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# Taste the World: Celebrating Diversity in Early Childhood Programs Through Meals and Snacks

Kathleen Lyons  
*Purdue University*

Louise Peck  
*Purdue University*

Susan Kontos  
*Purdue University*

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# TASTE THE WORLD:

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY  
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD  
PROGRAMS THROUGH  
MEALS AND SNACKS



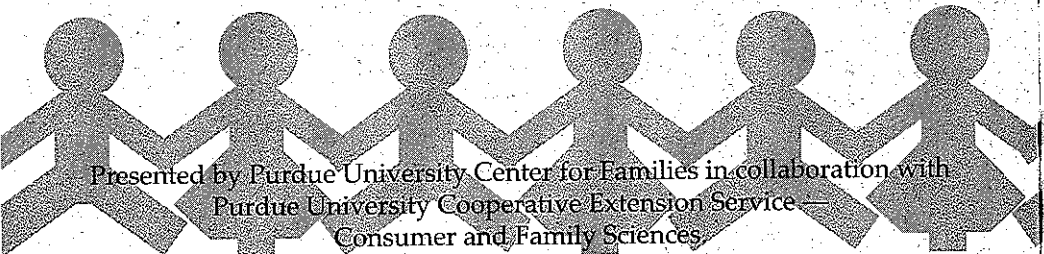
**KATHLEEN LYONS**  
**LOUISE PECK, PHD, RD**  
**DEPARTMENT OF FOODS AND NUTRITION**

**SUSAN KONTOS, PHD**  
**CENTER FOR FAMILIES**  
**PURDUE UNIVERSITY**  
**WEST LAFAYETTE, IN 47907**

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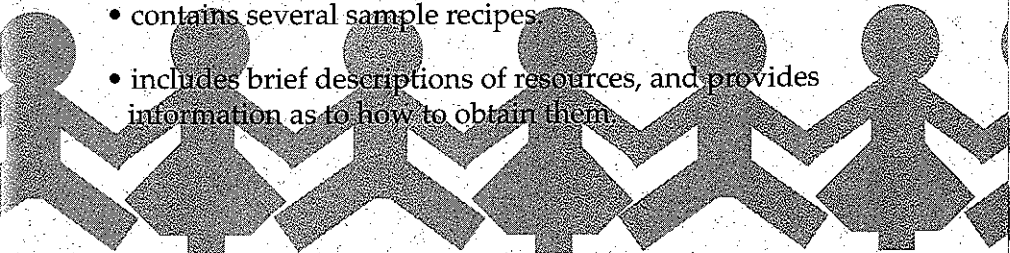


**F**ood and eating are important parts of young children's experiences in early childhood programs. Meals and snacks that children receive do more than provide information about healthy nutrition and eating habits. They also provide a window into customs and preferences of children and families from other religions, cultures, and ethnic groups. In other words, meals and snacks provide children valuable learning opportunities with long-term implications for health and cross-cultural understanding.

The diversity of today's society is often reflected in the children of varying ethnicities, religions, and races in early childhood programs. Even in programs lacking in this type of diversity, today's children are certain to encounter a diverse array of peers and families in their everyday lives. Providing meals and snacks reflective of society's diversity can help children from minority groups feel more at home; increase knowledge and awareness of diversity; and increase choices for healthy menu items.

#### **THIS PUBLICATION:**

- intends to increase awareness about cultural diversity on the part of child-care providers while introducing children to various cultural groups.
- offers suggestions for introducing new food items into children's meal and snack menus.
- provides suggestions for activities that can help to expand children's palates as well as their appreciation for diversity.
- contains several sample recipes.
- includes brief descriptions of resources, and provides information as to how to obtain them.



