



Nutrition Edition

Your Guide to Child Health and Nutrition



Nutrition Edition
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CACFPRoundtable.org

Happy Provider Appreciation Day!

MAY 6 IS NATIONAL PROVIDER APPRECIATION DAY and it gives everyone a chance to show support and appreciation for the caregivers of the world. This year take some time to show gratitude for the huge contributions made to society by Child Care



Professionals. The hardships faced by child care workers, all of whom are essential workers, was made more pronounced by the pandemic. They have been faced with making difficult decisions about whether to close their doors or remain open to provide care for essential workers and others. They have been coping with financial

uncertainty, keeping informed on rapidly changing protocols, navigating financial relief programs and much more. Despite the increase in challenges, child care providers have been unwavering in their dedicated care of children so that parents can work. They are our unsung heroes!

Child care providers have been loving and nurturing children in their care forever, but in the U.S. the demand for this service increased sharply during World War II when many women went to work to support the war effort. The need for child care has continued to grow year after year with approximately 8.4 million children under the age of five requiring child care in 2020.

Provider Appreciation Day began in 1996 by a group of child care workers in New Jersey, who took the initiative to celebrate this holiday for child care providers the Friday before Mother's Day. In 2001 the day began to be recognized globally when an article was published on the internet. In the year 2008, the official website for the recognition of the day was launched.

Cultural Cuisines

> Mexico <



Origins & Roles of Food

Mexican food practices are rooted in Mesoamerican cuisine. The Maya civilization domesticated maize and developed maize nixtamalization, allowing the grain to be processed more easily and increasing its flavor and nutritional value. Another staple was beans, which was usually accompanied with corn. The Spanish Conquest introduced many new foods such as meat from domesticated animals, dairy products, sugar and olive oil.

Food Customs

Mexican cuisine is an essential aspect of social and cultural traditions in Mexico. Home cooking, especially in rural areas, is an important part of Mexican culture. In traditional households, it is a woman's responsibility to cook and a woman's sazón, ability to cook, is considered one of her greatest assets. Dedicating time to cooking delicious foods for friends and family is an essential way to foster strong relationships.

Staple Foods

Corn (maize), beans, squash, cilantro, avocados, tomatoes, tomatillos, cacao, vanilla, agave, sweet potato, cactus and chili peppers are staple foods.

Dining Etiquette

Meals are eaten together at the table, everyone begins eating once the host says, "Buen Provecho". The most honored person sits at the head of the table. Mexicans use the same knife and fork for the entire meal.

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- Fuel & Fitness

Ideas to Celebrate Provider Appreciation Day

TO HONOR PROVIDERS, FAMILIES CAN:

Send a Handwritten Note

It may seem overly simple, but a handwritten note might be the perfect gift for National Provider Appreciation Day. Why? Because they're so rare these days. Take the time to write to your child's care provider and tell them how much you appreciate the love and commitment they show your children. It will mean a lot to them.



Give a Group Gift

Looking to afford something substantial? Go in on a group gift with the other families your child is in care with. Gift cards to places like a local restaurant or store are usually safe bets. But you can also do a little detective work and discover a more specific gift your provider will love.

Team Up with Your Child

Why not get your child involved, too? Ask them to make their provider a special art project. You can even pair this idea with one of the others (like a handwritten note or a gift card) to make it extra special.

Offer Paid Time Off

Let's be honest, caring for kids is exhausting. Your child's provider has definitely earned some paid time off, don't you think? Connect with the other parents at your child care and arrange to pick up your kids at lunch time on Friday to give your provider a jump on the weekend.

Buy Something for the Facility

Most child care providers spend a lot of money on stuff for their child care. Help them out by purchasing some of these things for them. For example, you could buy toys for the play area, art supplies or balls for outside play. If you don't know what your provider needs, ask them! That way you can give them a gift you know they'll be able to use.

PROVIDERS, GIVE YOURSELF THE GIFT OF SELF-CARE:

Something for You

Self care is not selfish, make this a priority and find something that you enjoy that is just for you. Whether it is for 15 minutes or stretches into the weekend, be sure you give yourself the gift of something just for you.

Maintain Your Physical Health

Just as you promote physical health for the children in care, remember this for yourself. Schedule regular doctor appointments, eat nutritious meals and get some physical activity. Try a walk around the block after the last child is picked up for the day or perhaps you can fit 20 minutes of yoga into your morning routine.

Establish Good Routines and Boundaries

Stay organized with both your personal and work life. Be on top of small tasks using lists if needed. Falling behind in either can cause stress.

Take Time Off

What day of the week can you disconnect from your computer and email and have just for you and your family? Maybe this means limiting access to your phone as well. Do you take at least 2 weeks of vacation each year? This will give you a chance to revive and be a better caregiver to the children.

REWARD YOURSELF

Being a caregiver is one of the most selfless and compassionate jobs, but it can be extremely challenging. Give yourself a pat on the back and a treat, whether it's a fun trip or a tasty dessert; occasionally stop and reward yourself for all your hard work.

We thank you!

Sources:

Brightstarcare.com, Nationaltoday.com, info.childcareaware.org

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Supporting Mental Health in Young Children

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS in young children can be difficult to identify. They often present themselves as behavioral challenges. When we consider that behavior is a form of communication, we need to wonder what a child is trying to tell us when they present behavior that is less than ideal.

Children's challenging behaviors can often trigger adults (caregivers) as well, impacting your own mental health. It's important to identify your own triggers and ways to support your needs, so that you can try to remain present and calm for a child with challenging behaviors or big feelings. Lastly, strong relationships and communication with families are critical to identifying and supporting children with mental health, behavioral and developmental needs.

Mental health challenges in young children can present themselves as delays in social, emotional, language, physical, behavior and regulation development. What we look for is how much and how often it impacts a child's ability to function at home, school and other social settings.

Early identification is important so that children can get the help they need. Some red flags that may indicate the need for additional support or a referral may include, but are not limited to:

- Difficulty relating and connecting with peers and adults
- Lacks empathy
- Difficulty with self-regulation and impulse control
- Unable to identify and respond appropriately to other peoples' facial and body expressions
- Unable to regulate feelings and emotions
- Overly sensitive to environmental stimulation
- Lack of language to communicate wants, needs and feelings
- Frequent screaming, biting, hitting, pushing or throwing objects
- Lack of imaginative or creative play
- Difficulty with transitions
- Eating or sleeping difficulties

Many of these red flags also overlap with red flags for other developmental delays, so please keep this in mind

when noting a child's behaviors. It is best to seek out the support of a specialist if a child displays several of these red flags.

What can YOU do to support children who display any of these red flags? See below for some helpful strategies to support ALL children in your care:

- It's all about Relationships – Respond vs. React:
 - Be the CALM – when a child is in a heightened state, first help them calm before moving forward (e.g., deep breathing, soft voice, reduce/eliminate stimulation, offer comfort items, drink of water, offer movement opportunities, music).
 - Label and validate feelings – this calms the brain and the body.
 - Empower them by giving them choices (limit to 2–3 choices) on how to calm or what to do next.
- Intentional Teaching – be PRESENT, in the moment without judgment:
 - Teach, model and facilitate skills: social skills, problem solving, self-regulation, empathy.
 - Use visuals!!! (e.g., daily schedule, First/Then Visuals, feelings visuals, rules, transitions) to set expectations and relieve anxious feelings.
 - Create a dedicated quiet space to express and calm strong feelings (e.g., breathing, counting, singing, yoga, family pictures, scented pillow, books, fidgets, etc.)
- Use story time/books for teachable moments.
- Provide variety of activities that stimulates all senses (we have 8 sensory systems).

Observe and connect with children by discovering their strengths and weaknesses. Get input from families about their values and culture. It only takes one kind person to make a difference in a child's life! Always remember why you chose this field and enjoy every moment with the little ones.

If children are SAFE, SEEN, SOOTHED and SECURE.... learning follows!

— *Megan Miccio and Joanne Funtila*
CocoKids Inclusion Specialists

Taco Stuffed Zucchini Boats

Zucchini	4 medium	OPTIONAL TOPPINGS:
Ground beef	1 pound	Sour cream
Taco seasoning	2 Tbsp	Tomatoes, diced
Monterey Jack cheese,		Green onions, sliced
grated	2/3 cup	Avocado, diced
		Cilantro, chopped
		Fresh lime, cut in wedges ... 1

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. In a large skillet cook ground beef on medium heat. Use your spatula to break up the beef. Add the spices, stir to combine and cook for 7 to 10 minutes or until browned.
2. While the ground beef is cooking, slice the zucchini in half lengthwise and use a spoon to scoop out the seeds.
3. Place the zucchini on a baking sheet and fill with the ground beef. Sprinkle with cheese and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until zucchini is slightly softened.
4. Serve stuffed zucchini with optional toppings.

Yield: 8 servings

Meets requirement for vegetable and meat/meat alternate

— *Downshiftology.com*

Mother's Day Pancake Skewers

MINI SIZE PANCAKES:	Milk	1 cup
All-purpose, enriched	Butter, melted	1 Tbsp
flour	Oil	1 Tbsp
Whole wheat flour	Strawberries,	
Baking powder	sliced into rounds	8 large
Salt	Banana, sliced	2
Eggs	Peanut butter, nut or seed	
	spread	as needed

1. Whisk together flours, baking powder and salt. In a separate bowl whisk together eggs, milk and butter. Pour wet ingredients into dry ingredients and mix with a rubber spatula. Do not overmix.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Carefully pour small circles of batter into the pan using 1–2 Tbsp of batter for each mini pancake. Flip over when bubbles appear and cook until light brown. Recipe will make approximately 16 mini-pancakes.
3. To assemble skewers spread the nut butter onto each pancake and skewer alternating with strawberry and banana slices, using 4 of each.

Yield: 4 servings

Meets requirement for whole grain-rich and fruit



Fuel & Fitness

JUST QUIT THE CLEAN PLATE CLUB!

A lot of parents grew up under the clean plate rule, but it did little to foster a healthy relationship with food and it does not help children listen to their bodies when they feel full. When children listen and respond to feelings of fullness and hunger, they are less likely to overeat.

Try this instead:

- Serve appropriate child sized portions on child sized plates.
- Allow children to serve themselves “family style” the portions they are hungry for.
- Have circle time activities/games around new and interesting foods.

There are subtle differences between encouraging children to try to new foods and pressuring them to eat the amount you decided they should have. Be respectful of a child’s preferences and choosiness, without catering to them. Ultimately, children need to be in charge of how much they eat; you are still the gatekeeper in determining what healthy foods will be served as well as when and where.

This Nutrition Edition is brought to you by your local Food Program:



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Food Q. Why was the cracker so happy to see his mom on Mother's Day?
Funny A. Because he had been a wafer so long!