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Vegetable Soup

By Glenda Wentworth, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Colorado State University, Eagle County

Do your children enjoy vegetable soup? Vegetable soup can be exciting to make and delicious to eat for children, especially when paired with a story about growing vegetables or making soup! They may be eager to make and taste it. For even more encouragement, include children in gardening pretend play and a cooking activity. Making soup together can become a fun family event. Children are more likely to taste what they have helped prepare. Exposure to different foods helps encourage children to taste and enjoy a variety of foods. When children learn about the importance of eating vegetables, it can help them in making lifelong decisions regarding their health.



“Growing Vegetable Soup”, written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert, is a bright and colorful book. This delightful story for young children explains the process of growing vegetables by planting seeds, watering them, weeding, and watching the plants grow. Finally, plants are harvested and ready to make into a vegetable soup.

Getting Started Activity

Start by reading the book “Growing Vegetable Soup” written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert. Pretend to make the vegetable soup with your child. Pretend to scrub, peel and cut up the vegetables. Talk about the color of each vegetable, if it is grown above the ground or below the ground. You can also let the child know how each color of vegetables helps their body grow. It is called eating the rainbow. Each color of vegetable provides many health benefits that can help protect our bodies from chronic diseases.



- Red vegetables (tomatoes and red bell peppers) are rich in lycopene. They seem to protect cells against damage.
- Orange and yellow vegetables (carrots and sweet potatoes) are good sources of carotenoids. They promote healthy eyes, skin, and immune system.
- Green vegetables (asparagus, broccoli, green beans, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts) are rich in cancer-blocking chemicals.
- Blue and purple vegetables (red onion, eggplant, purple potatoes) have powerful antioxidants called anthocyanins. They help keep blood vessels healthy.
- White and brown vegetables (mushrooms, garlic, potatoes and onions) contain compounds which are associated with improving blood pressure and cholesterol.

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This pretend playtime provides children with plenty of opportunities to make vegetable soup over and over again. Additionally, pretend play helps children develop skills such as vocabulary, communication, and problem solving.

Let's Talk

Ask your child what their favorite vegetables are. Ask them if they know where the vegetables come from. Then make a list of vegetables to purchase at the grocery store for your soup. Encourage participation by asking children help wash and prepare vegetables. Invite young children to watch you peel and chop the vegetables. If your child is old enough, they can assist you by peeling, tearing and/or cutting up the vegetables. Talk about the vegetables as you chop them, mention where and how they are grown, their colors, and texture. Invite children to put the chopped vegetables into the pot while both of you count the chopped pieces for counting practice.



Recipes for Health Vegetable Soup

**Makes 8 big servings or 12 smaller ones.*

Ingredients: (use these vegetables or choose others, depending on their availability)

- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 medium potato, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup green beans (canned, frozen or fresh) (if fresh, children can break/snap the beans into pieces)
- 1 stalk of broccoli, broken into bite size pieces
- 3 medium tomatoes, chopped (or 1 can stewed tomatoes)
- 1 green pepper, chopped or torn into small pieces
- 1 cup corn, (canned or frozen)
- 4 cups vegetable stock

Seasonings:

- 1 bay leaf
- ½ cup chopped parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste



Directions:

1. Wash hands and all food contact surfaces with soap and water.
2. Rinse fresh vegetables under cool running water.
3. Peel and chop or break vegetables into bite-size pieces.
4. Add vegetables, vegetable stock, and 4 cups of water to a large pot.
5. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer until vegetables are tender, an hour or two, depending on how soft or crunchy you prefer your vegetables.
6. Add seasonings; simmer for about 10 more minutes.
7. Remove the bay leaf and allow the soup to cool.

Enjoy your delicious and healthy creation with family!

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods...