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Food is a Gift for Our Taste Buds

Ann Zander, Family & Consumer Science Agent, Boulder County

Healthy eating and lots of physical activity are just as important for health and well-being during the holidays as at any other time of the year. Kids need healthy foods to fuel their body and mind. It's well known that families tend to eat too much "junk" food during the holidays. Give sugary and fatty "junk" foods the boot with simple, tasty, yet nutritious meals and snacks. With a little planning you can easily provide nutritious food for kids that's fun to prepare and eat. Although adults usually decide what's on the menu, kids eat what is available, so have a variety of healthy snacks readily available. Surrounding family with healthier options leaves them with no choice but to eat healthier food.

"Think about what you are celebrating, not just about how great the food is!"

So, how do you maintain your healthy eating habits during a family feast or get together? Here are a few ideas that can help you encourage healthy food choices:

Tips for Success:

Make Foods Taste Good:

We eat with our eyes as well, as our mouth and nose, so prepare foods that look, smell, and taste delicious!

1. Make healthy food look festive by sprinkling coconut, sliced almonds, green onions or herbs on food.
2. Use new shapes for sandwiches, vegetables, and fruits.
3. Try something new, such as adding a new ingredient to favorite recipes or serving a new side dish with a well-liked main dish.

Splurge on Colors and Textures:

1. Serve foods with contrasting colors. For example, combine yellow corn and black beans with low-fat salad dressing or just a squirt of lemon juice. Serve oranges along with green or red grapes.
2. Add a splash of salsa or sprinkle low salt seasonings on familiar side dishes such as rice, sweet potatoes or green beans. Do the same to low fat dips and spreads like hummus, bean dip, etc.
3. Buy a few special eye-catching fruits or vegetables by choosing in-season fruits and vegetables that will provide color and crunch!
4. Make meals quick and easy by using canned or frozen fruits and vegetables. For example serve canned pineapple or frozen peach slices without added sugar.

Sneak Vegetables into Familiar Dishes:

1. Substitute up to half of the macaroni with steamed cauliflower in a traditional Mac and Cheese.
2. Substitute up to half of the potatoes with steamed cauliflower in your favorite mashed potato recipe.
3. Add a cup of peas or shredded carrots to cooked rice, stuffing, taco meat, stew or meatloaf.



Healthy Sweet Endings:

1. Serve a home-made dessert of pudding, fruit, and vanilla wafers instead of pie.
2. Offer a parfait of yogurt, cereal, nuts, and dried or sliced fruit in layers
3. Make a Trifle by layering unfrosted cake slices with berries and pudding.
4. Pass around a platter of new or unusual fruits like pomegranates, persimmons, dates, figs or star fruit instead of fudge.

Let's Talk:

Small changes in five key areas can make a huge difference and do add up to real results:

1. Eat more fruits and vegetables
2. Consume less sugar and fat
3. Eat healthier snacks
4. Watch portion size
5. Eat together as a family



Any gathering can feel like a party, especially when you focus on enjoying the company of family and friends. Encourage everyone to laugh, act out stories, tell jokes, dance, play and just enjoy being together. The food can really be simple – just make everyone feel important and welcome. Eating healthy and being physically active work together to promote good health. Both can be fun parts of gatherings. Remember that for children, young and old, playtime is a priceless gift.

Parents can help their children learn the fun and joy of holiday celebrations without giving up daily activity and eating healthy. Start with simple menus. Remember, kids like to be involved.

Kids can:

- give ideas for menus
- help in the kitchen
- come up with ideas for holiday games and activities
- help find the most colorful in-season fruit or vegetable in the market

Recipe for Health:

Cauliflower Mac and Cheese

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. Penne pasta (wheat)
- 1 c. milk (2% or skim)
- 1 lb. Shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ head cauliflower florets
- ¼ c. parmesan cheese
- 1 T. chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste

Bring salted water to a boil and cook pasta until done. In meantime, cook the cauliflower until soft and transfer in a blender to puree. In a medium sized pan, transfer the pasta and pour the cauliflower puree in. Add milk, cheese and season to taste. Sprinkle chopped parsley on top or Serve with a green salad/vegetables
Makes 4 servings



Source: *Healthy Recipes from The White House To You*, October 17, 2011