

Workshop

1

# Yummy Carrot Sticks:

## How Children Learn to Like Nutritious Foods



### Key Concepts

- Healthy eating habits are an essential part of good nutrition.
- Healthy eating habits are learned.

## Participants will . . .

1. Increase their knowledge of healthy mealtime and eating habits.
2. Practice skills to share this knowledge of healthy mealtime and eating habits with children (i.e., help children make healthy food choices while avoiding power struggles) and parents.

### *Prepare*

#### *Read*

- Chapter 3 from Rethinking Nutrition

#### *Gather*

- Snack fixings
  1. 4 kinds of apples, sliced
- *Apple Farmer Annie* by Monica Wellington.
- Copies of six handouts
  1. W1 PowerPoint
  2. W1 Letter to Families
  3. W1 About Apples
  4. W1 Book List
  5. W1 Newsletter Articles
  6. W1 Evaluation
- Large paper and marker for agenda, comments and questions
- Paper and pencils
- Registry Certificates

### *Timed Agenda*

Activity	Minutes
Preparation	30-60
Introductions	15
Slides 1- 3	15-20
Slide 4-8	20-25
Slides 9-17	20
Slide 18	25-30
Closing (Slides 19-22)	5-10

#### *NOTE:*

*Workshops are designed to last a total of two hours. Recommended timing is also listed by each slide.*

#### Sources

1. Gortmaker, S., Long, M. & Wang, Y. C. (November 2009). The negative impact of sugar sweetened beverages on children's health. Healthy Eating Research: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). Retrieved 10/25/11 from <http://www.rwjf.org/childhoodobesity/product.jsp?id=52668>
2. Nitzke, S., Riley, D., Ramminger, A., & Jacobs, G. (2010). Eating and feeding behaviors are formed in the context of normative development. Rethinking nutrition: Connecting science and practice in early childhood settings (pp. 55-74). Saint Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.



### *Introduction ~ 15 Minutes*

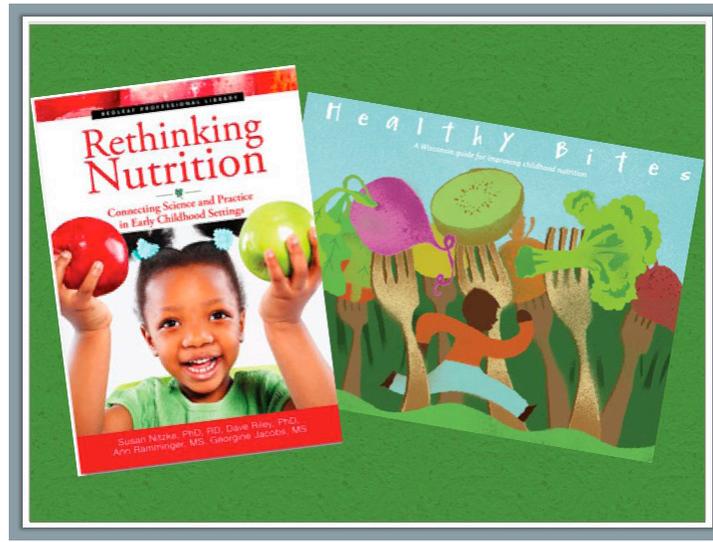
- **DO:** Have slide visible when participants arrive and leave up while completing introductions.
- **ASK:** Please introduce yourselves. Tell us your name, your program name, the ages of the children you work with, and the most unusual food you've gotten young children to try.
- **DO:** Let each participant answer your question. You could write some of the information for all the group to see - for instance, a list of the most unusual foods participants share.
- **TELL:** Today we're going to explore not only what children should and do eat but also how they learn about different foods and eating habits.

