

Buying on a Budget

Shopping for healthy food can be a challenging experience, especially when trying to stick to a budget. In order to plan, shop and cook healthy meals without overspending, consider these money-saving tips:

- **Know how much you need:** Be aware of how much food, on average, is used at meals. Having an idea of how much food is needed on a given day will help to avoid overpurchasing.²
- **Check expiration dates:** When buying products, be sure to check the expiration dates. Make sure you have enough time to use or freeze the foods before they expire to avoid throwing out spoiled products.¹
- **Compare:** Look for store brand products, which generally cost less than name brands, and sales on commonly used items at local stores. Before purchasing, check to be sure these products meet the guidelines.¹
- **Buy in season:** Look for low prices on seasonal fruits and vegetables at local farmers' markets, roadside stands or locally-owned grocery stores/markets. They may require a little more work in preparing, but will still save on total food costs.²
- **Buy in bulk:** Sometimes buying in bulk from wholesale stores or vendors is the best option. Before buying in bulk, think about where the food can be stored, if it will be used before expiration and if this strategy is in fact saving you money.¹
- **Freeze:** If you have purchased more than you use for a meal or snack, don't toss it – freeze the leftover ingredients! See the “Freezing and Reheating Guide” in this section for more information.³
- **Be flexible:** If an item in a recipe does not fit your budget, a similar item that costs less may be used. For example, if a recipe says to use turkey, but chicken is on sale, use chicken instead.
- **Buy whole and dry:** Ingredients such as beans, rice, oats and nuts are less expensive when sold without added salt, sugar or fats. They stay fresh longer and can be bought in large amounts and used over time.¹
- **Look for coupons:** There are many web resources for savings, including coupon and brand websites. Look in ads and circulars for additional coupon resources to save money on commonly used items.¹
- **Use community resources:** Work with a local farmers' market, food bank or food distributor. Visit the Delaware Department of Agriculture or Delaware Food Bank websites for contact information and additional resources.

Sources:

1. Florida Child Care Food Program (2009). *Nutrition and Menu Planning for Children in the Child Care Food Program*. www.doh.state.fl.us/ccfp/
2. USDA Team Nutrition (2000). *Building Blocks for Fun and Healthy Meals*. <http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/buildingblocks.html>.
3. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. *Fact Sheets: Safe Food Handling, Freezing and Food Safety*. http://www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/focus_on_freezing/index.asp⁴. Accessed July 2, 2010.

Effect of Guideline Changes on Food Costs

This chart compares the unit cost of select foods and beverages recommended for children one year of age and older with foods that do not meet Delaware CACFP/*Delacare* Rules. In some cases, products that meet guidelines cost more than those that do not, and in some cases they cost less. Prep time was not factored into these cost comparisons, but making products in advance or using them more than once will help to cut labor costs. These cost differences balance out — it's not more expensive to serve healthy foods if you shop smart! The prices below were taken from a Delaware grocery store on one day and will vary based on type and location of store/market and weekly sales.

Feeding children healthy foods in age-appropriate serving sizes is *comparable to or less expensive than* feeding them foods that do not meet Delaware CACFP/*Delacare* Rules.

Beverages

Fat-free or 1% (low-fat) milk are the preferred beverages for children age two and older, providing vitamins and minerals essential for health and growth. Water is also a very inexpensive and effective way to quench thirst. Sugary beverages are available at a wide range of costs, but are not a wise choice for the food dollar because they provide calories but little to no nutrition.

Do NOT Meet Guidelines		Meet Guidelines		Cost Difference
Apple juice cocktail	\$0.02/fl oz	100% apple juice	\$0.03/fl oz	+ 1¢/oz
Ruby Red grapefruit cocktail	\$0.05/fl oz	100% grapefruit juice	\$0.047/fl oz	∅
Yoo-hoo® chocolate drink	\$0.07/fl oz	Fat-free milk	\$0.03/fl oz	- 4¢/oz

Milk

Fat-free and 1% (low-fat) milk have as much calcium and vitamin D as 2% and whole milk without the saturated fat and additional calories. ***Note:** Delaware CACFP/*Delacare* Rules require that children under the age of two be served whole milk, while those age two and older should receive fat-free or 1% (low-fat) milk.

Do NOT Meet Guidelines		Meet Guidelines		Cost Difference
Whole milk	\$0.03/fl oz	1% (low-fat) milk	\$0.03/fl oz	∅
2% milk	\$0.03/fl oz	Fat-free milk	\$0.03/fl oz	∅

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Fruits & Vegetables

In order to increase nutritional quality and save on cost, consider purchasing local, in-season fresh produce, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables and those that are on sale.