## CHARACTERISTIC FOODS OF SEVERAL ETHNIC GROUPS

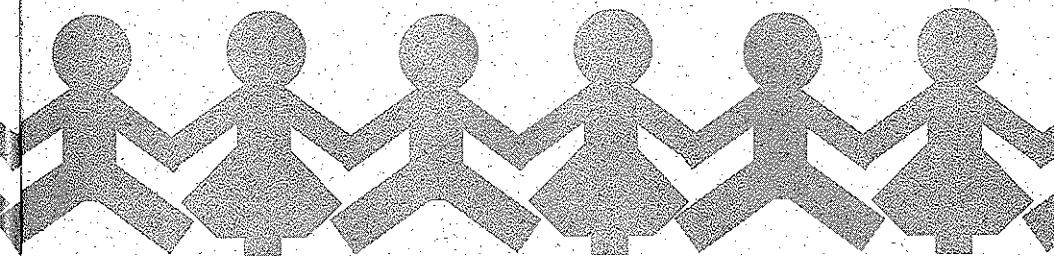
ETHNIC GROUP	CHARACTERISTIC FOODS
African-Americans	Pork, fish, small game, poultry, kidney beans, black-eyed peas, pinto beans, green leafy vegetables cooked with meat, okra, sweet potatoes, yams. A few fresh fruits. Corn bread, hushpuppies, grits.
Hispanic Americans	Lamb, chorizo (sausage), black beans, chilis, jicama, peppers, tomatillos, yucca, avocados, guava, passion fruit, mangoes, papaya, tamarindo, zapote, masa harina, tortillas, empanadas, sopa, pan dulce, rice, and tamales.
Pacific & Asian-Americans	Duck, seafood, soybeans, mung beans, bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, bitter melon, cabbage, ginger root, seaweed, taro. Wide variety of fruit, including kumquat and persimmons. Rice, noodles, wonton, rice cakes, and arrowroot.
Native Americans	Game meats, fish, camass root, chilis, fiddleheads, mushrooms, squash, sweet potatoes, dandelion, ferns, watercress, wild turnips, berries, currants, grapes, muskmelons, plums, rhubarb, corn, and wild rice.
Jewish Americans	Kosher beef, poultry, herring, lox, sardines, chopped liver, gefilte fish, potato kugel, thick vegetable soups, fried potato latkes, raisins, figs, dates, stewed dried fruit, chalsa, matzo, unleavened bread, bagels, kasha, and challah.

**Muslims**

Kid, rabbit, veal, fava beans, chick peas, lentils, artichokes, broadbeans, eggplant, grape leaves, leeks, okra, olives, dates, figs, pomegranates, corn, farina, rice (long grain & basmati), bulgur wheat, and couscous.

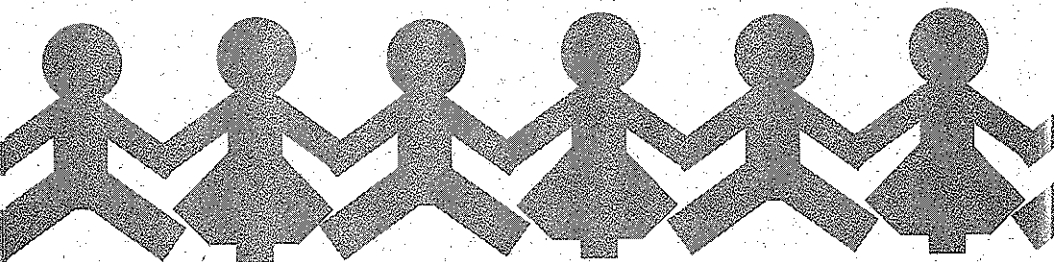
## TIPS FOR INTRODUCING NEW FOODS

- Talk about new food ahead of time. Give children an opportunity to help prepare the food.
- Introduce only one new food at a time—with familiar foods.
- Offer a small amount of the new food at the beginning of the meal when children are hungry.
- Make badges that proclaim “I tasted it!” for children to wear when they try new foods. The badges might look like a piece of fruit with a bite out of it. Let the children help make the badges.
- Have a party to taste test new foods. This will work best if everybody sits down and samples the food at the same time. That way, the effect of prior adverse reactions will be minimized. Also, remember to set a good example and taste the food yourself.
- If the new food is accepted, offer it again soon so children can become accustomed to it.
- Let parents know children have tried a new food. Send copies of recipes home with children. This will let parents know what foods their children have tried and give them a chance to prepare the foods at home.
- Do not make a fuss if the new food is refused. Offer it again in a few days.



