

potpourri

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What's Inside?

Harvest Time Recipes
Building Better Breakfasts
Creative Protein Foods
Emotional Safety
& More!



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August is a wonderful time to celebrate the abundance of the season. With many fruits and vegetables at their peak harvest, this month offers the perfect opportunity to introduce children to fresh, colorful foods while supporting healthy eating habits.

Farmer's markets and local farm stands are filled with seasonal produce like tomatoes, peaches, sweet corn, berries, cucumbers, and zucchini. Incorporating these foods into meals and snacks can help children experience a wider variety of flavors and textures while enjoying produce at its freshest. Seasonal foods are often more affordable as well, making them a great option for childcare menus.

This is also a great time to encourage conversations with children about where food comes from. Exploring fruits and vegetables through taste tests, simple gardening activities, or discussions about local farms can make nutrition education fun and engaging for young learners.

As summer begins to wind down, we are grateful for the continued care and dedication you bring to the children and families you serve. The healthy meals, positive routines, and welcoming environments you create each day make a lasting impact.

Thank you for all you do to support child nutrition and wellness throughout the year.

Denise Meyer

Denise Meyer
Executive Director

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It's Peak Harvest Season!

August is peak harvest season for vegetables like sweet corn, tomatoes, raspberries, zucchini, and more!

Raspberry Overnight Oats

6 servings

extension.wsu.edu

Ingredients

3 cups raspberries
1 1/2 cup rolled oats
3/4 cup plain or vanilla yogurt
1 1/2 cups milk of your choice
1 tbsp chia seeds (optional)

Optional: Add 2-3 tbsp of your choice of other chopped fruit, nuts, seeds, or spreads such as peanut butter

Instructions

- In a small bowl, mix oats, yogurt, milk, and chia seeds. If using optional items, include this in the mix.
- Layer oat mixture with raspberries and other optional ingredients.
- Refrigerate overnight or at least 8 hours.
- Best enjoyed within 24 hours.

🍓 Fruit 🌾 Grain



Easy Cheesy Calabacitas

6 servings

abraskitchen.com

Ingredients

1 cup zucchini finely diced
1 cup yellow squash finely diced
1 cup yellow corn (kernels off the cob)
1 cup yellow onion finely diced (optional)
1/2 cup green bell pepper finely diced

1/2 cup yellow bell pepper finely diced
1/2 cup red bell pepper finely diced
1 cup fresh tomato chopped
1 tbsp fresh jalapeño finely diced (optional)
3 cloves fresh garlic minced
1/2 tbsp kosher salt
1 tsp fresh black pepper
2 tsp dried cumin
1 tsp dried oregano
1 cup queso fresco

Instructions

- Dice all vegetables evenly, keeping the onion, garlic, and jalapeños separated.
- If using fresh – remove corn from the cob.
- Heat 2-3 tablespoons of olive or avocado oil over medium heat.
- Add the onion to the skillet and sauté until softened, approximately 5 minutes.
- Add bell peppers, zucchini, and squash and sauté until softened approximately 5 minutes.
- Add jalapeños and corn to the mixture and sauté for an additional 5 minutes, until corn is fully warmed through.
- Add tomatoes, cumin, dried oregano, salt, and pepper and cook for another 2 minutes, mixing the veggies to fully blend and season.
- Crumble in queso fresco, and stir to incorporate into the vegetable mixture.
- Remove from heat and cover to allow the cheese to soften.
- Garnish with fresh cilantro and/ or green onion.

Note: You can adjust the spice level of the dish by using more or less jalapeño or swapping the jalapeño for canned green chilis.

🌱 Vegetable 🍖 Meat/Meat Alternate



Zucchini Tots

4 servings

fruitsandveggies.org

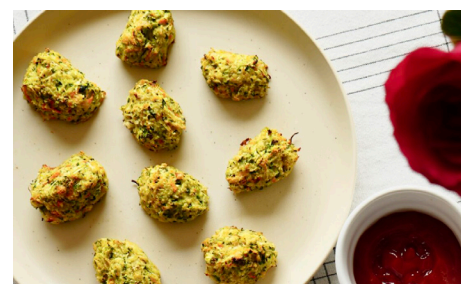
Ingredients

2 cups of chopped zucchini
1/2 cup of chopped carrot
1/2 cup of chopped broccoli
1 egg
1/2 cup of cheddar cheese
1/2 cup of panko breadcrumbs
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 400F degrees.
- Mix all ingredients in a bowl until well combined.
- Use hands or a spoon to form tots into your favorite shape.
- Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake at 400F for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

