas to connect menus to classroom activities.

1. Connect a menu item to a nutrition lesson.
2. Plan a food activity that allows children to participate in making a snack or meal component. See suggested ideas in the featured menus this month.
3. Use creative names for menu items. For example, when serving apples with peanut butter and raisins, the menu item can be called “apple smiles.” Ask children to create inventive names for menu items.
4. Talk about new foods presented in meals. When introducing new foods to children, ask children to tell what food group the food belongs to and how the food grows.
5. Discuss food groups represented in meals.
6. Teach students about nutrition using songs and games.
7. Read a children’s book that relates to a menu item to create interest in foods.
8. Use resources such as *More Than Mudpies* for new ideas (NFSMI, 2004).



# Mealtime Memo FOR CHILD CARE



## Breakfast Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
French toast Peach slices Milk	Peach Muffin Squares- A-16A <sup>1</sup> Grapefruit sections Milk	Cream of wheat cereal Fresh strawberries Milk	Cheerios® cereal Banana slices <sup>2</sup> Milk	Scrambled eggs Whole grain English muffin Tomato juice Milk



## Lunch Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Barbecued Beef or Pork on a Roll- F-08 <sup>1</sup> Carrots and peas Plums Milk	Tuna salad Whole grain crackers Lightly steamed carrot sticks Pineapple tidbits Milk	Baked fish Black eyed peas Green salad with shredded carrots <sup>3</sup> Cornbread Milk	Chicken Nuggets D-09B <sup>1</sup> Corn Whole wheat roll Diced pears Milk	Beef Burrito- D-21 <sup>1,4</sup> New potatoes Orange wedges Milk



## Snack Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Watermelon chunks Whole grain crackers Water	Pineapple Scones- A-01 <sup>1</sup> Milk Water	String cheese Graham crackers Water	Lowfat yogurt Apricot halves Water	Peanut butter <sup>5</sup> Apple slices <sup>6</sup> Water

<sup>1</sup>USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org).

<sup>2</sup>Children can use plastic knives to cut half a banana into slices. Talk about bananas growing on trees and ask children to tell the food groups that are represented in their breakfast (fruit, grains, milk)..

<sup>3</sup>Children can participate in making salads by tearing lettuce. Read a book about vegetables growing on this day, such as *Oliver's Vegetables* by Vivian French.

<sup>4</sup>As an optional food activity, prepare the filling for the burrito and let it cool. Allow children to place filling in tortillas and roll them before placing them in a baking dish. Talk about the meal components in this dish (meat, grains/bread, vegetable).

<sup>5</sup>Sunflower butter can be substituted for peanut butter.

<sup>6</sup>Have children spread peanut butter on apple slices with a plastic knife. Children can also place raisins (optional) on the peanut butter. Remember that raisins can be a choking hazard for young children.

### Sources:

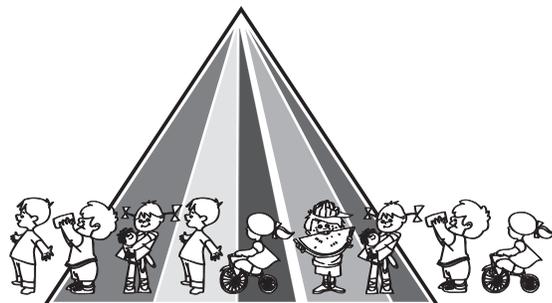
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## Drinking Water for Good Health



Offering water to children in childcare can help them learn to quench their thirst with water. Use the following facts about water to teach children about why water is healthy to drink.

- Tell children that when they feel thirsty, their bodies are saying “I need water.”
- People need water, just like plants and animals. The human body is made of about 60% water.
- Water keeps the body cool.
- Water helps the stomach digest food.
- Foods that have a lot of water include:
  - Fruits, juice, milk, and vegetables. For example, celery, carrots, and watermelon are mostly made of water.
- Talk to children about the different forms of water. Ice is frozen water. Water that we drink is liquid. Steam is also a form of water. Children may see steam when they take a hot bath. Ask children where they have seen each form of water.