## Rethinking Nutrition Workshop Series

1. **Yummy Carrot Sticks: How Children Learn to Like Nutritious Foods**
  - Avoiding food power struggles, Role modeling healthy eating
2. **What's for Snack? Nutrition to Support Healthy Growth**
  - Good nutrition, Lifelong food habits, Obesity
3. **Cupcakes for Lunch? Creating a Food & Nutrition Policy for Your Early Care & Education Program**
  - Nutrition policy, Family food practices
4. **Count, Read, Share: The Meal Table as a Learning Center**
  - Mealtime learning activities, Life skills, Social skills

### *Workshop Description ~ 1 Minute*

- **TELL:** Today's workshop is shown in orange and is the first in a series about nutrition in early care and education settings.
- **NOTE:** Facilitators, you can add more details regarding whether the other workshops will be offered. For instance, if there is interest, we'll hold the other workshops in the months ahead. We have arranged Registry credit for each of these.



### *Workshop Description 2 ~ 1 Minute*

- **TELL:** This workshop series is based on this book, which was written by 2 professors at the University of Wisconsin along with 2 Wisconsin early care and education professionals. If you want to take a look at it, I'll have a sample copy up front after the workshop, and also some information on how to purchase a copy. Throughout the workshop, we also reference Healthy Bites, which was written in Wisconsin and focuses primarily on nutrition and supporting a healthier environment for children in the early care and education settings. Healthy Bites is available free online.
- Facilitators, you may also want to pass the book around the room to allow people time to explore the book.

What would an early care and education center that promoted *poor* nutrition and *unhealthy* attitudes toward food look like?

### ***Large Group Activity: Reverse Thinking ~ 15 Minutes***

**NOTE:** Write the brainstormed lists of practices on a board or large piece of paper for the group to see.

**READ:** slide.

**TELL:** We're going to spend the next few minutes describing what an early care and education center that promotes poor nutrition and unhealthy attitudes would look like. For instance, might they always have a candy bowl out at child level? Or be forced to clean their plates? (Additional prompts: What kind of foods would we serve or avoid? How might we organize and schedule our mealtimes? What kind of emotional atmosphere would we create around the meal table? How would we do this? How could we prepare the foods to discourage good nutrition? What mealtime rules could we enforce to make mealtime less enjoyable?)

**DO:** Spend 5-7 minutes on the above question before moving on to the next question.

**TELL:** We've got a great list! Sounds like a confusing and harmful space. Now let's reverse our statements to say the opposite of what they say. For instance, "children must clean their plates" could be changed to "children may stop eating when they feel full."

**DO:** Spend 5-7 minutes on the above question before moving on to the final statement.

**TELL:** So what do these lists tell us? In some ways, this second list sounds like the kind of restaurant we might pay a bit extra to eat at as adults! It not only has nutritious food, but the food is tastily prepared, the atmosphere is calm and unhurried, and the conversation is friendly. Mealtime, at it's best, is a joy and hosting a meal is an art, whether for adult friends or young children.

What we do matters.

Nutrition habits learned early  
can last a lifetime.



### *What We Do Matters ~ 1 Minute*

- **READ:** Read slide.
- **TELL:** As you've just illustrated, interactions with adults (like ECE professionals and parents) influence what, when and how children eat. We'll talk about the ways children learn about eating from adults and how we can encourage healthy eating and good meal habits in children. What children learn about food and eating in early care and education settings is central to their lifelong eating habits.

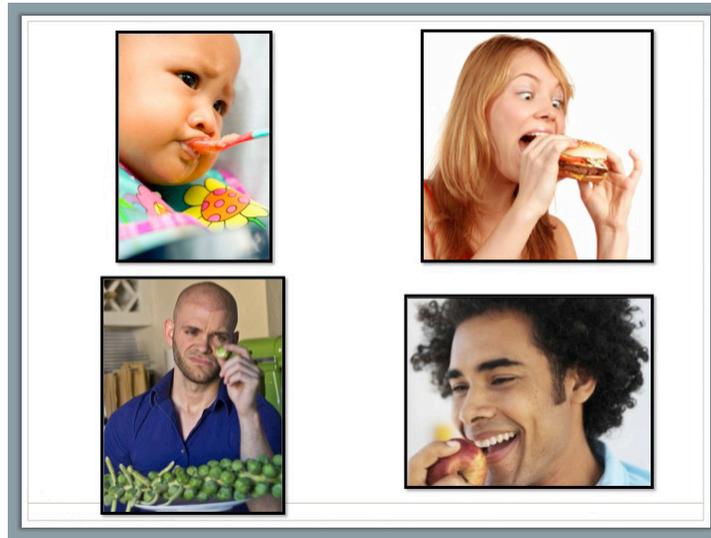
## Learning from Others

Children learn from others about food through:

1. Role Modeling
  - Actions intended to teach a specific way of eating or behaving at mealtime.
2. Social Learning
  - Children's observations and responses to our (sometimes unintentional) reactions to food and mealtime habits.

### *Learning from Others ~ 8 Minutes*

- **TELL:** The things adults do at the meal table, while eating or preparing food with children, impact children's opinions about food.
- **READ:** First point on slide.
- **TELL:** We role model when we introduce children to new foods. Here's a story that illustrates role modeling: When all eight four-year-olds were seated, teacher Sylvia told them they could begin serving the food. The children each took one large spoonful of food from the serving bowls and passed the bowls around the table. Sylvia said, "Here is the zucchini we picked on our field trip. See how we cut it into little rounds? And now it's cooled. Who said they had eaten zucchini before?" Two children said they had. "And did you like it?" One of them said she liked it, the other wasn't so sure. "Well, I like it a lot," said Sylvia. Several of the children at the table used their forks to take cautious nibbles at pieces of stir-fried zucchini.
- **ASK:** How do you role model eating and mealtime habits to children?
- **TELL:** Adults can role model that a food is good by smiling, making pleasant sounds, and stating how good a food tastes while eating with or feeding a child.
- **READ:** Second point on slide.
- **ASK:** Think of a food you love, what does your face look like when you see it on the table? What about a food you dislike?
- **TELL:** Children watch the faces of adults very closely and often model the emotions they see. If you wrinkle up your nose and look uninterested (or disgusted) at a certain food, the child will sometimes imitate your reaction. Every child should be given a chance to try a new food with enthusiasm. Even if you don't like the smell, texture or taste of the food, smile and talk to the child about what he is eating, how it is grown and how it helps him grow.



### *Reading Faces ~ 1-2 Minutes*

- **ASK:** Since children read social cues, how well do you think they would like the foods if they observed these different faces first?
- **DO:** Point to pictures of people eating foods on the slide and get quick feedback from the participants about how children might like food if they saw it presented with each of these faces.

## What We Do & What Kids Eat

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*One year-olds are*

- Driven to explore their environment (especially through tasting it!).

*What we do matters because*

- Repeated opportunities to taste food allow 1-year olds to sample nutritious foods – even if they reject the food the first time.



### *What We Do & What Kids Eat (1 Year Olds) ~ 1-2 Minutes*

- **READ:** Read slide.
- **ASK:** Does anyone know how many times experts say a child might need to be exposed to a food before they are willing to eat it?
- **DO:** Take responses from participants.
- **TELL:** Children often need to be exposed to a food nine or more times before they are willing to eat it. One expert, Ellyn Satter, says 20 times is not unreasonable.
- **TELL:** Suppose my friend says she has tried a new food - papaya - with her child, and he didn't like it. So she tried mangoes, and he didn't like that either. And then she tried star fruit, and he didn't like that. She says 'I'm running out of things to try!'
- **ASK:** What can you say to her?
- **DO:** Take responses from participants.
- **TELL:** Yes, trying one food after another isn't good enough, we have to give children repeated exposures to the same food many times before we can expect a child to eat it!
- **ASK:** What are other ways we expose children to food? (Example answers: cooking, grocery shopping, gardening)
- **DO:** Take responses from participants.

