

TABLETALK

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Cultural Foods

Children eat according to the eating traditions of their family. These traditions are a valued aspect of their culture. Many foods we might eat occasionally, such as sweet potatoes, bok choy and buckwheat, are enjoyed regularly by different cultures. Different cultures also use common foods such as chicken and fish in recipes that show their cultural heritage.

Learning to appreciate food as prepared and enjoyed by other cultures can add to the interest children already have in food and eating. For example, by offering a staple food such as bread in its many forms (pita, bannock, focaccia, bagels, chapattis, tortillas) and discussing the origins of the food, children can begin to appreciate the cultural diversity that food choices reflect.

How to introduce new foods

Parents and caregivers can help preschoolers accept a wider selection of foods by:

- Being role models. Children are more eager to eat foods that they see family and friends enjoying;
- Presenting food in appealing ways by combining different colours, textures and shapes of food; offering small quantities of a new food alongside a familiar one, without pressure to eat the new food;
- Serving a new food when children are with their peers;
- Encouraging them to become familiar with different foods by helping to grow, buy, prepare or serve them;
- Being patient. If an unfamiliar food is not accepted the first time, it can be offered again later. The more often children are exposed to new foods, the more likely they will taste them and learn to accept them;
- Not using foods as rewards. For example, withholding a sweet dessert until all the vegetables are eaten may establish a preference for the dessert and a dislike for the vegetables;
- Respecting individual food preferences. Every child has different likes and dislikes.

How much food is enough? Too much?

Many parents and caregivers are concerned about how much a child eats. For some, their concern is that the child is eating too little; for others, it is that the child is eating too much. Children know best how much they need. Parents and caregivers can help them meet their nutrient and energy needs by providing a variety of foods and by:

- Respecting the child's ability to determine how to eat,
- Offering portions suitable for the child (at least the minimum USDA portion sizes), with options for seconds, and allowing children to serve themselves when possible;
- Setting regular meal and snack times - ones that work best for the children, families and child care;
- Making time for healthy eating so that meals are not rushed;
- Providing a comfortable setting for eating - one that is without distractions such as television, which can interfere with hunger and satiety cues;
- Not pressuring the child to eat.



Tips from Chef Bob

IMPOSSIBLY EASY HAM 'N SWISS PIE

Serves 6

Ingredients: 1-1/2 cups cubed fully cooked smoked boneless ham; 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese (4 ounces); 1/4 cup chopped green onions or chopped onion; 1/2 cup Bisquick mix; 1 cup milk; 1/4 teaspoon salt, if desired; 1/8 teaspoon pepper; 2 eggs; 1 tomato, sliced; 1 green bell pepper, cut into rings. **Directions:** Heat oven to 400°F. Grease 9-inch pie plate. Sprinkle ham, cheese and onions in pie plate. Stir Bisquick mix, milk, salt, pepper and eggs until blended. Pour into pie plate. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 5 minutes. Garnish with tomato and bell pepper.