Do NOT Meet Guidelines		Meet Guidelines		Cost Difference
FRUITS				
Fruit snacks	\$0.46/oz	Canned fruit in own juice	\$0.07/oz	- 39¢/oz
Fruit roll-ups	\$0.60/oz	Frozen fruit	\$0.19/oz	- 41¢/oz
		Fresh bananas	\$0.99/lb or \$0.06/oz	- 54¢/oz
VEGETABLES				
French fried potatoes**	\$0.084/oz	White potatoes	\$0.06/oz	- 2¢/oz
Tater tots**	\$0.06/oz	Red potatoes	\$0.09/oz	+ 3¢/oz
		Yams	\$0.06/oz	∅
		Frozen mixed vegetables	\$0.09/oz	+ 3¢/oz

Meats & Meat Alternates

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010, replacing meats with beans and eggs more often increases protein in the diet and benefits health.¹ Meat, poultry, fish and beans that are prepared from scratch are consistently less expensive and more nutritious ounce for ounce than processed foods that are higher in salt and other preservatives.

Do NOT Meet Guidelines		Meet Guidelines		Cost Difference
MEATS				
Sausage	\$0.12/oz	Canned black beans	\$0.06/oz	- 6 ¢/oz
Bacon	\$0.16/oz	Ground turkey	\$0.12/oz	- 4¢/oz
Chicken nuggets**	\$0.21/oz	Boneless chicken breast	\$0.27/oz	+ 6¢/oz
Tuna canned in oil†	\$0.24/oz	Tuna canned in water	\$0.19/oz	- 5¢/oz
MEAT ALTERNATES				
Cream cheese	\$0.21/oz	Low-fat cottage cheese	\$0.09/oz	- 12¢/oz
Cheez Whiz®	\$0.29/oz	Non-fat plain yogurt	\$0.09/oz	- 20¢/oz
Velveeta®	\$0.28/oz	Real American cheese singles	\$0.29/oz	+ 1¢/oz

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1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-DGACReport.htm>. Accessed July, 2010.

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Grains & Breads

In order to increase nutritional quality and save on cost, think about buying in bulk or purchasing generic brands. Whole grains such as brown rice, barley and oats are usually easy to find in bulk, and generic whole grain cereals and breads generally taste the same as name brands. If you serve baked goods, consider baking your own using whole wheat flour as a substitute for white flour, and fruit purées (e.g., applesauce or prunes) as a substitute for sugar and oil.

Do NOT Meet Guidelines		Meet Guidelines		Cost Difference
White rice, instant†	\$0.14/oz	Brown rice, instant	\$0.14/oz	∅
White flour	\$0.46/lb	Whole wheat flour	\$0.50/lb	+ 4¢/lb
Regular white English muffins	\$4.52/lb	Whole wheat English muffins	\$5.32/lb	+ 80¢/lb
White bagels	\$2.89/lb	Whole wheat bagels	\$2.89/lb	∅
Fruity Cheerios®	\$0.31/oz	Cheerios®	\$0.28/oz	- 3¢/oz
Frosted Flakes®	\$0.21/oz	Generic toasted oats cereal	\$0.21/oz	- 10¢/oz
Flavored oatmeal, single-serving package	\$0.21/oz	Generic corn flakes	\$0.12/oz	- 9¢/oz
		Old-fashioned or quick oats	\$0.09/oz	- 12¢/oz

** Not allowed unless no more than 35% of calories are from fat. † Not recommended.

Delaware CACFP/Delacare Meal Pattern— Infants of All Ages

Meal Component	Birth through 3 months	4 through 7 months	8 through 11 months
BREAKFAST – Serve the following 3 components:			
1. Breast Milk or Formula	4 - 6 fl oz	4 - 8 fl oz	6 - 8 fl oz
2. Infant Cereal	None	0 - 3 Tbsp	2 - 4 Tbsp
3. Fruit or Vegetable	None	None	1 - 4 Tbsp
LUNCH or SUPPER – Serve the following 4 components:			
1. Breast Milk or Formula	4 - 6 fl oz	4 - 8 fl oz	6 - 8 fl oz
2. Infant Cereal	None	0 - 3 Tbsp	2 - 4 Tbsp
3. Fruit or Vegetable	None	0 - 3 Tbsp	1 - 4 Tbsp
4. Meat or Meat Alternate			
Lean meat, poultry, fish, egg yolk, cooked beans or peas	None	None	1 - 4 Tbsp
Cheese	None	None	1/2 - 2 oz
Cottage cheese	None	None	1 - 4 oz
SNACK – Serve the following 2 components:			
1. Breast Milk or Formula	4 - 6 fl oz	4 - 6 fl oz	2 - 4 fl oz
2. Grain or Bread			
Bread	None	None	0 - 1/2 slice
Crackers	None	None	0 - 2 crackers