## CLASS ACTIVITIES

- Explore the eating utensils (i.e., knives, forks, spoons, chopsticks, and fingers) used in various cultures.
- Play a game that Chinese children play. The goal is to carry food items, such as marshmallows or popcorn, with chopsticks from a bowl placed at one end of the room to a bowl located at the other end. The competition can be a relay race between several teams or a race between individuals.
- Practice the eating styles of different cultures. For example, eat sitting on the floor instead of in a chair.
- Make sandwiches and explain that every culture has its own version. Tacos, pitas, and egg rolls are the same concept as bread surrounding a filling.
- Cut out pictures of a wide variety of foods (especially ethnic foods). Decide where they belong in the Food Guide Pyramid.
- Play "Japanese Fruit Basket," which is similar to musical chairs. Each child is assigned a fruit (use fruits from different cultures, and have samples to taste at the end). Chairs are placed in a circle, but there is one less than the total number of children. One child is "it" and stands in the middle of the circle. Either two specific fruits or "fruit basket" is called. The children representing the specific fruits must change seats. If "fruit basket" is called, all of the children change seats. The child who is "it" tries to sit in an empty chair.



# RECIPES

Food is a tool that can be used to explore diversity and introduce multicultural education. Although specific foods may have different meanings in different cultures, most cultural groups use food for similar purposes. And all cultures celebrate with food. The following recipes are intended to provide an initial spark. There are many other resources for recipes, including parents and the local library.

## LATKES (POTATO PANCAKES)

### JEWISH AMERICAN

- 6 medium potatoes
- 2 small onions (or 1 tablespoon onion powder)
- 6 tablespoons flour
- 4 eggs (or 8 oz. Egg Beaters)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

Scrub potatoes and cut out any dark spots. Grate the potatoes (coarsely) into a large bowl. Peel onions and grate into the bowl (or use instead 1 tablespoon onion powder). Mix in flour, eggs, salt, and pepper. Spray frying pan with nonstick cooking spray and heat pan over medium heat. Drop potato mixture by heaping tablespoons into frying pan. Flatten with the spoon and fry at medium heat until both sides are golden brown. Mix the batter in the bowl from time to time as you work. Drain the latkes on paper towels. Serve with applesauce.

(Makes 16, 4-inch round latkes)

## QUESADILLAS

### HISPANIC AMERICAN

- Flour tortillas
- Grated cheese

Place one flour tortilla in a frying pan and sprinkle with grated cheese. When the cheese melts, cover with another tortilla to make a sandwich. Flip. When tortillas are warm and the cheese is melted, remove from heat. Serve by cutting into six wedges.

(One tortilla and 1/2 cup cheese per child)

## GINGERED CARROTS

### ASIAN-AMERICAN

- 2 pounds fresh carrots
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 4 teaspoons dried parsley
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger

Peel carrots and cut them diagonally into thin slices. Steam until tender. Combine remaining ingredients in a small mixing bowl. Pour over carrots. Serve immediately.

(Makes 25 servings)



## **BANANA BAKE**

### **AFRICAN - AMERICAN**

- 5 medium bananas
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1/3 cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 2/3 cup shredded coconut



Cut bananas crosswise in half; cut each lengthwise in half again. Arrange in greased pie plate. Dot with butter and drizzle with juices. Sprinkle with brown sugar and coconut. Bake at 375° F until coconut is golden brown, eight to 10 minutes.

## **FLAPIJACKS**

### **NATIVE AMERICAN**

- 2 cups cornmeal
- Pinch of salt
- 1/4 cup water



Mix cornmeal and boiling water. Pinch off small pieces of dough. Flatten dough using a press or rolling pin. Spray skillet or frying pan with nonstick cooking spray. Place flapjacks in pan and cook over medium heat, turning to brown both sides.

## **SPICY GROUND BEEF**

### **EAST INDIAN**

- 3 pounds 8 ounces ground beef (no more than 30 percent fat)
- 1/2 cup fresh onion, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 2 teaspoons oregano
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2 cups raisins
- 2 cups ketchup
- 2 cups water



Brown meat and onion. Drain off excess fat and juices. Combine seasonings and orange juice; mix with meat mixture and simmer 10 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Turn heat to low and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes, stirring frequently.

