



From the Food Bank Kitchen

The Food Bank
of Western Massachusetts

Picky Eaters

It is very common for children to be picky eaters. Some children may love trying new fruits and vegetables, but others may want to stick to a “white” diet of pasta, and bread. While grains are important, children need a well-balanced diet to get all of the vitamins and minerals that will help them grow big and strong. Is it possible to make broccoli seem as appealing as a slice of pizza? Probably not, but there are some proven strategies to help even the pickiest eater broaden their horizons.

Don't give in to the power struggle: Most of the time, children can pick up on a parent's nervousness. If a child rejects a food, that may increase pressure on the parent to ensure the child eats that food. When this happens, bargaining may work short term, but not long term. Telling a child “two more bites and you get dessert” makes dessert valuable, and the meal invaluable. While vegetables are a chore, dessert is the reward. A child will learn if they resist long enough, they can get a reward for “two more bites”.

Set realistic expectations: Research has suggested it takes children up to 12 times being exposed a food to determine if they like it. Being exposed to a food does NOT mean they have to eat the food. An exposure can be looking at the food, listening to a parent talk about the food, helping prepare the food, or trying a sample of the food. Putting pressure on a child to like a food immediately can backfire and a child can swear the food off entirely.

Add variety: Children need a well-balanced diet to grow. If they only like peas, it would make sense to serve them peas at every meal to appease them. While this works to give them a serving of vegetables, it teaches them that they do not need to try new things when it comes to eating. If possible, switch up the menu including various vegetables and protein sources.

Include them: When a child is involved in gardening, shopping, or meal preparation, they are more inclined to eat the meal. When at a grocery store, encourage your child to scan the produce department and pick out the vegetable for the meal or for a snack. For meal prep, have your child wash the vegetables, mix home made salad dressing, or toss the veggies in herbs and olive oil. This contribution will create a sense of accomplishment in your child and they will want to benefit from their hard work, by eating their work!

Don't make separate meals: If a child knows they can protest and argue until they get boxed mac and cheese for dinner, they will protest. Making one meal shows a child that this is what they will have for dinner, and there will not be accommodations for their pickiness. If they truly refuse to eat their meal, don't send them to bed hungry but have bland alternatives instead, like plain cheerios, plain yogurt, or cottage cheese.

Eat together: If possible, eat as a family. A child will be more inclined to eat a meal if they see their parent eat the same meal. If a parent opts out of eating the vegetable portion of dinner but tells their child to eat it, the child will believe vegetables are not important, and are optional for adults.

Manage when sweets are eaten: Forbidding sweets can backfire. Research has shown that restricting foods can lead to an overindulgence down the road. Giving children a set number of sweets a day can help them learn control. Maybe a child can have a piece of candy at lunch, or a cookie after dinner but not both. This gives the child two choices, when they have their treat, and what their treat is.

Banana Lentil Muffins

Makes 12 muffins

From lentils.org

1 egg	1 cup bananas, mashed
1/2 cup canola oil	1 cup lentil puree*
1/2 cup sugar	1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. baking soda	1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
1/2 cup raisins (optional)	1 tsp. baking powder

Directions: Preheat oven to 400°F. In a bowl, combine egg, canola oil, sugar, bananas, lentil purée and vanilla. Mix well. In another bowl, mix together flour, baking soda, baking powder and raisins. Stir into egg mixture until just combined. Spoon batter into greased muffin tins filling about 2/3 full. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. Cool and remove from muffin tins.

***For lentil puree:** cook dry lentils according to instructions on packaging. Drain lentils once finished cooking and mash lentils with a potato masher until it's paste or put lentils in a blender and blend until it's a paste.

Nutrition: 1 Muffin: Calories 220, Fat 10g, Saturated Fat 1g, Carbs 29g, Fiber 3g, Sugar 15g, Protein 4g, Sodium 150mg.



