

The Basic Guide to Family Style Dining - Part 1

“The children drop the food on the floor, spill the milk on the table, or don’t eat enough” are all common reasons why some child care providers choose not to serve meals family style. However, family style dining has many advantages and can be made very easy for both the provider and the children. This month and next month, Mealttime Memo will provide you with a step-by-step guide for implementing family style dining.



What is family style dining?

In family style dining, all food is placed on the table in child size serving bowls, with child size serving utensils. Children are encouraged to serve themselves, with help from their teacher if needed. Milk can be served in small pitchers or cartons.

The Value of Family Style Dining for Young Children

Family style dining can help children learn and practice many different skills. They can learn social skills, such as sharing, taking turns, and saying please and thank you.

Family style dining also gives children the opportunity to develop their gross and fine motor skills by performing different tasks, such as helping to set the table, pouring their own milk, and learning how to serve themselves without touching the food in the serving bowls.

Family style dining allows children to feel in control of their eating. They know that they can decide what to eat and how much to serve themselves. Children may take a small serving and take additional food later in the meal. Children know that they can pass on certain foods, but change their minds later in the meal. In addition, there may be less food wasted when children serve themselves.

Indirectly, family style dining encourages children to try new foods. While children may need to be offered a new food 10-15 times before they will try it, they often follow what they see others doing. They are more likely to try new foods if other children or the adult sitting with them are eating those foods.

The Value of Family Style Dining for Child Care Providers

With family style dining, child care providers are able to act as role models during mealtime. They can sit and eat with the children and demonstrate healthy eating habits and appropriate table manners. The adults can help children develop positive attitudes about mealtime and the foods being served. By sitting with the children throughout the meal, the adults can minimize distractions and redirect inappropriate behavior.



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When food for the meal is placed on the table at the beginning of the meal, teachers do not have to act as a server unless more food is needed for second servings. They can have a more relaxed meal.

Mealtime can be used as an opportunity to talk positively with the children about nutrition and about the food that they are eating. Children should be encouraged to describe the taste (sweet, salty), texture (crunchy, smooth), appearance, and health benefits of the food. Meals served in family style dining are satisfying and there is enough food for everyone, including teachers and staff. Family style dining allows everyone to enjoy the same nutritious meal and reduces the amount of food waste.

Points to Success

Family style dining can be very successful with careful planning. Next month's memo will feature step-by-step directions on implementing family style dining. In the meantime, here are a couple of points to remember when beginning to offer meals family style.

- Point 1:** Parent education is key! Educate parents about the new way of serving meals. Send a letter home or talk about it during a parent meeting. Explain to parents how family style dining works and the benefits of serving meals this way. Also, encourage them to try it at home.
- Point 2:** Talk with children! Talk with the children about family style dining before you start implementing it so that they will be prepared. You may wish to have a pretend meal set up in the dramatic play area and cups in the sand and water play area. This will assist children in learning how to pour liquids and serve themselves.
- Point 3:** Prepare yourself! Purchase the appropriate child size serving and eating utensils. Expect spills because children are learning and accidents will happen. It is important to develop a positive attitude about family style dining and remember children are learning new skills.

For more information about family style dining or questions, please contact the Help Desk at nfsmi@olemiss.edu or 1800-321-3054.

Nutrition Fact of the Month

Not all dietary fats are created equal! Eating dietary fat is good for you because it transports vitamins and protects organs in the body. However, there are good, bad, and really bad fats.

- Good Fats are unsaturated (polyunsaturated or monounsaturated) fats because they promote a healthy heart, balanced blood cholesterol, and overall wellness. Unsaturated fats are generally made from nuts, fish, or vegetable oils. You can find unsaturated fat in olive oil, canola oil, safflower oil, and sesame and sunflower seeds.
- Bad Fats are saturated fats because they raise blood cholesterol and increase the chance of heart disease and other diseases. Saturated fats are mostly made from animal foods. You can find saturated fat in whole milk, cheese, ice cream, and lard.
- Really Bad Fats are trans fats because they increase your risk of heart disease, stroke, and other disease. Trans fat is made by adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oil. This process is used to increase the shelf life of foods, such as in candy bars, cookies, pizza dough, and packaged snack foods.



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Nutrition Tip of the Month

Use placemats during meal times. Placemats are great tools for mealtimes because they are fun and appealing, and they make cleanup super easy. As an art activity, gather butcher paper and art supplies for each child to decorate their own placemat. Model for the children as you create a placemat. Once the placemats are completed, laminate them for long-term use during mealtime.



Fruit of the Month

It is Fruit Time! The fruit of the month is the raspberry. Raspberries were first found in Europe and later arrived in the United States in 1771. There are over 200 varieties of raspberries in the world. In the U.S., 90% of raspberries are grown in Oregon, California, and Washington and are harvested through the end of the summer. Raspberries can be black, red, purple, or gold. Raspberries are easily perishable. This is why it is

important to only rinse them just before eating. A fun way to introduce raspberries to children is by inviting a librarian to read books about raspberries.



CACFP Rock Star of the Month

The CACFP Rock Star of the Month is Ms. Rebecca Chlubicki. She is a Family Child Care Provider from Wyoming, PA. Ms. Chlubicki has made an eco-friendly transition, introducing organic and natural foods during meal times. She finds pleasure in planning and creating healthy meals with fresh foods that children love, such as eggplant parmesan and edamame. In addition to planning eco-friendly, healthy, and appealing meals, Ms. Chlubicki includes Zumba and Yoga as physical activities on a regular basis. To ensure that the children in her care are receiving the best education and care, she regularly applies for grants and training to stay current on best practices.

Congratulations, Ms. Chlubicki. You are truly a CACFP Rock Star!

It's News Time

The CACFP Sponsor's Association

The CACFP Sponsor's Association will host their 27th Annual Conference on September 15-17, 2013, in Minneapolis, MN at the Hyatt Regency. This year's theme is "Change. Variety. Diversity." The keynote speakers are Cindy Long, Tom Thorfinnson, Tom Copeland, and Paul Cook. In addition, NFSMI will have sessions on online courses, the basic guide to nutrition, and the latest free education and training resources. Register today at <http://www.cacfp.org/ListProduct.asp?bSub=T&idCategory=3>

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