

potpourri

October 2026

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What's Inside?
Root Veggie Recipes
National Farm to School Month
Balancing Fun & Nutrition
Fire Safety
& More!



Potpourri is published monthly by the Association for Child Development (ACD), a sponsor of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Child care providers sponsored by the ACD for participation with the CACFP receive Potpourri free of charge. No portion of Potpourri may be reprinted without the consent of ACD.

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October brings so many things for children to enjoy - crisp autumn days, colorful leaves, pumpkins, seasonal activities, and plenty of opportunities for fun. With all the excitement of the season, it's also a great time to remember that nutritious foods can be part of that fun!

Fall offers an abundance of foods that can add variety and seasonal flavor to childcare menus. Root veggies, pears, sweet potatoes, winter squash, and pumpkin are just a few options that can introduce children to new tastes while providing important nutrients. Pairing these foods with whole grains, protein foods, and dairy can create balanced meals that keep children fueled for busy days of play and learning.

Halloween gives providers a chance to talk about balance. Special treats can be part of celebrations, while everyday meals and snacks continue to provide the nutrition children need. Offering festive, healthy options like fruit, vegetables, or fun-shaped foods can make mealtimes feel just as special.

Most importantly, fall is about creating positive experiences around food. When children see nutritious foods presented in fun and appealing ways, they are more likely to be curious and willing to try them. These small experiences can help build healthy attitudes toward food that last well beyond the season.

Denise Meyer

Denise Meyer
Executive Director

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Rooted in Fall Flavor!

As the days grow cooler, root veggies take center stage!

Kid-Friendly Roasted Vegetables

8 servings
glueandglitter.com



Ingredients

4 cups baby carrots
4 cups chopped golden beets - one-inch pieces
4 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 425° F.
- Toss all of your ingredients together in a 9" x 12" baking pan. Bake for 45 to 60 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes, until the veggies are fork-tender and a little bit browned.

🍅 Vegetable

Sheet Pan Roasted Root Vegetables

8 servings
eatingwell.com



Ingredients

2 large carrots
2 medium parsnips, peeled

2 medium beets, peeled
1 medium red onion
1 medium sweet potato
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 1/2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar or balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon fresh herbs, such as thyme, rosemary or sage
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

1/2 teaspoon ground pepper

Instructions

- Position racks in upper and lower thirds of oven; preheat to 425°F. Line two large rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.
- Cut 2 carrots and 2 parsnips into 1/2-inch-thick slices on a diagonal, then cut into half moons. Cut 2 beets and 1 onion into 1/2-inch-thick wedges. Cut 1 sweet potato into 3/4-inch cubes. You should have about 12 cups raw vegetables.
- Toss the vegetables with 3 tablespoons oil, 1 1/2 tablespoons vinegar, 1 tablespoon herbs, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper in a large bowl until well coated. Divide between the prepared baking sheets, spreading into a single layer.
- Roast the vegetables, rotating the baking sheets top to bottom halfway through, until fork-tender, 30 to 40 minutes.

🍅 Vegetable

Pink Beet Pancakes

8 servings
liltoddlermeals.com

Ingredients

2 cups rolled oats, uncooked
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1/4 teaspoon sea salt
2 large eggs
1/2 cup cottage cheese (can sub plain yogurt)
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 beets, cooked and peeled
1 banana
2 tablespoons coconut oil

Instructions

- Make oat flour by combining oats, baking powder and sea salt in a high speed blender until a fine powder forms. Pour in bowl and set aside.
- Wash out blender and combine remaining ingredients. Blend until smooth and well combined. Pour in oat flour and blend again until a smooth, thick batter forms. You may have to scrape the sides a few times and blend again.
- Heat a pan over medium-low heat with some coconut oil. When the oil is hot, start spooning tablespoons of pancake batter onto the pan (or however big you want the pancakes to be).
- Cook until you see small bubbles forming on the top of the pancakes and the edges seem ready, about 2-3 minutes. Flip the pancakes and cook the other side for another 2-3 minutes.
- Enjoy!

🍅 Vegetable 🍖 Meat/Meat Alternate



Meals & Menus

CACFP Requirements



CACFP		MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
BREAKFAST	1. GN/BP OR MT** 2. FT OR VG 3. MK	1. WG Pumpkin Pancakes 2. Apple Slices 3. Milk	1. Yogurt w/WG Cereal 2. Pear Slices 3. Milk	1. WG Raisin Toast 2. Oranges 3. Milk	1. Scrambled Eggs w/ WG Biscuit 2. Banana 3. Milk	1. Oatmeal 2. Cranberry Apple Fruit Cup 3. Milk
	1. MT 2. GN/BP 3. VG 4. FT OR VG 5. MK	1. Turkey Slices 2. Cornbread 3. Butternut Squash 4. Banana 5. Milk	1. Chicken Kabobs 2. Brown Rice Pilaf 3. Steamed Broccoli 4. Mandarin Orange 5. Milk	1. Cheese/Spinach Stuffed Baked Potato 2. WG Roll 3. Spinach 4. Blueberries*** 5. Milk	1. Beef/Vegetable Soup 2. WG Biscuit 3. Mixed Soup Veggies 4. Red Grapes*** 5. Milk	1. Baked Pollock 2. WG Couscous 3. Brussels Sprouts 4. Kiwi 5. Milk
LUNCH/DINNER	1. MT 2. GN/BP 3. VG 4. FT OR VG 5. MK	1. Turkey Slices 2. Cornbread 3. Butternut Squash 4. Banana 5. Milk	1. Chicken Kabobs 2. Brown Rice Pilaf 3. Steamed Broccoli 4. Mandarin Orange 5. Milk	1. Cheese/Spinach Stuffed Baked Potato 2. WG Roll 3. Spinach 4. Blueberries*** 5. Milk	1. Beef/Vegetable Soup 2. WG Biscuit 3. Mixed Soup Veggies 4. Red Grapes*** 5. Milk	1. Baked Pollock 2. WG Couscous 3. Brussels Sprouts 4. Kiwi 5. Milk
	1. MT 2. GN/BP 3. FT 4. VG 5. MK	1. Cottage Cheese 2. WG Pretzels 3. Pineapple Chunks 4. Carrots 5. Milk	1. Hummus 2. WG Pita 3. Peaches 4. Red Bell Pepper*** 5. Milk	1. String Cheese 2. WG Mini Bagel 3. Banana 4. Snap Peas 5. Milk	1. Nut/Seed Butter 2. WG Crackers 3. Blueberries*** 4. Celery*** 5. Milk	1. Ricotta Cheese 2. WG Oat Cereal Squares 3. Apples 4. Homemade Veggie Chips 5. Milk
SNACKS*	1. MT 2. GN/BP 3. FT 4. VG 5. MK	1. Cottage Cheese 2. WG Pretzels 3. Pineapple Chunks 4. Carrots 5. Milk	1. Hummus 2. WG Pita 3. Peaches 4. Red Bell Pepper*** 5. Milk	1. String Cheese 2. WG Mini Bagel 3. Banana 4. Snap Peas 5. Milk	1. Nut/Seed Butter 2. WG Crackers 3. Blueberries*** 4. Celery*** 5. Milk	1. Ricotta Cheese 2. WG Oat Cereal Squares 3. Apples 4. Homemade Veggie Chips 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 MK: Milk BP: Bread Prdt. MT: Meat/Meat Alternate				(***) Choking hazard for children under age 4.		



REMINDERS:

August 2026 final claim due: **October 26, 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

National Farm to School Month:

Bringing the Farm to Your Child Care Table

Every October, National Farm to School Month celebrates the connections between children, local farmers, and healthy foods. While the name includes "school," the celebration also recognizes early care and education programs, making it a perfect opportunity for childcare providers to introduce children to fresh, locally grown foods.

Farm-to-table practices do more than serve nutritious meals. They help children understand where food comes from while supporting local farms and communities.