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White Bean Dip with Herbs

Makes 20 portions

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- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp chopped sage
- 1/2 tsp chopped rosemary
- Pita chips for serving

- Two 19 ounce cans cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 Tbsp. water
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper (optional)

Directions: In a medium skillet, heat the olive oil on medium heat until shimmering. Add the garlic, sage, and rosemary and cook, stirring until fragrant and the garlic is just beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Add the beans and toss to coat. Transfer the cannellini beans to a food processor. Add the water, season with salt and cayenne pepper and process to a fairly smooth puree. Transfer the dip to a small serving bowl, drizzle with 1tsp olive oil, and serve with pita chips.

*If you do not have a food processor the beans can be mashed with a hand masher.

Nutritional Info: Calories: 198, Total fat: 9g, Saturated fat: 1g, Sodium: 68mg, Carbohydrate: 22g, Fiber: 4g, Sugars: 1g, Protein: 7g

This afterschool snack has lean protein, lots of folate, iron, and Vitamin E

Sweet Crunch Winter Salad

Serves: 4

From BudgetBytes.com

- Maple Tahini Dressing:
- 1/4 cup tahini
 - 1/4 cup water
 - 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
 - 1 Tbsp. maple syrup
 - 1/4 tsp salt, and garlic powder
 - Pinch cayenne pepper (optional)

- Salad:
- 3 cups chopped purple cabbage
 - 3 cups finely chopped broccoli
 - 1 large carrot, shredded
 - 2 green onions, sliced
 - 1/3 cup sunflower seeds (unsalted)
 - 1/3 cup dried cranberries

Directions: To prepare the dressing— combine the tahini, water, lemon juice, maple syrup, salt, garlic powder, and cayenne pepper in a bowl or jar. Whisk the ingredients together, or place a lid on your jar and shake until incorporated. Set the dressing aside.

For the salad— finely chop the cabbage and broccoli, then place them in a bowl. Peel and shred the carrot and slice the green onions. Add the carrots, green onion, sunflower seeds, and dried cranberries to the bowl with the cabbage and broccoli. Stir until everything is combined. To serve, drizzle the dressing over the salad mixture and then stir until everything is well coated. You want to use a generous amount of dressing, making sure everything is liberally coated, similar to coleslaw.

The salad can be refrigerated for 4-5 days undressed.

Nutritional Info: Calories: 279, Total fat: 17g, Saturated fat: 2g, Sodium: 141mg, Carbohydrate: 28g, Fiber: 7g, Sugars: 13g, Protein: 9g

This salad can be served as a side dish for lunch or dinner. It has lots of Vitamin A, B Vitamins, Vitamin E, and Vitamin K!

Spinach and Artichoke Dip Pasta

Serves: 4

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- 8 ounces whole wheat rotini or pasta of choice
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 large shallot, minced
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

- 3 Tbsp. flour
- 2 cups skim milk
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese, shredded
- 1 cup low fat shredded mozzarella cheese
- 14 ounce can artichoke hearts, roughly chopped
- 2 cups spinach, fresh or frozen (thawed if frozen)

Directions: Cook the pasta according to package instructions, drain the pasta and set aside. In a large saucepan, melt the butter and oil over medium/high heat. Add the shallot and sauté for about 2 minutes, or until the shallot has softened slightly. Add in the garlic and sauté for another minute. Lower the heat to medium, add in the flour stirring until it is completely incorporated, cook another minute. Slowly pour in the milk whisking continuously as you do. Add in the salt and pepper and continue whisking until the sauce is smooth and thickened, about another 2 minutes. Add in the parmesan cheese, and 3/4 of the mozzarella cheese whisking until they have melted completely. Add in the artichokes and spinach and heat through, about 2 more minutes. Pour the pasta back into the sauce and fold together until it is completely covered in the cheese sauce. Pour the pasta mixture into a casserole dish and top with the remaining 1/4 cup of the mozzarella cheese. Place the pasta in the oven under the broiler and broil just until the top is golden brown. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Info: Calories: 403, Total fat: 15g, Saturated fat: 4g, Sodium: 460mg, Carbohydrate: 47g, Fiber: 11g, Sugars: 7g, Protein: 22g

This dinner dish is an excellent source of protein, and fiber! It is exceptionally high in calcium, Vitamin A, Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, Vitamin E, Vitamin K, Folate, Thiamin, and Niacin!