Menu Planning Template—Infants of All Ages

Center Name: _____ Infant Name: _____ DOB: _____
 Month of: _____ Formula Type: _____

Requirements for Infant Meal Pattern	
AGES	BREAKFAST
0 through 3 mos.	4 - 6 fl oz breast milk or formula
4 through 7 mos.	4 - 8 fl oz breast milk or formula 0 - 3 tbsp infant cereal
8 through 11 mos.	6 - 8 fl oz breast milk or formula AND 2 - 4 tbsp infant cereal AND 1 - 4 tbsp fruit and/or veg.
	LUNCH OR SUPPER
	4 - 6 fl oz breast milk or formula
	4 - 6 fl oz breast milk or formula 0 - 3 tbsp infant cereal 0 - 3 tbsp fruit and/or veg.
	SNACK
	2 - 4 fl oz breast milk or formula 0 - 1/2 slice bread OR 0 - 2 crackers

DATE	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
BREAKFAST	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.
LUNCH	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.
SNACK	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers

DATE	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
BREAKFAST	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ fr./veg.
LUNCH	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.	____ breast milk or formula ____ infant cereal ____ &/or meat, poultry, alt. ____ fr./veg.
SNACK	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers	____ breast milk or formula ____ bread or crackers

Instructions: Fill in top section completely. Specify the type of food served and fill in the amount in ounces or tbsp. Cereal and formula are iron-fortified unless medical note available.

Delaware CACFP/Delacare Meal Pattern—Children

Meal Component	Ages 1 through 2	Ages 3 through 5	Ages 6 through 12
BREAKFAST – Serve all 3 components (meat/meat alternate is optional).			
1. Milk, fluid	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
2. Fruit or Vegetable	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
3. Grain or Bread			
Bread	1/2 slice	1/2 slice	1 slice
Cereal – dry	1/4 cup	1/3 cup	3/4 cup
Cereal – hot	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
4. Meat or Meat Alternate (optional)			
Lean meat, poultry or fish	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Cheese	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Cottage cheese	2 Tbsp	2 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
Large egg	1/2 egg	1/2 egg	1/2 egg
Peanut butter or other nut/seed butters	1 Tbsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
Nuts or seeds	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Yogurt, plain or flavored	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
LUNCH or SUPPER – Serve all 5 components.			
1. Milk, fluid	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
2. Fruit or Vegetable*	1/4 cup total	1/2 cup total	3/4 cup total
3. Fruit or Vegetable*			
4. Grain or Bread			
Bread	1/2 slice	1/2 slice	1 slice
Grain or Pasta	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
Cereal – dry	1/4 cup	1/3 cup	3/4 cup
Cereal – hot	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
5. Meat or Meat Alternate			
Lean meat, poultry or fish	1 oz	1-1/2 oz	2 oz
Cheese	1 oz	1-1/2 oz	2 oz
Cottage cheese	1/4 cup	3/8 cup	1/2 cup
Large egg	1/2 egg	3/4 egg	1 egg
Cooked dry beans/peas	1/4 cup	3/8 cup	1/2 cup
Peanut butter or other nut/seed butters	2 Tbsp	3 Tbsp	4 Tbsp
Nuts or seeds	1/2 oz	3/4 oz	1 oz
Yogurt, plain or flavored	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
SNACK – Select 2 of the 4 components.			
1. Milk, fluid	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1 cup
2. Fruit or Vegetable	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
3. Grain or Bread			
Bread	1/2 slice	1/2 slice	1 slice
Grain or pasta	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
Cereal – dry	1/4 cup	1/3 cup	3/4 cup
Cereal – hot	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
4. Meat or Meat Alternate			
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Cheese	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Cottage cheese	2 Tbsp	2 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
Large egg	1/2 egg	1/2 egg	1/2 egg
Cooked dry beans/peas	1/8 cup or 2 Tbsp	1/8 cup or 2 Tbsp	1/4 cup or 4 Tbsp
Peanut butter or other nut/seed butters	1 Tbsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
Nuts or seeds	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Yogurt, plain or flavored	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup

*Serve 2 or more separate and identifiable fruit/vegetable dishes

Menu Planning Template—Children

Name of Center/Home: _____ Week Beginning: _____

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
BREAKFAST — Serve milk, grain/bread and fruit/vegetable. Meat/meat alternate is optional.					
1. Milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk
2. Fruit or Vegetable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Grain or Bread	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Meat or Meat Alternate (optional)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
AM SNACK — Select 2 of the 4 components. Items must be from two different food categories.					
1. Milk					
2. Fruit or Vegetable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Grain or Bread	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Meat or Meat Alternate	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Beverage	Water	Water	Water	Water	Water
LUNCH — Serve all 5 components.					
1. Milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk
2. Fruit or Vegetable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Fruit or Vegetable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Grain or Bread	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Meat or Meat Alternate	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
SNACK — Select 2 of the 4 components. Items must be from two different food categories.					
1. Milk					
2. Fruit or Vegetable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Grain or Bread	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Meat or Meat Alternate	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Beverage	Water	Water	Water	Water	Water
SUPPER — Serve all 5 components.					
1. Milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk	1% or fat-free milk
2. Fruit or Vegetable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Fruit or Vegetable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Grain or Bread	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Meat or Meat Alternate	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Milk should be whole for children 12 through 23 months; 1% or fat-free for children 2 years of age and older.

If **milk** is selected as a snack component, no juice is allowed.

Water is a healthy drink for quenching thirst and should be available at all times. Encourage children to drink water at snack, after meals or during play to quench thirst.

Healthy Food Substitutions

Making your menu healthier doesn't always require big changes. It can be easy! Adjusting just one or two ingredients can reduce the fat and sugar content of most meals and snacks. More importantly, many substitutions are so subtle that children won't even notice a difference! Changing the way food is prepared, like switching from frying to baking, is also an effective and simple way to cut calories and fat (see Healthy Cooking Methods on pg.42).

Use the chart below for ideas on healthy substitutions. It organizes foods into categories by CACFP food groups (which may not be how you're used to seeing foods grouped). Please note that many of the foods in the first column are not reimbursable and/or do not meet the DE CACFP/Delacare Rules. While most foods in the second column are reimbursable, some — such as those in the “Condiments” section — are not. You may even find that some healthier options are less expensive than their less healthy counterparts. Either way, switching to healthier ingredients will greatly benefit the health and well-being of the children in your care!

Instead of this...	Try this healthier option!
MILK	
Whole milk or 2% milk	Fat-free or 1% (low-fat) milk [for cooking/baking and children age two and older]
GRAINS & BREADS	
White bread	Whole grain bread, pita, roll, etc.
White rice	Brown rice
Bagel	Whole grain, mini-bagel
Flour tortilla	Corn or whole grain tortilla
Pasta	Whole grain pasta
Croissant	Whole grain roll, English muffin or mini-bagel
Sugary boxed cereal	Whole grain boxed cereal with at least 3 grams of fiber and no more than 6 grams of sugar per serving
Instant sweetened oatmeal	Plain instant oats with fruit and/or nuts
FRUITS & VEGETABLES	
Adding salt to flavor cooked vegetables	A mixture of herbs or spices like garlic powder, onion powder, oregano, basil, lemon pepper, etc.*
Creamy sauces	Lemon juice
Fruit pie	Baked fruit with raisins
Fruit canned in heavy syrup	Fruit canned in own juice; fruit canned in light syrup, drained and rinsed
Dried fruit, sweetened	Dried fruit, unsweetened
	Fresh fruit; fruit canned in own juice; fruit canned in light syrup, drained and rinsed
French fries	Oven baked potato or sweet potato wedges with skin intact

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*Foods that are not reimbursable †Foods that may only be served once every two weeks CN Foods that require a Child Nutrition label

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Instead of this...	Try this healthier option!
MEATS & MEAT ALTERNATES	
Ground beef	Lean and very lean ground beef (90% lean or greater) Lean ground turkey or chicken Textured vegetable protein*
Bacon	Baked turkey, chicken or pork strips Turkey bacon † ^{CN} Spiral ham †
Sausage	Lean ground turkey 95% fat-free sausage † ^{CN} Lean turkey sausage † ^{CN} Soy sausage links or patties*
Chicken nuggets	Baked chicken breast
Fish sticks	Baked fish fillet
Cheese	Reduced-fat, part-skim, low-fat or fat-free cheese
Yogurt	Low-fat or fat-free yogurt
Ice cream	Low-fat or fat-free frozen yogurt Low-fat or fat-free ice cream* Frozen fruit juice products* or sorbet*
Cream cheese	Low-fat or fat-free cream cheese*
CONDIMENTS	
<i>*Please note that most condiments are not reimbursable</i>	
Whipped cream	Chilled, whipped evaporated skim milk* Non-dairy, fat-free or low-fat whipped topping made from polyunsaturated fat*
Mayonnaise	Fat-free or low-fat mayonnaise* Fat-free or low-fat salad dressing, whipped* Fat-free or low-fat yogurt, plain
Salad dressing	Fat-free or low-fat commercial dressings* Homemade dressing made with unsaturated oils, water and vinegar, honey or lemon juice*
Sour cream	Fat-free or low-fat sour cream* Fat-free or low-fat yogurt, plain 1/2 cup fat-free or low-fat cottage cheese blended with 1-1/2 tsp lemon juice
Vegetable dips, commercial	Hummus; low-fat or fat-free plain yogurt
SOUPS	
Cream soups, commercial	Broth-based or skim milk-based soups, commercial Fat-free or low-fat cream soups, commercial
Cream or whole milk in soups or casseroles	Puréed vegetables Evaporated skim milk*
BAKING & COOKING	
Evaporated milk	Evaporated skim milk*
Butter, margarine or oil to grease pan	Cooking spray or a tiny amount of vegetable oil rubbed in with a paper towel*
Butter or oil in baked goods	Natural applesauce for half of butter, oil or shortening
Refined, all-purpose flour	Half whole wheat flour, half all-purpose flour
Sugar	Reduce the amount by half and add spices like cinnamon, cloves, all-spice or nutmeg*
Salt	Reduce the amount by half (unless it's a baked good that requires yeast) Herbs, spices, fruit juices or salt-free seasoning mixes*

*Foods that are not reimbursable †Foods that may only be served once every two weeks ^{CN}Foods that require a Child Nutrition label

Choosing Healthy Options in Each Food Group

Planning a menu can be hard. Trying to find foods that meet DE CACFP/*Delacare* Rules and your budget is a challenging task! Use the suggestions below to choose healthy options from each food group when planning menus:

FOOD COMPONENT	HEALTHY OPTIONS
Grains & Breads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole grain bread (rolls, breadsticks) Whole grain pita Whole grain mini-bagels Whole grain English muffins Whole grain pancake or waffle mix Whole grain or corn tortillas Brown rice Whole grain couscous Oatmeal Low-sugar cereal (less than 6 grams of sugar per serving) Rice cakes Whole grain crackers Graham crackers Baked tortilla or corn chips Pretzels*
Meats & Meat Alternates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean and very lean ground meats (80-95% lean) Lean and very lean ground chicken or turkey (80-95% lean) Lean cuts of beef, ham, lamb, pork or veal Boneless, skinless chicken and turkey Fish (e.g., salmon, trout, flounder, tilapia, tuna or cod) Canned tuna packed in water Real cheeses (e.g., cheddar, provolone, parmesan, Gouda, mozzarella, Swiss or ricotta) Low-fat real cheeses (e.g., cheddar, provolone, parmesan, Gouda, mozzarella, Swiss or ricotta) Cottage cheese (1% low-fat or fat-free) Yogurt (low-fat or fat-free, plain or flavored) Nuts and seeds* Beans Hummus Eggs
Fruits & Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh – see the “Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables List” for fresh suggestions Canned fruit in 100% juice or if in syrup, drained and rinsed Canned vegetables without added salt or fat Frozen fruits and vegetables without added salt, sugar or fat Unsweetened or no sugar added applesauce Salsa
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1% (low-fat) } for children age two and older Fat-free }

*Choking hazard for children under four years of age

Seasonal Fruits & Vegetables

Fresh fruits and vegetables are a delicious, healthy part of meals and snacks. While most produce is available year-round, it can be expensive when it is not purchased in season. Fruits and vegetables also taste better when purchased during their natural growing season. The chart below shows which fruits and vegetables grow best in the fall, winter, spring and summer. When preparing food at your center or home, keep this list in mind and use seasonally-appropriate ingredients to save money. If a recipe calls for a vegetable that is not in season, replace it with one from this chart that is.

FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER
September, October, November	December, January, February	March, April, May	June, July, August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apples Broccoli Brussels Sprouts Cabbage Chinese Cabbage Cauliflower Celery Root Chicory Cranberries Cucumbers Dates Eggplant Fennel Grapes Greens Lettuce: Head or Iceberg Leaf Lettuce Mushrooms Nuts Okra Mandarin Oranges Pears Chili Peppers Sweet Peppers Persimmons Pomegranates Pumpkin Quince Shallots Spinach Winter Squash Star Fruit Sweet Potatoes Turnips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avocados Broccoli Brussels Sprouts Cabbage Chinese Cabbage Cauliflower Celery Root Chicory Dates Fennel Grapefruit Greens Lemons Wild Mushrooms Mandarin Oranges Sweet Oranges Pears Spinach Sweet Potatoes Tangerines Turnips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asparagus Avocados Basil Beans Beets Berries Broccoli Cabbage Chinese Cabbage Cucumbers Lettuce: Head or Iceberg Mangos Okra Sweet Oranges Papayas Peas Chili Peppers Sweet Peppers Radishes Rhubarb Shallots Spinach Summer Squash Turnips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apricots Basil Beans Beets Blackberries Blueberries Boysenberries Carrots Cherries Collards Corn Cucumbers Dates Figs Grapes Green Beans Limes Mangos Melons Nectarines Okra Peaches Pears Chili Peppers Sweet Peppers Plums Raspberries Summer Squash Tomatoes Watermelon