🌱 Vegetable



Meals & Menus

CACFP Requirements



CACFP		MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
BREAKFAST	1. GN/BP OR MT**	1. WG Peach Oatmeal Bake	1. Yogurt w/WG Breakfast Cereal	1. WG Bagel w/ Nut Butter	1. Scrambled Eggs w/ Spinach & WG Toast	1. WG Corn Muffins
	2. FT OR VG	2. Blackberries***	2. Cantaloupe	2. Plums	2. Watermelon	2. Pears
	3. MK	3. Milk	3. Milk	3. Milk	3. Milk	3. Milk
LUNCH/DINNER	1. MT	1. Teriyaki Chicken Bites	1. Cheese & Bean Tostada	1. Turkey Meatballs	1. Baked Whitefish	1. Chicken Salad Wrap
	2. GN/BP	2. Brown Rice	2. WG Tostada Shell	2. WG Couscous	2. WG Barley Pilaf	2. WG Tortilla
	3. VG	3. Broccoli	3. Lettuce	3. Cauliflower	3. Sauteed Yellow Squash	3. Cucumbers
	4. FT OR VG	4. Nectarines	4. Honeydew Melon	4. Red Grapes (Halved)***	4. Raspberries***	4. Apple Wedges
	5. MK	5. Milk	5. Milk	5. Milk	5. Milk	5. Milk
SNACKS*	1. MT	1. String Cheese***	1. White Bean Dip	1. Hard Boiled Egg Slices	1. Cottage Cheese	1. Hummus
	2. GN/BP	2. WG Breadsticks	2. WG Pita Chips	2. WG Crackers	2. WG Mini Waffles	2. WG Tortilla
	3. FT	3. Peaches	3. Blueberries***	3. Mango	3. Kiwi	3. Strawberries
	4. VG	4. Snap Pea Pods	4. Roasted Zucchini	4. Green Beans	4. Cherry Tomatoes***	4. Bell Peppers***
	5. MK	5. Milk	5. Milk	5. Milk	5. Milk	5. Milk
(*) Choose two food groups from “Snacks” list.				(**) MT may be substituted for GN/BP up to 3x a week.		
FT: Fruit VG: Vegetable GN: Grain WG: Whole Grain				(***) Choking hazard for children under age 4.		
MK: Milk BP: Bread Prdt. MT: Meat/Meat Alternate						



REMINDERS:

June 2026 final claim due: **August 24, 2026 (Mon.)**

- **CENTERS:** All claims require supporting documentation before being submitted to the state for reimbursement. No documentation = no reimbursement.
- Please open any mail that comes from ACD. Also, please check your email and spam folders for news and information from us.
- Please remember to record any children out of school or daycare closures in My Food Program.
- Send enrollments to: **Michigan:** mifrontdesk@acd-kids.org | Fax: (517) 332-5543
Illinois: ilcustomerservice@acd-kids.org | Fax: (708) 236-0872

Building Better Breakfasts

As childcare providers, you know that the secret to a smooth, successful day begins at the breakfast table. Breakfast isn't just the first meal of the day, it is a critical tool for supporting a child's rapid physical growth, keeping moods stable, and boosting cognitive development.

According to dietary data, young children often miss out on crucial nutrients. While most kids eat enough grains, vegetable intake is consistently too low across all age groups, and dairy consumption begins to drop significantly as children get older. By focusing on a well-balanced morning meal, your childcare program can step in to bridge these gaps.

Why Young Bodies Need Breakfast

Children have a faster metabolic rate than adults do, less muscle mass to store energy, and brains that demand a continuous supply of blood flow and oxygen. Because their small bodies rapidly deplete their energy stores during an overnight fast, skipping breakfast can leave them feeling fatigued or irritable. Providing a nutritious breakfast breaks this fast, stabilizing their blood sugar and setting them up for better focus, fewer behavioral outbursts, and a happier morning of play and learning.

The Morning Nutrition Gap

When children eat breakfast, they get a massive head start on their daily nutrition. Breakfast eaters consume significantly more protein, fiber, and essential vitamins than those who skip the meal, providing roughly 25-30 percent of their total daily nutrient intake.