(Makes 25 servings)

## RESOURCES

For additional ideas on how to incorporate an awareness of cultural diversity through ethnic foods, you may wish to consult some of the following:

Bauer, E. and Björkman, S. *This Is The Way We Eat Our Lunch*. Scholastic Inc. 1995.

Children take a trip across America and around the world to learn about the various lunch preferences of children from different cultures.

Cook, M. L., Barwood, J. C., and Fly, A. D. *Hands On: International Cooking Projects for Children & Parents*. Bloomington Developmental Learning Center. Bloomington, IN. 1995.

A 31-page booklet that contains recipes from around the world that children can help prepare. Also included are games, activities, and appropriate books and songs.

Duyff, R. L. and Hamilton, J. M. *The Foods I Eat ... The Foods You Eat: A Multicultural Learning Program for Young Children*. Many Hands Media, New York, NY. 1996.

This is a nutrition education kit that contains materials designed to encourage young children to explore and appreciate the foods of many cultures.

Food and Nutrition Information Center, National Agricultural Library, USDA. *Food and Nutrition Fun for Children*. USDA. 1995.

A bibliography of children's books about foods and nutrition that are available from your local library. This list includes call numbers and brief descriptions of the resources.

Texas Women's University and Texas Nutrition Education & Training program. *Standardized Ethnic Recipes for Child-care Centers and Family Day Homes*. Texas NET.

Twenty-seven standardized ethnic recipes for 12 or 24 servings each on a separate 5-1/2 inch x 8-1/2 inch card. All have been tested for quality, consistency, yield, and acceptability.

Story books for children:

*This is the Way We Eat Our Lunch* by Edith Ball

*The Hungry Leprechaun* by Mary Calhoun

*Baba Learns to Cook* by Laurent DeBrunhoff

*How My Parents Learned to Eat* by Ina Friedman

## REFERENCES

Edelstein, Sari. *Nutrition and Meal Planning in Child-Care Programs*. The American Dietetic Association. Chicago, IL. 1992.

This guide is intended to assist child-care center managers in planning meals that meet the USDA's daily recommendations. It includes sample menus and a list of resource agencies.

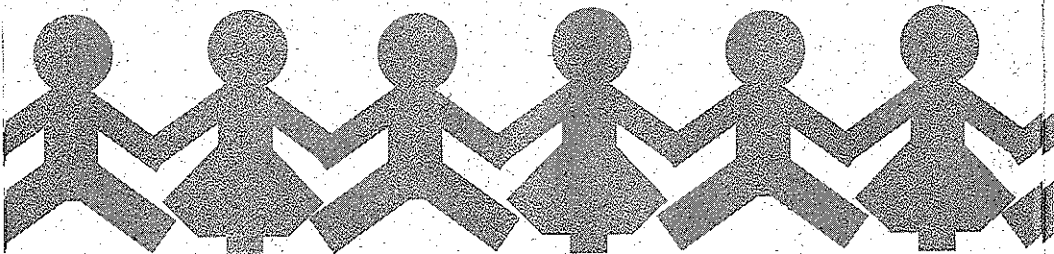
Eliades, D. C. and Sutor C. W. *Celebrating Diversity: Approaching Families Through Their Food*. National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health. Arlington, VA. 1994.

This 70-page booklet, which is a joint effort of USDA and DHHS/MCHB, is not directed toward preschoolers, but it is a good reference on the subject. Available from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau at (703) 524-7802.

Kittler, P. and Sucher, K. *Food and Culture in America*. West/Wadsworth. Belmont, CA. 1998.

Culturally sensitive information that health professionals can use when providing nutrition education. This 535-page book contains common foods, meal patterns, and the role of food in the society, as well as therapeutic uses of food.

In addition, the American Dietetic Association and the American Diabetes Association have a series of publications that are specific to various cultures. The title is *Ethnic and Regional Food Practices*. Contact the American Dietetic Association at (800) 877-1600, ext. 5000.



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