Source: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Accessed August 10, 2010 <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov>

Tips for Transitioning Kids to Healthier Foods

Many young children are picky eaters and prefer to eat simple, familiar foods. However, childhood is an important time that shapes food preferences and lifelong health habits. As a child care provider or staff, you have the unique opportunity to introduce children to a variety of nutritious foods to make sure they grow up strong and healthy. While you may encounter small challenges along the way, the tips below for transitioning kids to healthier foods are sure to make the task less daunting.

- Don't tell them it's different! Sometimes kids won't even notice.
- Transition foods after a summer, winter or spring break. Children are less likely to notice a difference if they've been away for a while.
- Transition to new foods or ingredients slowly and gradually. Instead of going directly from whole milk to fat-free, first serve 2% for a few weeks, then 1% (low-fat), before finally arriving at fat-free milk. You can also try mixing whole and fat-free and gradually reducing the amount of whole milk as kids adjust to the taste.
- Be sure to introduce only one new food at a time and allow kids to adjust to the change.
- Encourage kids to taste food every time it's served, but let them know that they don't have to eat a whole serving if they don't like it. They can just "try it."
- Introduce new foods in fun and creative ways. For example, freeze small batches of mixed chopped fruit in small cups or ice cube trays, add a stick, and voilà – a delicious frozen treat that kids are sure to enjoy!
- Involve children in preparing meals and snacks created from new foods they are learning about. Children are more likely to try and enjoy food that they have helped prepare.
- Teach children where the food they're eating comes from. This may be comforting for picky eaters and allows them to learn about how food is made or grown. Talk about the food with children during meal time, and encourage them to share how they like it.
- Always provide plenty of praise and encouragement when kids try new foods to reinforce this positive behavior. Praising children at the table who are trying the new food may encourage the more hesitant children as well.
- "Sneak in" healthier ingredients. For example, cauliflower can go undetected when mashed and mixed in with mashed potatoes. As kids adjust to the taste, you can serve cauliflower on its own.

Healthy Cooking Methods¹

Preparation and cooking methods make a big difference in determining the nutritional value of a recipe. Use the following easy cooking methods to make everyday dishes healthier.

- 1. Baking** – Baking can be used for almost any type of food including meat, fruits and vegetables, mixed dishes (i.e. casseroles) and baked goods such as bread or pies. Place the food in a dish, either covered or uncovered, and allow the hot air from the oven to cook it.
- 2. Braising** – Cooking slowly in a covered container with a small amount of liquid or water. The cooking liquid may be used for a sauce.²
- 3. Broiling** – Cooking meats, poultry, seafood or vegetables by placing on a broiler rack in oven below the heat, allowing fat to drip away into a container below.
- 4. Grilling** – Cooking foods over direct heat on a grill, griddle or pan. Fat can be removed as it accumulates.
- 5. Microwaving** – Microwaving can be a fast and easy way to cook food if it is done correctly. Cover the food with a lid or plastic wrap. Loosen the lid or wrap so that steam can escape. Stir or rotate the food midway through cook time so that it is evenly cooked.³
- 6. Poaching** – Cooking delicate foods like eggs or fish either partially or completely in liquid (such as water or broth) at temperature between 140° - 180°F.
- 7. Roasting** – Cooking meat, poultry and seafood larger than single portions by dry heat, uncovered in an oven. It is a great way to use marinades, herbs and spices.
- 8. Sautéing** – Sautéing is a good method for vegetables that are tender and high in moisture such as mushrooms, tomatoes and zucchini. The ingredients are cooked in a small amount of oil or margarine at a very high heat until tender.
- 9. Steaming** – A great, healthy way to cook vegetables that produces little to no loss in flavor or moisture. Cut into small, even-size pieces. Fill a pot or pan with 1-2 inches of water or broth, set to medium-high heat, and wait until liquid begins to produce steam. Add the vegetables, cover and let the steam surround and cook the vegetables. Generally, vegetables are done steaming when they become slightly soft (yet still crunchy) and vibrant in color. To enhance taste, seasoning (e.g., herbs, chicken or vegetable stock) can be added to the water.
- 10. Stir frying** – Cooking quickly over very high heat in a wok or skillet. Cut all ingredients the same size so that they cook evenly. With a small amount of vegetable or canola oil, keep the food in constant motion by stirring and tossing. Great for large or small batches of meat, seafood and/or vegetable (fresh, frozen or pre-cooked) combinations.

1. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service. (June 2009). *USDA Recipes for Child Care*.

2. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service. Accessed August 12, 2010. *Cooking A World of New Tastes*. www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/worldtastes04Seg3.pdf.

3. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Accessed August 12, 2010. *Cooking Safely in the Microwave Oven*. Retrieved from www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Cooking_Safely_in_the_Microwave.index.asp.

Product Dates: What Do They Mean?

Product dates are guides to determine a product's freshness. There are a variety of terms used to define when a food loses quality. It is important to understand the differences in these terms to ensure the health and safety of the children in your care.

“Sell By”

A product with a “sell-by” date must be sold or taken off the shelf by the date on the package. A product is still safe to use after this date, but be sure to keep in the refrigerator or freezer until ready to use. If a product has a “sell-by” date, cook or freeze within the following timeframes:

Fresh Product	Cook or Freeze Within...of “Sell-By” Date	
Poultry	1 to 2 days	
Beef, Veal, Pork and Lamb	3 to 5 days	
Ground Beef, Ground Poultry	1 to 2 days	
Eggs	3 to 5 weeks	
Processed Product	If Unopened	After Opening
Pre- Cooked Packaged Poultry [†]	3 to 4 days	3 to 4 days
Lunch Meat [†]	2 weeks	3 to 5 days
Bacon [†]	2 weeks	7 days
Hot Dogs [†]	2 weeks	7 days
Cooked Sausage [†]	3 to 4 days	3 to 4 days
Ham, fully cooked	7 days	Slices, 3 days; Whole, 7 days
Ham, canned, labeled “keep refrigerated” [†]	9 months	3 to 4 days

[†]These foods may only be served once every two-week cycle

“Best Before,” “Best if Used By” and “Best By”

A product with one of these terms has guaranteed quality and freshness until the printed date. It does not need to be purchased by that date and is not necessarily unsafe if the date has passed.

“Use By”

A “use-by” date tells you when a product loses its quality and freshness, and may be unsafe to eat. If a product is past its “use-by” date, throw it away to avoid any risk of illness.

Canned Foods

Do not use cans that have rusted, swollen or are severely dented! If a can is not damaged, it has a long shelf-life. High-acid foods such as tomatoes, pineapple and grapefruit can be stored for 12 -18 months. Low-acid foods such as canned meats, poultry, fish and vegetables can generally be stored from 2 - 5 years.

These guidelines are recommendations only. Use your judgment. If a product has been tampered with, or changed in color, texture or smell, discard it.

Food Product Dating. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/food_product_dating/index.asp. Accessed August 13, 2010.

Safe Food Storage

Storing food correctly is important to ensure optimal taste and nutritional quality and avoid contamination or spoilage. When storing food, keep in mind the “use-by,” “sell-by” and “best-by” dates (discussed previously in this section). Use this table as a guide for the length of time breads, dairy products, meats, fruits and vegetables can be stored in the refrigerator or freezer. Stay organized by labeling food items with the date they go into storage, whether on the pantry shelf, in the refrigerator or the freezer. By sticking to these guidelines, you can be sure that the food you serve is both safe and delicious.

Product	Refrigerator (35-40° F)	Freezer (0° F)	Comments
BREADS, FLOURS			
Breads, baked	2 - 3 weeks	2 - 3 months	Store in refrigerator to prevent mold growth.
Flour, white or whole wheat	6 - 8 months	12 months	Keep in airtight container.
DAIRY PRODUCTS			
Cheese: cottage, ricotta, cream cheese	5 - 7 days 2 weeks	1 month 1 month	Freezing changes texture of soft cheeses. Becomes crumbly when frozen.
Natural, aged cheeses (cheddar, Swiss, mozzarella, etc.)	2 - 3 months	6 - 8 months	Natural cheeses can be frozen. Defrost in refrigerator; cheese will be less likely to crumble. Use soon after thawing.
Margarine	3 months	12 months	Overwrap in plastic freezer bag for frozen storage.
Milk, opened	3 - 5 days	1 - 3 months	Freezing effects milk's flavor and appearance. Best used for cooking after frozen.
Yogurt	1 month	NR	Yogurt will separate if frozen.
EGGS			
Eggs, fresh yolks or whites	4 days	12 months	To freeze, break eggs out of shell; stir until yolk is well blended with white or other yolks.
Eggs, in shell, fresh	3 weeks	NR	
FRUITS			
Apples	1 - 3 weeks	8 - 12 months*	Peel, dip in lemon juice, tray freeze; store in freezer bag.
Apricots, cranberries	1 week	8 - 12 months*	
Avocados	3 - 5 days	4 - 6 months*	
Bananas	1 - 2 days, unpeeled	4 - 6 months	
Berries, cherries	1 - 2 days	8 - 12 months*	
Grapes, peaches, pears, plums	3 - 5 days	8 - 12 months*	

NR = Not recommended

*Freeze all fruits in moisture- and vapor-proof containers.