To ensure your menu is doing the heavy lifting, aim to incorporate items rich in these five critical nutrients:

Key Nutrient	Why Children Need It	Kid-Friendly Ideas
Fiber	Keeps children full longer and stabilizes blood sugar	Whole-grain waffles, oatmeal, berries, or sliced apples
Vitamin D	Builds strong bones and boosts immune systems	Egg yolks, cow's milk, or fortified breakfast cereals
Calcium	Supports healthy bone, heart, and nerve growth	Yogurt, cheese slices, or broccoli-egg bites
Potassium	Promotes proper cellular, heart, and bone health	Bananas, oranges, and sweet potato hash
Iron & Choline	Prevents anemia and drives brain development	Scrambled eggs, turkey sausage, beans, or iron-fortified cereals

Overcoming Common Morning Challenges

Serving a healthy breakfast in a childcare setting often comes with real-world hurdles, but a few simple shifts can keep your routine on track:

- **Navigating Sugar Limits:** To stay aligned with healthy standards (like CACFP added sugar limits) skip the sweets. Instead, opt for savory dishes like a vegetable egg scramble, or naturally sweeten muffins and oatmeal using mashed bananas, cinnamon, or applesauce.
- **Beating the Morning Rush:** If mornings are hectic, rely on grab-and-go prep. Hard-boiled eggs, overnight oats, and pre-portioned smoothie bags kept in the freezer make serving a breeze.
- **Handling "Not Hungry" Kids:** If a child refuses to eat right after arrival, their appetite might just need time to wake up. Try offering a portable "second breakfast" option during a slightly later morning snack time, and chat with parents about adjusting evening snack times or bedtimes to help restore a natural morning appetite.



Getting Creative with Protein Foods

For many children, eating protein foods can be a struggle. Texture issues, chewing difficulties and different taste profiles are a few reasons children may avoid eating protein foods. But protein foods are vital for children's health, providing nutrients like iron, zinc and B vitamins for healthy growth and development.

Getting a bit creative with menu planning can help make protein foods more appealing to children. Start by making a list of popular foods you serve, then consider a protein food you can add. For example, if tortillas are popular, think of protein foods you could add, such as:

Tortillas + **hummus** + **sliced cheese** + thinly sliced cucumbers: Cucumber Pinwheels

Tortillas + **nut/seed butter** + thinly sliced apples: Apple Quesadilla

Tortillas + **shredded chicken** + **shredded cheese** + salsa: Chicken Tacos

Tortillas + **edamame** + shredded carrots and cabbage + **peanut** sauce: Crunchy Thai Wrap

Oftentimes, texture is a barrier for children when eating meat proteins. To overcome this, try marinating meat before cooking, cook on low with ample liquid, use ground meat or shred proteins after cooking and add sauce. Soups are a great option for softer, tender meat protein foods too. If eating soup is a messy endeavor, try draining the broth after cooking for (hopefully) less spillage.

Consider texture and taste preferences when serving meatless proteins as well. For a smooth, creamy texture with a mild flavor, consider hummus or nut/seed butters that can easily be used as spread on sandwiches or wraps or as a dip for crackers, pita or fruits and vegetables at snack time. And pasta made from 100% bean or legume flour counts as a meat/meat alternate as long as you serve it with a visible meat/meat alternate at least 0.25 oz eq. per serving.

With a little creativity and attention to popular textures and flavors, serving protein foods can be easier than ever!



Balanced Breakfast Fruit Pizza

Pizza for breakfast?!? This balanced breakfast features a fiber-filled whole grain crust, peanut butter "sauce" with healthy fat and protein, topped with fruit for a sweet finish.

Yield: 3 pizzas

Ingredients:

- 2 cups oats (not steel cut)
- 1 tbsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 tbsp honey
- 3 tbsp water
- 6 tbsp nut or seed butter
- 3/4 cup banana slices
- 3 tbsp raisins

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Add oats to a food processor and blend for 2 minutes.
3. Add to a mixing bowl the processed oats, cinnamon, salt, eggs and honey. Gently mix together before adding water, 1 tbsp at a time.
4. Divide the dough into 3 even portions and spread the dough to 1/4 inch thick on a parchment lined baking sheet. Bake for 16-18 minutes.
5. Allow the oatmeal pizza crust to cool for 15-20 minutes.
6. Spread nut or seed butter onto the oatmeal pizza crust and top with sliced bananas and raisins.

Optional: Tight on time? Use toasted whole wheat English muffins in place of the oatmeal crust.

Nutrition information: (serving size 1/2 pizza): 270 calories, 11 grams fat, 36 grams carbohydrate, 5 grams fiber, 10 grams protein



The "Reverse Strategy"

Here are a few tips to save money on the ever-rising price of groceries!



Shop Near Closing

Time: Most

supermarkets mark down "prepared" foods (rotisserie chickens, deli salads) and bakery items by 50% or more in the final two hours of operation to avoid tossing them.

The "Bottom Shelf" Rule:

Grocers place high-profit, name-brand items at eye level. Literally look down. The generic or bulk versions of the exact same ingredients (like oats, flour, or beans) are almost always on the very bottom shelf at a much lower unit price.

