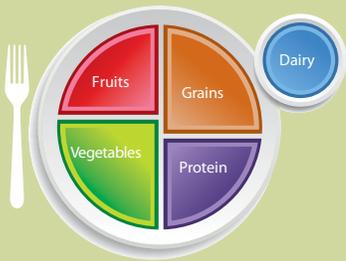


Family Style Meals



Family style meals are all about children and supervising adults sharing a meal together, where children are encouraged to serve food themselves. Enough food is placed on the table to allow each child and adult to take the full regulatory portion of food required by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or State Licensing Rules. Children are allowed to choose how much of each food they serve themselves, or if they will take any of the food at all.



in Child Care

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services supports family style meals in child care settings of all types, large or small. Serving meals family style in the child care setting is recognized by several prominent national organizations as being a best practice for child care.

Why try family style meals?

- Promote a comfortable and relaxed meal setting as children and adults sit together.
- Encourage positive behaviors through role modeling of supervising adults.
- Children learn to self regulate portion sizes according to their level of hunger.
- Enhance development of motor, language and social skills.
- Build self-esteem and develop independence as children learn new skills.
- Encourage children to try new foods by allowing them to feel in control of their eating.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn about food.
- Decrease food waste and save money.
- Build lifelong skills such as food presentation and preparation, as children take part in the entire meal service.

Tips for Beginning Family Style Meals

- Establish rules and share them with the children before implementing. For example, rules such as “do not touch the food” or “keep the spoon in the bowl” can be discussed and even practiced in advance.
- Practice passing bowls of dry beans, dry rice, or pitchers of water with the children before implementing during the meal service.
- Start small with easy to serve items, like buns or rolls, then expand to other foods, one food at a time.
- Get parent and staff support for family style meals prior to making the switch.
- Keep towels or napkins nearby for quick clean-up if there are spills.
- Keep extra serving utensils on hand in case someone drops or inappropriately touches.
- Serve food in multiple small serving containers instead of one large container to minimize waste.

Food Safety Considerations

Family style meals served in accordance with these guidelines are in compliance with basic sanitation and food safety regulations.

- Adequate adult supervision is required when implementing family style meals. For children 2 to 5 years of age, this would be one adult for each 8 to 10 children.
- Food served family style (placed on the table) and not eaten cannot be reserved.
- Milk served from a pitcher must be thrown away after the meal service.
- Any uncovered foods on the table, such as margarine, may not be served again to the children.
- Protect food from unnecessary handling and protect from coughs and sneezes. This can be done by using containers with lids that can be covered easily after passing and by providing appropriate utensils for dishing up and serving the food.
- Avoid having children touch the food or the food contact surface of the container or utensils.
- Utensils must be properly stored between uses. It is generally recommended that they be stored in the food container with the handle extending outward.

- Children must wash their hands prior to the meal service.
- A communicable disease outbreak may temporarily suspend family style meal service. Children or adults with draining wounds or lesions that are not properly bandaged should be excluded from family style food service.
- Children serving other children is not recommended.

For additional information on family style meals and food safety concerns, contact your local public health agency. A directory of agencies can be found at health.mo.gov/living/lpha/lphas.php.



Resources

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd edition. American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, 2011.

Happy Meal Times for Healthy Kids Module 2: Putting Nutrition Ideas into Practice. National Food Service Management Institute, 2003

Mealtime Memo for Child Care No. 8. 2006 Family Style Dining in Child Care Mealtime Memo for Child Care 2003 Serving Family-Style Meals

From the Trainer's Tablet: Lessons for Family/Home Child Care Providers. Family Style Meals National Food Service Management Institute, Spring 2003

Ammerman A, Ward D, Benjamin S, et al. An Intervention to Promote Healthy Weight: Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) Theory and Design. *Prev Chronic Dis* (serial online). 2007; July. Available from www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/jul/06_0115.htm.

Position of the American Dietetic Association: Benchmarks for Nutrition Programs in Child Care Settings. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2005;105:979-986.