P. Kendall, Colorado State University Extension. February, 2007. <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09310.pdf>. Accessed July 6, 2010.

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Product	Refrigerator (35-40° F)	Freezer (0° F)	Comments
FRUITS			
Canned fruits, opened	3 - 5 days	1 - 2 months	Texture will be softer after freezing. Refrigerate in glass or plastic to avoid metallic taste.
Citrus fruits	3 weeks	4 - 6 months*	Wrap cut surfaces to prevent loss of vitamin C.
Dried fruit	3 - 5 days	4 - 6 months	
Juices: canned, bottled, frozen	1 week	12 months	Transfer canned juice to glass or plastic container after opening.
Melons	1 week	8 - 12 months*	Wrap cut surfaces to prevent vitamin C loss, control odors.
MEATS & POULTRY			
Ground beef, pork, turkey, lamb	1 - 2 days	3 - 4 months	
Sausage: pork, beef, turkey	1 - 2 days	1 - 2 months	
Chicken and turkey, whole	1 - 2 days	12 months	
Chicken and turkey, pieces	1 - 2 days	9 months 6 months	
Bacon	5 - 7 days	1 month	Keep packaged meats in original package. For best quality, use within one week of "sell-by" date.
Deli meats	3 - 5 days	1 - 2 months	Storage time after vacuum-sealed package is opened. Unopened package may be kept two weeks or according to date on package.
VEGETABLES			
Asparagus	2 - 3 days	8 - 12 months†	
Beans, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers	1 week	8 - 12 months†	
Corn, in husk; corn without husk	1 - 2 days 1 - 2 days	8 - 12 months† NR	
Lettuce, salad greens	1 week	NR	Store in bag or lettuce keeper.
Mushrooms	1 - 2 days	8 - 12 months†	Do not wash before storage.
Onions	3 - 5 days	NR	
Tomatoes: Open, canned fresh, ripe	1 - 4 days 5 - 6 days	8 - 12 months†	

NR = Not recommended

*Freeze all fruits in moisture- and vapor proof containers.

†Blanch fresh vegetables and freeze in moisture- and vapor-proof materials.

P. Kendall, Colorado State University Extension. February, 2007. <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09310.pdf>. Accessed July 6, 2010.

Freezing & Reheating

Making extra food to freeze for later use is a great way to save time. It is important to know the best ways to freeze and reheat foods in order to avoid loss of flavor, spoiling and bacteria growth. Use the following tips to save time and decrease waste.

Freezing Tips:

- Use fresh ingredients.
- Line pans with freezer-safe wrap. Slightly undercook foods (about three-quarters of the total time required).
- Cool dishes before freezing. Once food stops steaming, place it in the refrigerator or freezer immediately. To avoid bacteria growth, food should not be left out for longer than two hours.
- Use wraps (foil or plastic) and containers (glass or ceramic) labeled for freezing.
- Leave room for food to expand (about 1" to the top of container).
- Put foods in the coldest part of the freezer first.
- Label foods with date, name of food and last date to be used. Use the "Safe Food Storage" sheet in this section for guidance.
- Rotate! Rule of thumb: "first in, first out." Be sure to move foods so that those put in the freezer first are used first.

Freeze Well

- Cooked chicken or turkey
- Stews (except those with potatoes and cream broths)
- Cooked dry beans
- Combination dishes (cover meats in sauces)
- Bread

Do NOT Freeze Well

- Cooked eggs
- Potatoes
- Salad greens, raw tomatoes, apples and grapes
- Mayonnaise
- Milk-based sauces and gravies
- Cooked plain pasta or rice

Reheating Tips:

• Conventional Oven

- Defrost food in the refrigerator prior to reheating. Defrosting should occur 24 hours to 3 days in advance. Once food is defrosted it should stay in the refrigerator no more than 5 days.
- Preheat oven to temperature on recipe.
- When cooking a defrosted food, cook for one-third to one-half more time than time listed on recipe.
- Bake to at least 165°F.

• Microwave Oven

- Remove wrapping and place food in microwave-safe dish.
- Cover with waxed paper or glass lid.
- Use defrost setting (10-15 minutes per pound or 4 servings).
- Microwave times vary depending on settings. Check your manual to determine best cook times for foods. Start with a low time (3-5 minutes depending on size), rotate food and cook again for the same time. Cook until 165°F throughout.