Reverse Meal Planning: Instead of picking a recipe and buying the ingredients, buy what is deeply discounted first. Use an AI tool or a site like Budget Bytes to "input" those 3-4 random sale items and generate a recipe from them.

Buy Gift Cards at a Discount:

Use sites like CardCash or Gift Card Granny to buy grocery store gift cards for 5-15% less than their face value. It's an instant, guaranteed discount on your entire cart before you even walk in.

The "Pantry Challenge": Once every few months, commit to a "no-spend week" where you eat only what is currently in your freezer and pantry. It forces you to use the "forgotten" items that usually end up expiring and being wasted.

■ Source: aarp.org

Food Pairings That Pack a Nutritional Punch!

Serving nutritious foods is important in childcare settings, but combining certain foods can help children get even more nutritional value from meals and snacks. Strategic food pairings can improve the absorption of vitamins and minerals, provide lasting energy, and expose children to a variety of flavors and textures.

Why Food Pairing Matters

Some nutrients work better together. Pairing foods thoughtfully can help children's bodies absorb key nutrients needed for growth, brain development, and strong immune systems.

SMART FOOD COMBINATIONS FOR CHILDREN		
Food Combination	Nutrition Benefit	Easy Childcare Ideas
Iron + Vitamin C	Helps absorb iron	Whole grain cereal with strawberries, beans with tomatoes
Protein + Whole Grains	Provides steady energy	Turkey on whole wheat bread, hummus with pita
Healthy Fat + Vegetables	Helps absorb vitamins A, D, E, and K	Carrots with ranch yogurt dip, avocado with cucumber
Dairy + Fruit	Supports bone health and digestion	Yogurt parfaits, cheese with apple slices
Fiber + Protein	Helps children stay full longer	Oatmeal with sunflower seed butter, crackers with cheese

Simple Pairing Tips for Providers

- Add fruit to iron-rich breakfasts like oatmeal or fortified cereal.
- Include a protein source with snacks whenever possible.
- Offer colorful fruits and vegetables throughout the day.
- Use dips to encourage children to try new foods.
- Rotate pairings seasonally to keep menus fresh and affordable.

Thoughtful food pairings do not have to be complicated or expensive. Small changes to meals and snacks can help children get more nutrients while building healthy eating habits that may last a lifetime. By offering balanced combinations throughout the day, childcare providers can support children's growth, learning, and overall wellness in meaningful ways.

DID YOU KNOW?

Vitamin C can help the body absorb iron from plant-based foods!

KID-FRIENDLY PAIRING IDEAS

Breakfast

Oatmeal topped with blueberries

Whole grain toast with sunflower seed butter and banana slices

Lunch

Chicken, brown rice, and steamed broccoli

Bean and cheese quesadillas with salsa

Snacks

Yogurt with peaches

Whole grain crackers with turkey and cucumber slices

■ Source: eatright.org | cdc.gov
 ■ Image: canva.com



Pine Cone Fireflies

MATERIALS

- Small pine cones
- Black construction paper or cardstock
- Scissors
- Black wire or black pipe cleaner
- Googly eyes
- Tacky craft glue or hot glue
- Lime green paint
- Paintbrush

STEP 1

Paint the narrow end of the pine cone with green paint. Some children may enjoy dipping their pinecones into the paint instead.

STEP 2

While the paint is drying, cut wings out of the black paper. Snip down the center of your shape, but not completely through it.

STEP 3

When the paint is dry, glue the wings onto the pine cone. Then attach the googly eyes to the front of the firefly.

STEP 4

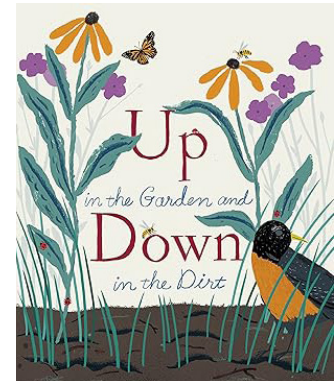
Last, bend a piece of wire or pipe cleaner around the pine cone to create antennae.



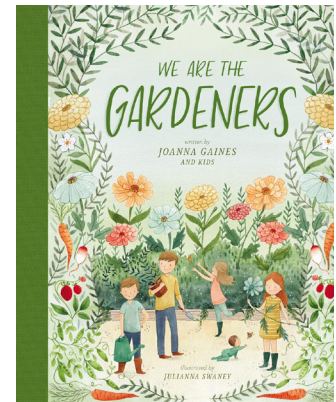
Harvest time is here for those who have gardens! The farmer's markets are full of fresh produce! Let's read a few books about the garden!



