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EXTENSION

# Family Matters

*Improving Health Together*

## September 2022 Newsletter

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### When it's Too Hot to Cook, Serve-up a Board of Cold Foods *By Sheila Gains, Colorado State University Extension*



September is actually the beginning of fall, but it often feels more like a hot summer's day instead. When it feels too hot outside to turn on the oven or stand over a hot stove, consider making a meal of cold foods, called a charcuterie board. Serving a board dinner is one of many no-cook meal ideas to add to your meal options. A charcuterie board is simply a board or tray filled with cold food options. Each person gets to select from a variety of ingredients to make a meal of tasty small bites.

#### **Putting Together a Charcuterie Board Dinner**

Start with a large cutting board, flat pan or cookie sheet. Then load it up with colorful piles of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, protein and condiments.

#### **Vegetables**

Baby carrots, red pepper strips, celery sticks, snap peas, crisp cucumber rounds, and florets of cauliflower or broccoli can be eaten plain, with dip, or rolled in the center of a slice of salami. Thinly slice vegetables like tomatoes or radishes, so they are ready to easily top a small bite.

#### **Fruits**

Both fresh and dried fruits work well on a dinner board. Add small clusters of grapes or handfuls of in-season fruits such as berries, melon slices, or apple slices. Dried fruit options could include dried cran-raisins, apricots, dates, or diced mango. Fruit can add just the right amount of sweet to balance salty cheeses or meats.

#### **Whole Grains**

Include some whole grain crackers or toasted bread for building the base of your yummy bites.

#### **Protein**

Be sure to leave room for some protein options on the board. Protein choices could include: nuts, nut butters, cheeses, sliced and cooked or cured meats (salami, etc.), bean spread (hummus), sliced hard-boiled eggs or egg salad.

#### **Condiments**

If you want to add condiments or wet foods, such as pickles, jams, dips, mustard, sauce, olives, etc., put them in a small bowl first, rather than putting them directly on the board or pan. This keeps their juices and their flavors contained. Dips and spreads add a flavor boost to raw vegetables. They also and help hold layers of your small bite creations together. Experiment with a small bowl of avocado spread, cream cheese, light ranch dressing or spinach dip.

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

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### Food Safety

- As a reminder, always start by washing hands with soap and water. This is just as important for those helping prepare and place foods on the board/tray, as it is for those who will be helping themselves to the food.
- Gently rub all fresh produce (fruits and vegetables) under cold running water and drain before adding them to the board.
- Prepare foods that need to be kept cold for food safety (meats, cheese, eggs and many dips or spreads) in small bowls or plates and keep them in the refrigerator. Then right before serving add them to the board.
- Have a variety of tongs, spoons, forks or toothpicks in food to help keep hands out of the food.
- Leftovers should be refrigerated within 2 hours of serving or thrown out.



### Let's Talk



Talk to children about the importance of eating a variety of foods each day. Eating different types of food helps them grow healthy and strong.

Explain to children that the foods they like, or dislike now might change as they get older, so it is important to be willing to try both new and familiar foods, and sometimes more than once. Share with them an example of a healthy food you didn't like at their age, but now you do.

Ask children to help you decide what foods to include on the food board. Be sure to include a few of their favorites. Include children in food preparation, such as helping wash produce, making a pile of nuts, or arranging slices meats and cheeses on the board.

### Recipe for Health

This is not really a recipe, but ideas of kid friendly foods to include on a family board dinner.

- If your children like mac-n-cheese, include a mild cheese and crackers.
- If they like chicken nuggets, pick up a roasted chicken at your local grocery store, remove skin and bones. Serve cold cubed chicken and their favorite dip or sauce.



Include foods with a wide selection of colors, flavors, textures and nutrients. Variety is the key to making this creative no-cook dinner appeal to everyone. Having choices is powerful!

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