## Taste Test!

- Expose children to new foods 10-20 times (at least)
- Plan activities that allow children to taste the same foods repeatedly
- Talk to children about different foods
- Incorporate foods you've tried into the regular menu



### *Taste Test ~ 10 minutes*

- **READ:** Read slide.
- **TELL:** One way to help introduce children to new foods multiple times is to hold regular taste tests. Let's pretend that I'm the teacher and you all are the kids and we are having our own taste test: (Follow text on the back of the About Apples Handout).
- **DO:** After completing exercise, hand out After Apples Handout for participants to take home.
- **TELL:** You could do a taste test with a different fruit or vegetable every week and serve the vegetable or fruit as part of your menu or snack during the week, too. You could also introduce the kids even more to the fruit or vegetable by reading a book related to the food or taking a field trip to see how it is grown. All of this talking about fruits and vegetables counts as introductions to the food.

## What We Do & What Kids Eat

*Two year-olds may be*

- Less hungry as their growth slows.

*What we do matters because*

- Adults can (and should) provide nutritious food, but two year-olds can decide which foods and how much of those foods to eat.



### *What We Do & What Kids Eat (2 Year Olds) ~ 1-2 Minutes*

- **READ:** Read slide.
- **ASK:** What are some healthy food choices you might give a two year old? For instance, you could offer a choice of apple or orange slices. What are other examples? (Ideas might include: substituting any fruit with another fruit or any vegetable with another vegetable, oatmeal or piece of whole grain toast, cheese or hummus, tuna or peanut butter, yogurt or milk.)
- **DO:** Hear a few responses.

## Kids need help making healthy choices.

- **Children don't need special "kids" meals**
  - Children not already full of sugary or salty snacks will be hungry for the food served at meals or snacks.
  - Avoid power struggles by offering two healthy choices and letting the child choose one.
- **Bribing doesn't work**
  - Expose children to new foods repeatedly.
  - Serve new foods next to familiar foods, and let children be rewarded by enjoying the food or a pleasant mealtime.



### *Kids need help making healthy choices ~ 1-2 Minutes*

- **READ:** Read first half of slide.
- **TELL:** In power struggles, if the child still refuses to eat, one method is to say, “this is what is available now and different choices will be available at the next snack or meal.”
- **READ:** Read second half of slide.
- **TELL:** Studies show that children’s food choices tend to get worse instead of better when they are coaxed, forced, or bribed to eat nutritious foods.

## What We Do & What Kids Eat



### *What We Do & What Kids Eat (3-5 Year Olds) ~ 1-2 Minutes*

- **READ:** Read slide.
- **ASK:** What experiences have you given children to learn about food?
- **TELL:** Key experiences are seeing where food comes from (e.g., gardening, grocery store), reading about food, and helping to prepare food (e.g., like our snack).
- **DO:** Pass out book list handout of books encouraging nutritious foods.

## When Kids Eat & What Is Learned

### *Infants should*

- Be allowed to eat whenever they are hungry.

### *Infants learn that*

- Food will be available when they are hungry.



### *What Kids Eat & What Is Learned (Infants) ~ 1 Minute*

- **TELL:** Children learn what to eat from how we act when we eat with them. They also learn eating habits based on when they eat. For instance, infants . . .
- **READ:** Read slide.

### When Kids Eat & What Is Learned

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**Children should**

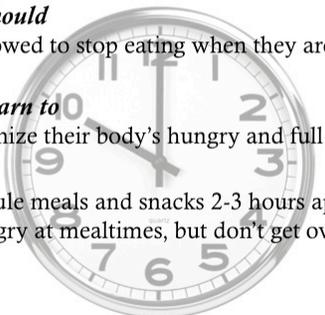
- Be allowed to stop eating when they are full.

**Children learn to**

- Recognize their body's hungry and full cues.

**Tip:**

- Schedule meals and snacks 2-3 hours apart so kids are hungry at mealtimes, but don't get overly hungry.



### *What Kids Eat & What Is Learned (Children) ~ 1-2 Minutes*

- **READ:** Read slide.
- **TELL:** Allowing children to “graze” by having snack foods continuously available is not acceptable. The child may eat poorly at meals knowing he can fill up on snacks instead of on the food served at mealtime. If regular meals and snacks are offered, children will learn to eat when they are hungry.
- **ASK:** Pretend a parent says to you “When I pick up my child he says he’s starving, and he’s not going to have dinner for an hour, so I give him a bag of chips.” OK, what can you say to that parent?
- **DO:** Hear responses from participants.
- **TELL:** Yes, you can explain that the child was offered snack but did not eat and explain to the parent why the early care and education center offers scheduled meals and snacks. The child will learn to eat meals and snacks when they are presented if we make sure to not feed him in between times. He may get hungry for an hour or more, but he will soon learn!

Many young children have families that do not have regular routines, so children do not know when to expect their next meal or snack.

*Do you know children who might fit this description?  
How can you guide their behavior to fit the social expectations of your early care & education setting?*

### *Routines ~ 3-5 Minutes*

- **READ:** Read top of slide.
- **ASK:** Do you know children who might fit this description? How can you guide their behavior to fit the social expectations of your child care setting?
- **DO:** Hear a few responses from participants.
- **NOTE:** Differences between classroom and family routines - especially the perceived lack of family routines - may be a hot topic for participants. After 3-5 minutes stop discussion: Summarize the main points they have made and then move on. Be sure to point out that the Letter to Families in this workshop is one way to communicate with families. Additionally, if participants are interested they could read Chapter 5 in Rethinking Nutrition, which focuses on cultural differences.

**Facilitators**, if you have time you may wish to make the following points about why families don't have regular meal routines:

- Some families are very organized but very busy (work schedules, activities).
- Some families are disorganized.
- Lack of family mealtime may not be how these families want it; it might be unavoidable.
- Even more important for children to experience mealtime at their early childcare setting.
- **ASK:** How do you work with a child who hasn't learned regular mealtimes?
- **TELL:** You tell them what you want and expect and keep reinforcing that mealtime pattern with all the children.

### What We Do & How Kids Eat



- The expectations adults set around mealtime behaviors and the ways adults act while eating with or feeding children can teach children that mealtime is a pleasant, relaxed, and cheerful event.
- *What could you as a caregiver do to communicate this message to infants?  
To 1-2 year olds? To 3-5 year olds?*

### *What We Do & How Kids Eat ~ 3-5 Minutes*

- **TELL:** In addition to learning what to eat and when to eat, children learn how to eat from adults. (Most of us would describe this as table manners!)
- **READ:** first point on slide.
- **ASK:** What could you as a caregiver do to communicate this message to infants? To 1-2 year olds? To 3-5 year olds?
- **NOTE:** Some possible responses to the question may include the following:
  - *Infants:* Smile, make pleasant sounds, talk to infant while feeding bottle; Eat the same food as older infants, smile, make pleasant sounds, and state how good food tastes
  - *1-2 year-olds:* Smile and talk at mealtime, allow to explore new foods and learn how to use utensils even if messy, be relaxed and cheerful, don't make a big deal out of spills - use a relaxed and neutral tone to help children clean up and get back to eating
  - *3-5 year-olds:* Smile and talk, allow choices between healthy foods, encourage children to follow mealtime rules, allow each child some time to talk

### What We Do & How Kids Eat

- Set age-appropriate limits
  - Example: 1-2 year-olds should be allowed to eat with utensils *and* their fingers to allow them to slowly master their motor skills. However, older children should be expected to use utensils when needed.
- Explain expectations
  - Example: Children must wait for everyone to be served before beginning to eat.



### *What We Do & How Kids Eat ~ 2-3 Minutes*

- **TELL:** We've just covered a number of the ways our actions can influence how kids eat. Additionally, we can set limits but explain our expectations, role model and reinforce positive behavior.
- **READ:** Read first half of slide.
- **TELL:** For instance, one and two year olds are mastering how to use utensils and their own child-size cups - allowing them to eat with their fingers and utensils allows them to slowly master these skills. However, it would not be appropriate to allow older children to eat "like a baby."
- **READ:** Read second half of slide.
- **TELL:** Children need to learn to behave in ways that keep mealtimes pleasant for themselves and others at the table. Expectations – rules about how children and adults should act at mealtimes – help children learn and remember appropriate mealtime behavior.