Hello, World! Garden Time: A Book of Plants and Gardening for Kids
by Jill McDonald (Author)



Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt
by Kate Messner (Author),
Christopher Silas Neal
(Illustrator)



We Are the Gardeners
by Joanna Gaines (Author),
Julianna Swaney (Illustrator)

■ **Books:** [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Building Emotional Safety Through Trusted Routines

Children thrive when they feel emotionally safe. In childcare settings, emotional safety helps children build confidence, develop healthy relationships, and manage stress. Research shows that predictable environments and nurturing relationships support healthy brain development and improve social-emotional skills in young children. For childcare providers, one of the most effective ways to create emotional safety is through trusted routines.

Young children may not always have the words to explain their emotions, so they rely on consistent adults and familiar routines to help them feel secure. Sudden changes, chaotic environments, or inconsistent expectations can increase anxiety and challenging behaviors.

The Power of Trusted Routines

Trusted routines are predictable daily patterns children can rely on. They help children know what to expect and provide a sense of stability throughout the day.

Examples include:

- Greeting each child warmly at arrival
- Posting and reviewing a visual daily schedule
- Using consistent mealtime and nap routines
- Singing familiar cleanup or transition songs
- Ending the day with calming reflection activities

When routines are consistent, children feel more in control of their environment. This can reduce stress and help prevent emotional outbursts during transitions.



Simple Ways Providers Can Support Emotional Safety

Childcare providers can strengthen emotional safety by:

- Speaking calmly and respectfully
- Acknowledging children's feelings
- Offering choices when appropriate
- Preparing children for schedule changes
- Modeling healthy emotional expression
- Creating cozy quiet spaces for self-regulation

It is also important to build trusting relationships with families. Sharing routines between home and childcare settings can help children feel more comfortable and connected.



A Lasting Impact

Emotionally safe environments do more than prevent behavior problems: they help children develop the confidence and emotional skills they will carry into school and beyond. By creating trusted routines and supportive relationships, childcare providers play a vital role in helping children feel safe, valued, and ready to learn.

August 2026

Submit quiz answers to your Field Monitor to receive FREE training credit.
Do not (e)mail quiz to the ACD office.

1. Which activity helps build emotional safety?

- a. Frequent schedule changes
- b. Yelling during transitions
- c. Consistent routines
- d. Skipping quiet time

2. Which food pairing helps the body absorb iron?

- a. Cheese & crackers
- b. Beans & tomatoes
- c. Yogurt & granola
- d. Cucumbers & ranch

3. Children have a slower metabolic rate than adults.

- a. True
- b. False

4. Pasta made from 100% bean or legume flour counts as a meat alternate on its own, without any additional ingredients.

- a. True
- b. False

5. Vegetable consumption consistently meets recommended guidelines across all child age groups.

- a. True
- b. False

6. What is one way to overcome texture barriers when serving meat to children?

- a. Add strong spices
- b. Cook on low with ample liquid, marinate, or shred the meats
- c. Serve only meatless proteins
- d. Hide the meat inside other foods

7. Hummus and nut/seed butters are good options for children who prefer smooth textures and mild flavors.

- a. True
- b. False

8. Pairing protein with grains does not provide steady energy.

- a. True
- b. False

9. Children feel more emotionally safe when daily routines are predictable.

- a. True
- b. False

10. What percentage of a child's daily nutrients can a single breakfast provide?

- a. 5-10%
- b. 25-30%
- c. 50-60%
- d. 75-80%

11. Which nutrient pairing can help children stay full longer?

- a. Sugar + juice
- b. Fiber + protein
- c. Fruit + candy
- d. Water + crackers

12. Why might children avoid eating protein foods?

- a. High cost
- b. Texture issues
- c. Chewing difficulties
- d. Both A and B

13. Young children have lower muscle mass than adults.

- a. True
- b. False

14. What nutrient supports healthy bone, heart, and nerve growth?

- a. Calcium
- b. Iron
- c. Potassium
- d. Vitamin C

15. Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron.

- a. True
- b. False



The Association for Child Development educates parents and caregivers about nutrition to promote the development of children and establish healthy eating habits to last a lifetime.



As a nonprofit, ACD has been operating for 50 years in Illinois and Michigan. A large part of our work involves serving more than 36,000 children through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) – a program ensuring children have access to nutritious meals.

Alongside this critical work, ACD looks to make a greater impact by expanding our mission to include a safety component focused on decreasing the risk of harm or injury in homes children are cared for through outreach, education and safety products.

Support ACD's efforts to prevent child injury.

Donate today at www.acdkids.org.