Family Style Meals: 101
Nutrition Education in the Classroom
Agenda

• Definition and benefits of family style meals
• Specific roles in family style meal service
• Strategies to support family style meals
• Nutrition Education and family style meals
Endorsed
Family Style Meals are important!

- By two years of age, children assume the eating practices of their family.
- Teachers are important partners for encouraging healthy habits.
Components of family style meal service

- **Child involvement**
  - Washing and setting the table
  - Bringing food to the table
  - Pass or share food
  - Clean up

- **Adult modeling**
  - at least one adult sitting and eating the *same foods* with the children
  - Table manners, trying new foods, food safety
  - Children choose whether to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat.
  - Child sized serving bowls, plates, and utensils
  - Small groups of 5-7
Family style meals and infants

Infants younger than 6 months should be:

- Fed only breast milk or formula
- Held while being fed
- Fed on demand

Never prop a bottle or give bottles to children in cribs or allow them to walk around with bottles.
Family style meals and infants

✓ One on one personal interaction
✓ Feeding times should be safe and relaxed
✓ Offer foods gradually
✓ Allow babies to feed themselves and explore new textures and colors.
Family Style Meals with toddlers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=EIpanmnPhAg
Benefits for children

- Builds independence
- Provides structure
- Enhances development of:
  - Motor skills
  - Language skills
  - Social skills
- Provides opportunities for child-teacher interaction
- Self-esteem
- Food is not used as a reward or punishment
Benefits for Teachers

• Creates a positive atmosphere for the teacher to eat
• Opportunities to talk with the children
• Reinforce other lessons such as taking turns
• Decreases food waste
• Improves mealtime behavior
Why Family Style Meals?
Opportunities to build healthy habits

Children who are overweight or obese as preschoolers are 5 times as likely as normal-weight children to be overweight or obese as adults.

www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns
Why Family Style Meals?
Opportunities to build healthy habits

- Introduces and encourages children to new foods
- Encourages teachers to model healthy eating
- Provides opportunities for nutrition education

- Teaching serving sizes
- Offers variety of healthy foods
- Teaches food safety

You may need to introduce a food 10-15 times before a child will accept it!
Role of the teacher

- Create a positive eating environment
- Encourage healthy eating
- Model healthy eating and table manners
- Follow the child’s lead in making feeding choices
- Address learning goals
Role of the teacher: Create a positive eating environment

- Avoid the “clean your plate” mentality
- Encourages children to listen to their own hunger and satiety cues
- Can create positive affects on child’s food preference
Role of the teacher: Encourage healthy eating

- To introduce new foods, teachers use strategies* such as:
  - Make food
  - Keep offering new foods
  - Be a good role model by eating new foods with children
  - Let children choose new foods
  - Help children learn about new foods
  - Try offering one new food at a time
  - Avoid forcing children to try new foods
Role of the child

Children can:

• Choose what foods will be eaten from those offered
• Decide how much to eat
• Request smaller portions or decline any food item
• Decide later in the meal to try foods they have declined earlier
• Request second helpings after all children have had their first serving
Strategies to support family style meals

- Practice!
- Establish rules and discuss them with the children before mealtime
- Be prepared for spills
- Let the children help.
- Keep extra serving utensils nearby
- Slowly build their skills
- Get parents involved
- Transitions
Strategies to support family style meals

- Appropriate serving utensils
- Use pictures to build language skills
- Sit younger children near adults to facilitate serving
- Allow children to take the lead
- Allow enough time
  - Schedule lunch and breakfast for at least 45 minutes.
  - Schedule snacks for at least 30 minutes
Nutrition education and family style meals

**During mealtime**
- Reinforce other activities
  - Sharing
  - Colors, shapes
  - Other activities i.e. a nutrition related book your group is reading
- Practice conversation and social skills
- Ask questions

**Other opportunities**
- Practice cooking and meals skills
- Introduce food with fun activities
- Introduce food with books
- Teach children how to plant a garden
- Allow children to help cook
A simple framework to remember healthy habits

- 5 or more fruits & vegetables
- 2 hours or less recreational screen time*
- 1 hour or more of physical activity
- 0 sugary drinks, more water & low fat milk

*Young TK/Kinder age or under the age of 2.
5, 2, 1, 0 Messages are Consistent with:
Acknowledgement

Content for this Family Style Meals 101 Slide set was adapted from the American Academy of Pediatric Institute for Healthy Childhood Weight