

# TABLETALK

APRIL, 2010 ❁ CHILD FOOD PROGRAM OF TEXAS ❁ P.O. BOX 5465 ❁ KATY, TX 77491 ❁ 281-395-7000, TOLL-FREE: 877-395-6560, Fax: 281-395-7002

## Healthy Portion Sizes

Are we setting up our children for a lifetime of weight problems and unhealthy eating by serving them inappropriately large portion sizes? Maybe, according to recent research. When given large portions of lunch components that exceeded the USDA recommended serving sizes, 5- and 6-year olds ate more of all items than when they were served recommended portion sizes. 3 1/2 year old children ate similar amounts no matter what portion size they were offered.

It appears that very young children eat the amount of food needed to satisfy their hunger, then stop. As they get older, children seem to start ignoring their internal hunger cues and eat according to other influences, such as the amount of food offered to them. Nutrition experts think that serving children larger than recommended portion sizes encourages them to eat more than is necessary and may be an important piece of the growing childhood obesity puzzle. CACFP portion sizes are based on the amount of food required for normal growth of children at different stages of development.

Providers must always serve at least the minimum portion size of each meal pattern component. If a child is still hungry after finishing the first serving, offer additional food rather than serving very large portions initially.

### For Preschoolers, Healthy Eating Is...

- Being curious about new foods and ways of eating them · Examining the chicken sandwich before they eat it
- Accepting toast only if it is cut in triangles
- Trying only a bite of squash today - maybe more tomorrow
- Drinking milk only if they can pour it into their own glass
- Loving carrots on Tuesday, refusing them on Wednesday.
- Insisting the apple be whole, not in slices
- Wanting a peanut butter sandwich for lunch every day for a week
- Gobbling up the cookies they helped to prepare when they are fresh from the oven.
- Preferring simple foods they can recognize
- Drinking soup out of a mug, just like Mom's

## Variety

For preschoolers, food variety promotes the positive and pleasurable aspects of eating by exploring a wide range of foods with different colors, flavors and textures. Preschoolers are eager to learn about the nature of food. From an early age most delight in exploring the textures and savoring the tastes of various foods.

Even simple activities such as helping to cut open a pumpkin or make muffins are ways children learn about food. Preparing food gives young children a feeling of accomplishment. It also encourages them to eat these foods. Potatoes the preschooler has helped to mash or radishes she has picked from the garden are more appealing than those that just appear on the table.



## Tips from Chef Bob

### MEXI-BEEF CASSEROLE

**Ingredients:** 1 lb lean (at least 80%) ground beef; 1/4 cup chopped onion; 2 Tbsp taco seasoning mix (from 1-oz package); 1 can (11 oz) whole kernel corn with red and green peppers, drained; 2 cans (8 oz each) tomato sauce; 4 oz Cheddar cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes (1 cup); 1 can (7.5 oz) refrigerated buttermilk biscuits; 1 tsp butter or margarine, melted; 1 tsp yellow cornmeal, if desired. **Directions:** Heat oven to 375°F. In 10-inch ovenproof skillet, cook beef and onion over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until beef is thoroughly cooked; drain. Reduce heat to medium; stir in taco seasoning mix, corn and tomato sauce. Heat until hot. Stir in cheese cubes. Separate dough into 10 biscuits; cut each into quarters. Arrange quartered biscuits around outer edge of skillet. Brush biscuits with melted butter; sprinkle with cornmeal. Bake 18 to 22 minutes or until biscuits are golden brown.