### Offer Water for Quenching Thirst

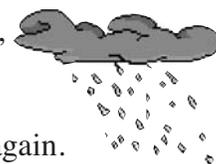
Consider making available a child-sized water fountain or a water bottle filled with water and small paper cups on a counter at child’s level. At first, children may drink lots of water through the day. Once they become familiar with having water available, they will drink only when they are thirsty.

### Teach Children about the Water Cycle

- Rain or snow occurs when there is lots of water in the air and the clouds become heavy. Rain, snow,

sleet, or hail comes down to fill lakes, rivers, and oceans.

- Some water is soaked up by the ground and stored until it is needed.
- The sun comes out and heats the water. This turns the water to steam in the air. Plants also add water to the air.
- When vapor in the air gets cold, it turns back into liquid to form clouds. When the clouds get heavy, the cycle starts all over again.



### Food Activity: Make Fruit Julius

Let children help make a beverage of fruit, ice, and water. Children can help measure ingredients and place them in the blender.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups fresh fruit (peaches, strawberries, cantaloupe, or bananas)
- 1 ¾ cups water
- ½ cup instant nonfat dry milk
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 Tbsp honey (for children over the age of 2 years only) or sugar
- 12 ice cubes

Blend all ingredients together in a blender. This activity makes 15-16 ¼ cup servings.

### Read Children’s Books About Water:

- Little Cloud* by Eric Carle
- Water* by Frank Asch
- The Water’s Journey* by Eleonore Schmid



# Mealtime Memo FOR CHILD CARE

## Molded Fruit Salad E-01<sup>1</sup>

Canned crushed pineapple with juice, chilled	3 cups	Orange juice concentrate	¼ cup
Lemon gelatin	2 ½ cups	Lowfat plain yogurt	2 cups
Water, boiling	2 cups	Fresh red or white seedless grapes, cut in half, chilled*	2 cups
Reserved pineapple juice	1 cup		

Drain pineapple and reserve 1 cup juice. In a bowl, dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Add reserved pineapple juice, orange juice concentrate, and yogurt. Whisk until smooth. Freeze mixture for about 30 minutes, until it begins to set. Place 1 ¼ cups of crushed pineapple and 1 ¼ cups 2 Tbsp of grape halves in each of two 3 qt gelatin molds or baking pans (9" x 13" x 2"). In a mixing bowl, use the whip attachment on medium speed to beat the gelatin mixture for 5 minutes, until fluffy. Pour 1 qt of whipped gelatin over the fruit in each mold and stir gently to blend. Refrigerate until set, at least 2 hours.

Number of servings: 25

Serving size: ¾ cup (No. 10 scoop) provides ¼ cup fruit.

\* Special tip: This salad may be prepared substituting equal volumes of fresh diced apples or fresh grated carrots for fresh grapes, and substituting equal volumes of canned Mandarin oranges, canned diced peaches, and juice for canned pineapple and juice.

<sup>1</sup>USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org).



## Snack Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lowfat yogurt Strawberries Water <sup>2</sup>	Peanut butter <sup>3</sup> and crackers Milk Water <sup>2</sup>	Banana bread Milk Water <sup>2</sup>	Molded Fruit Salad- E-01 <sup>1</sup> Graham crackers Water <sup>2</sup>	String cheese Carrot-Raisin <sup>4</sup> Salad- E-05 <sup>1</sup> Water <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org).

<sup>2</sup>Water is suggested as a beverage for all snacks even when other beverages are offered to encourage children to drink water.

<sup>3</sup>Sunflower seed butter can be substituted for peanut butter.

<sup>4</sup>Raisins can be a choking hazard for young children.

### Sources:

National Food Service Management Institute. (1997). *CARE Connection*. University, MS: Author.

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