## What We Do & How Kids Eat

- Serve as a positive role model
- Respond to negative behavior by describing, modeling, and reinforcing the more acceptable behavior
  - Example: If children are not passing food around the table, show them how and then ask them to pass the food after serving themselves. Encourage them when you see them passing food appropriately.



### *What We Do & How Kids Eat (2) ~ 1 Minute*

- **READ:** Read slide.

## Activity: Involving Others

1. Make a list of your early care & education setting's mealtime and food habits and expectations
  - Example: Do children need to wash their hands before eating? Sit at a table together? Try certain foods?
2. Write a letter or handout to communicate this list with parents and families OR create a poster to communicate this list with classroom volunteers and/or visitors.

### *Activity: Involving Others ~ 20-30 Minutes*

- **TELL:** As with many things we do in early care & education, it can be easy to just do mealtimes and food preparation without communicating WHY we make certain choices or even saying what our expectations are to parents and families. One way to communicate this information with parents is to write a letter simply stating your early care & education setting's mealtime expectations. Another way is to communicate this information with anyone who volunteers in or visits the classroom by posting your center's mealtime and food habits and expectations on a poster. You can also educate families about issues surrounding development and mealtimes through a regular newsletter article (Hand out list of example newsletter articles.) We're going to conclude this workshop making something you can take with you. First, by yourself, I'd like you to make a list of your early care & education settings' expectations about food and mealtime habits.
- **DO:** Give participants about 5 minutes to list their child care settings' expectations.
- **ASK:** What are some of the expectations you identified?
- **DO:** Hear responses.

## Activity: Involving Others

1. Make a list of your early care & education setting's mealtime and food habits and expectations
  - Example: Do children need to wash their hands before eating? Sit at a table together? Try certain foods?
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### *Activity: Involving Others Continued*

- **NOTE:** Facilitators, for the next part of the activity you may wish to choose either the letter or the poster to simplify this activity. See example on page 74 in *Rethinking Nutrition*.
- **TELL:** Now individually or in small groups, write these expectations in a letter or a poster that parents or volunteers would understand.
- **DO:** Give participants about 10 minutes individually or in small groups to write a letter to families and/or a classroom poster of food and mealtime expectations.
- **TELL:** (Pass out copies of "Letter to Families" found at the end of these workshop materials.) This is an example of a letter to families. You can use it as a model of one way to write your expectations. A poster would be similar but might use shorter statements.
- **DO:** For another 10 minutes, have participants share their products with the larger group.

*(For additional registry credit, participants could bring in the product (poster or letter) that was not completed during class.)*

## Summary

- Our job is to provide a variety of healthy, tasty foods to children; the child's job is to decide what and how much to eat.
- Schedule meals and snacks at regular intervals
- Allow children to ask for more if they are still hungry or not eat if they are not hungry
- Provide positive reinforcement for healthy eating
- Be a positive (and healthy) role model.

### *Summary ~ 3-5 Minutes*

- **NOTE:** *This* slide is animated so only the title should show at first. Before clicking through this slide, ask the following question.
- **ASK:** What are the “take away” messages for you all today?
- **TELL:** Thanks for sharing. We hope you will also remember these points.
- **READ:** Read slide.

**“Children need adults to be supportive and companionable, to show them what it means to grow up with respect toward food, and to give them opportunities to experiment and master.”**

**- Ellyn Satter (2008)**

### ***Closing ~ 1-2 Minutes***

- **TELL:** In closing, I'd like to read you all a quote by a well-known nutrition expert working with families and children around mealtime and eating.
- **READ:** Read slide.
- **DO:** Hand out W1 Evaluation handout.
- **TELL:** I'm handing out a short workshop evaluation form. Please fill it out. Your comments help us continue to improve these workshops. Thank you all for attending today! I'm happy to take any questions you have.
- Distribute registry certificates to those who need them and collect evaluation forms.

Development of this educational program was made possible by a generous donation from an alumna of the School of Human Ecology, UW-Madison.

### *Acknowledgement*

- *DO*: Have slide visible to participants