When it comes to feeding children and encouraging healthy eating, you may wonder how to avoid fights over food.

Avoid Food Fights
Learning the Roles to Feed Children

Children’s eating habits are not developed in a day. Parents and caregivers play an important role in teaching children about food. Starting at a young age, food experiences, whether good or bad, can help determine a child’s eating habits later in life. Caregivers can influence children’s eating habits through the example they set, the types of foods they buy, and what they serve for meals and snacks. You can model healthy eating habits by doing the following:

- Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups
- Be willing to try new foods
- Limit buying foods that are not healthy choices
- Make meal time enjoyable by having a positive attitude
- Eat with the children and do not skip meals
- Take moderate portion sizes
- Drink water and milk instead of soda
- Show productive ways for dealing with stress that do not include food; Reward with attention or small prizes (not food)

Division of Responsibility
Part of avoiding fights over food is knowing what your job is when it comes to feeding and what the child’s job is in eating. The table below shows the different responsibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver Responsibility</th>
<th>Child’s Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decide what to serve</td>
<td>Choose how much to eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide when to eat</td>
<td>Choose whether to eat or just sit at the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide where to eat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What to Expect from Children

- Trust children to know how much to eat: as children grow, they may eat a lot of food one day and then not much the next. It will all balance out and they will get the amount they need.
- Set mealtime rules and expect children to follow those rules: this may include speaking politely, sitting quietly while others finish eating, etc.
- Children will choose what to eat from what you serve. Offer the same foods for everyone to choose from. Don’t become a short order cook for a picky eater.
- Remember it is okay if the child doesn’t eat all the food offered. They are still learning about food and figuring out how much and what they need.
- Children are more likely to try a new food if they have seen you or other children eating that food.
- Many children become fussy eaters between 18 and 24 months.
- Expect ups and downs in eating: a child may like a food one day and decide he doesn’t like it the next.
- The more the child is exposed to a food, the more likely she is to try it. A child may need to be exposed to a food 15-20 times before she will even taste it.

Source and for more information visit: http://ellynsatterinstitute.org