WHY IT MATTERS

Research shows that children are more likely to try new fruits and vegetables when they have opportunities to learn about them through hands-on experiences. Offering local produce also means children may enjoy foods that are harvested at peak freshness and flavor.

SIMPLE WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

- Visit a local farmers market.
- Purchase seasonal produce from nearby farms.
- Feature one "Harvest of the Week."
- Read books about farming, gardens, and healthy foods.
- Let children wash vegetables, tear lettuce, or help prepare simple snacks.
- Plant herbs or vegetables in containers, raised beds, or a small garden.

SUPPORTING LOCAL FARMERS

Buying locally keeps food dollars in your community and helps sustain family farms. Even small purchases—such as apples for snack time or squash for lunch—can make a difference. Many farmers markets and farm stands welcome childcare providers and may offer educational materials or opportunities to meet the people who grow the food.

National Farm to School Month reminds us that healthy eating begins with strong connections between farms, families, and childcare programs. By serving seasonal foods, encouraging children to explore new tastes, and sharing the story of how food reaches the table, providers help build lifelong healthy eating habits while supporting their local agricultural community—one delicious meal at a time.



- Sources: superhealthykids.com | farmtoschool.org
- Image: superhealthykids.com

SEASONAL FAVORITES FOR OCTOBER

Fall is an excellent time to feature locally grown produce, such as:

Apples	Carrots
Pears	Sweet Potatoes
Grapes	Winter Squash
Pumpkins	Beets
Cabbage	

These colorful foods provide vitamins, minerals, fiber, and great opportunities to talk about colors, textures, and flavors.

Root Veggie Chips

8 servings
superhealthykids.com

Ingredients

- 1 medium sweet potato
- 1 medium beet
- 1 medium rutabagas
- 1 medium turnips
- 1 medium parsnips
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Instructions

- Wash, peel and thinly slice vegetables (to 1/8 inch or thinner).
- Place all veggie slices in a bowl and drizzle with olive oil.
- Arrange slices on a cookie sheet and sprinkle with salt.
- Bake at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes, or until your veggies are crispy, but not burned!

■ Vegetable

Balancing Fun & Nutrition in the Fall

Hayrides at the apple orchard, cheering on our favorite football teams and decorating for Halloween are just a few fun activities the fall season brings. While cider donuts, caramel apples, apple pie and Halloween candy abound, it's important to balance special treats high in added sugar and saturated fat with more nutritious choices to support children's health. Fall can still be fun - even with more nutritious (but still delicious) choices, such as:

APPLES

Nutrition: apples are a great source of dietary fiber, along with key nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin A, iron, potassium and calcium. In fact, the soluble fiber in apples helps prevent big spikes in blood sugar, unlike other sweet foods lacking in fiber.

Fun: make apple "donuts" by coring apples and slicing into rings before topping with nut or seed butter and sprinkling with shredded coconut or fresh berries. Bonus: kids can help sprinkle toppings on!

PUMPKIN

Nutrition: pumpkins are loaded with vitamin A, which is key for healthy skin, eyes and immune systems. Pumpkins also contain a good amount of fiber and have beta-carotene and vitamin C, which are powerful antioxidants.

Fun: make pumpkin chia seed pudding with canned pure pumpkin (not pie filling), chia seeds, milk, maple syrup and nut or seed butter. Bonus: serve it in a hollowed out mini pumpkin!

SQUASH

Nutrition: squash is high in vitamin C and beta-carotene, both powerful antioxidants. In addition, squash is relatively low in calories while still providing fiber, B vitamins, potassium and magnesium.

Fun: make butternut squash soup with Greek yogurt, broth and spices- see the next page for the full recipe. Bonus: for a more festive meal, serve the soup in a Halloween themed mug!

Remember to balance all of the special treats this fall with these fun and festive recipes featuring nutritious fall produce.



Butternut Squash Soup

Savor the flavors of fall with this nourishing soup featuring butternut squash and Greek yogurt!

Yield: 6 cups

Ingredients:

3 lb butternut squash, peeled and cubed
1 small yellow onion, sliced
2 Tbsp olive oil
1/4 tsp salt
1/8 tsp black pepper
4 cups chicken broth
1/4 tsp cumin
1 cup plain Greek yogurt

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. To a lined baking sheet, add the cubed squash and sliced onion. Drizzle with olive oil and top with salt and pepper.
3. Roast for 30 minutes, stirring halfway.
4. After removing from the oven, place the roasted squash, onions, chicken broth and cumin in a blender. Blend until smooth.
5. Add the Greek yogurt to the blender and continue blending until smooth.

Optional: Use frozen butternut squash or swap squash for canned pumpkin. Cottage cheese can be used in place of Greek yogurt as well.

Safety note: *Omit pumpkin seed garnish [shown in photos] for children under age 4.*

Nutrition information (serving size 1

cup): 160 calories, 6 grams fat, 22 grams carbohydrate, 7 grams protein



October Budget Hacks

October is a prime time for strategic shopping and low-cost seasonal shifts. Here are a few ways to stretch your operating budget this month!



The Dress-Up Goldmine: Keep an eye out for costume sales at the end of the month. Gently used or cleared-out Halloween costumes make fantastic additions to your dramatic play area.

Thrift Store Craft Hacks: This time of year, thrift stores are overflowing with donated fall decor. Other clever thrift finds can include flannel shirts for art smocks, or sweaters, etc., that can be cut up for art projects or sensory bin textures.

Batch Squash Purees: Squash is in season and low in price. Roast butternut or acorn squash in bulk and freeze in pre-portioned containers (e.g., ice cube trays). Blend them into oatmeal, macaroni and cheese, or breakfast muffins to boost nutritional value for months to come.

Dollar-Store Mitten & Hat Stash: Buy 10-12 pairs of inexpensive, plain, stretchy mittens in basic colors now. When a child arrives missing a mitten or glove on a cold morning, you will be prepared.

■ Source: childcareaware.org

The Power of Routine: Mealtime Structure & Schedule

For childcare providers, mealtimes are far more than a simple pause in the daily schedule. They are the foundation for lifelong wellness. Under the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), over 4.2 million children receive balanced nutrition each day. While offering whole grains, lean proteins, and colorful vegetables fulfills program guidelines, establishing a consistent mealtime routine is what truly transforms how children relate to food.

WHY STRUCTURE MATTERS

Young children thrive on predictability. According to the USDA's Study of Nutrition and Activity in Child Care Settings (SNACS), young children's overall dietary quality, measured by Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores, is significantly higher on childcare days compared to non-childcare days. A major driver behind this positive outcome is the structured, predictable environment that CACFP providers maintain daily.

Implementing fixed meal schedules and familiar table routines provides several key benefits:

- **Predictable Appetite Regulation:** Spacing meals and snacks 2 to 3 hours apart helps children recognize natural hunger and fullness cues, preventing mid-day energy crashes or overeating.
- **Reduced Emotional Stress:** Knowing when food is coming lowers mealtime anxiety. When children feel secure in the daily schedule, behavioral disruptions during table transitions drop noticeably.
- **Social and Physical Skill Development:** A predictable routine allows adequate time for family-style service, giving children room to practice pouring, passing dishes, and self-feeding at an unhurried pace.



IMPLEMENTING YOUR ROUTINE

To maximize these benefits, establish clear transition cues, such as a clean-up song or handwashing ritual, 10 minutes before eating. Aim to keep mealtimes between 20 and 30 minutes, ensuring slow eaters have sufficient time without leaving fast eaters sitting idly.

By grounding your CACFP meal service in a dependable rhythm, you do far more than meet program regulations: you nurture confident, healthy eaters for life.

Paper Plate Spiders

MATERIALS

- Small paper plates (2 per spider)
- Acrylic paint (any color you choose)
- Googly eyes (we used varying sizes, 8 per spider)
- Pipe cleaners (4 per spider)
- Paint brush
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Glue

STEP 1

Paint the underside of two small paper plates with acrylic paint and set them aside to let them dry completely.

STEP 2

When the paint has finished drying, cut four pipe cleaners in half to make eight spider legs.

STEP 3

Line up your two painted paper plates with the paint facing out on both sides and then place a staple at the top to connect them together.

STEP 4

Insert a spider leg in between the two plates about one-inch and then staple it down between the two plates. Do this with all eight legs, with four on each side of the paper plates. Then place additional staples around the paper plates to close them shut.

STEP 5

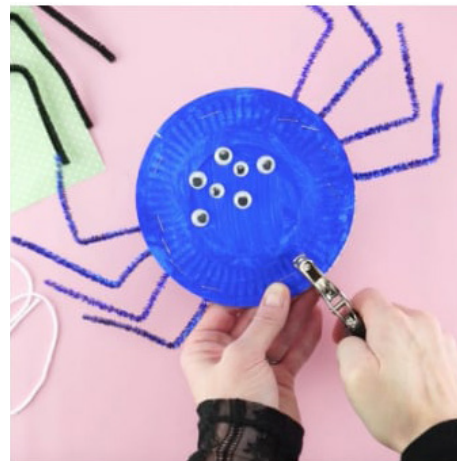
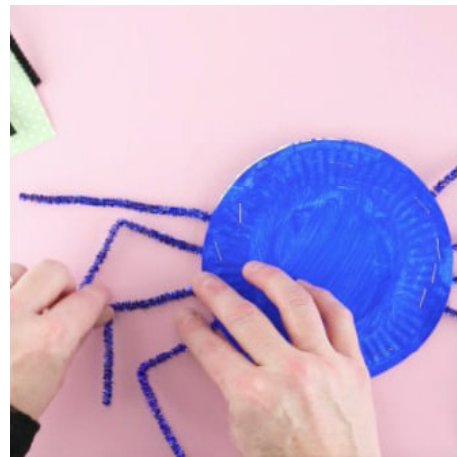
Create a bend in each of the chenille stems to make them look like spider legs.

STEP 6

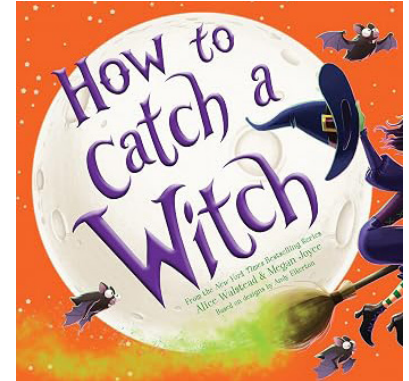
Glue on eight googly eyes of different sizes on the top of your spider.

STEP 7

Use a hole punch to punch a hole in the top of the paper plate spider and tie a white string through it so you can hang it up as if it's coming down its spider web.

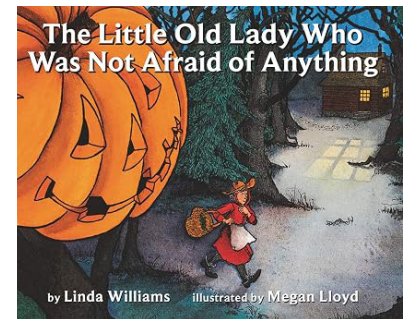


These sweet, not-too-spooky stories make wonderful memories while helping little ones build a love of reading one page at a time!



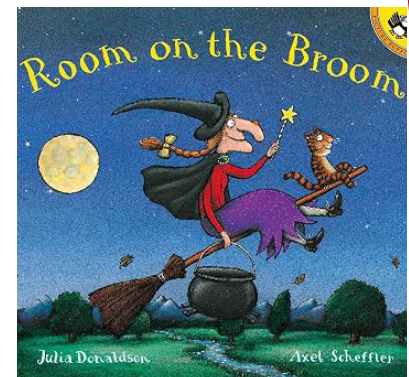
How to Catch a Witch

by Alice Walstead (Author),
Megan Joyce (Illustrator)



The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything

by Linda D. Williams (Author),
Megan Lloyd (Illustrator)



Room on the Broom

by Julia Donaldson (Author),
Axel Scheffler (Illustrator)

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

STOP FIRES BEFORE THEY START

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK:

October 4-10

Fire Prevention Week, observed each October, is a reminder that the best way to protect children is to prevent fires from happening in the first place. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), cooking remains the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in the United States, making everyday safety habits especially important in childcare settings.

EVERYDAY FIRE PREVENTION TIPS

Small changes can make a big difference. Keep these fire prevention practices part of your daily routine:

- Keep paper towels, dish towels, and other flammable items away from stovetops.
- Never leave cooking or food warming equipment unattended.
- Test smoke alarms monthly and replace batteries as recommended.
- Keep electrical cords in good condition and avoid overloading outlets.
- Store matches and lighters in locked cabinets, out of children's reach.
- Keep heaters at least **3 feet** away from furniture, curtains, and other combustible materials.
- Turn off and unplug appliances when they are not in use.
- Place a fire extinguisher away from the stove, specifically 30 feet or less from cooking equipment and near an exit door, rather than right next to or behind the cooking surface.

DID YOU KNOW?

U.S. fire departments respond to more than 340,000 home cooking fires each year.

Most cooking fires start because food is left unattended.

Young children are at greater risk of injury because they may not recognize fire hazards.

CREATE A FIRE-SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Children learn by watching adults. Modeling safe habits—such as unplugging appliances, keeping exits clear, and storing flammable materials properly—helps build lifelong awareness. Regularly check classrooms, kitchens, and storage areas for potential fire hazards before they become serious problems. Remember: Fire prevention is an everyday responsibility, not just something to think about only during Fire Prevention Week. By identifying hazards early and practicing safe habits consistently, childcare providers can create a safer environment where children can learn, play, and grow with confidence.

HOME COOKING FIRE PREVENTION TIPS

62% Cooking is the leading cause of **home fires** and fire injuries. **Ranges or cooktops** cause **62%** of home fires.* Learn how to stay safe.

Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stovetop

ALWAYS unplug countertop appliances when not in use

Make sure you have, and test, GFCI receptacles in your kitchen to prevent shock and electrocution

Double check that everything is off when you finish

Prevent fires by keeping your oven and stove top clean of grease and dust

October 2026

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

1. Which specific nutrient is highlighted as being found in both pumpkins and squash as a powerful antioxidant?

- a. Calcium
- b. Beta Carotene
- c. Vitamin D
- d. Iron

2. Which of the following minerals are powerful antioxidants?

- a. Beta Carotene
- b. Vitamin C
- c. Fiber
- d. Both A and B

3. Cooking is a leading cause of home fires.

- a. True
- b. False

4. Research shows that children are more likely to try new fruits and vegetables when they have opportunities to learn about them.

- a. True
- b. False

5. Clear transition cues, like songs, help implement a routine.

- a. True
- b. False

6. To support predictable appetite regulation and prevent energy crashes, how far apart should meals and snacks be spaced?

- a. 1-2 hours
- b. 2-3 hours
- c. 3-4 hours
- d. 4-5 hours

7. It's safe to overload electrical outlets.

- a. True
- b. False

8. Sweet potatoes, winter squash and beets are in season in October.

- a. True
- b. False

9. The soluble fiber found in apples helps prevent significant spikes in blood sugar levels.

- a. True
- b. False

10. How far should heaters be from flammable items?

- a. 1 foot
- b. 2 feet
- c. 3 feet
- d. 5 feet

11. What is the recommended duration for a mealtime?

- a. 10-20 minutes
- b. 20-30 minutes
- c. 30-40 minutes
- d. One hour

12. Ranges or cooktops cause 90 percent of home fires.

- a. True
- b. False

13. Research from the USDA indicates that children's dietary quality is typically higher on non-childcare days than on childcare days.

- a. True
- b. False

14. While providing fiber and essential B vitamins, squash is very high in calories.

- a. True
- b. False

15. Under the CACFP, over 4.2 million children receive balanced nutrition each day.

- 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.