

Celebration Ideas for Happy, Healthy Events

Birthdays, holidays, and special celebrations usually include treats. Turn any joyous occasion into a celebration of taste and good health. Use the ideas below. Blend learning about letters, numbers, and color with healthful choices. Serve up activities and snacks that meet program needs in a playful manner.

Birthdays are special days to focus on a child. Find out more about the child by featuring his or her favorite color, age (number), and the first letter of the child's name or initials. Build the snack around celebrating the child. Create excitement around the child's choices and no one will even notice the sugary treats don't show up for the party.

For example, Jessie is celebrating her fourth birthday and she loves the color yellow. Serve each child 4 jicama sticks and a dip made of pureed yellow split peas seasoned with ground ginger (see recipe). Explain that the letter 'J' sounds different in Jessie (a 'jay' sound) and jicama (an 'h' sound, "hic a ma"). Have the children count the jicama sticks.

There are four sticks and Jessie is four years old today. Tell the children that jicama is a vegetable that we can eat raw or cooked. It is crunchy when raw. Ask the children to try jicama plain and describe what they taste. Then, try it in the yellow dip made in honor of Jessie's favorite color.

Follow food safety guides for young children. For example, cut grapes or cherry tomatoes to avoid choking hazards and make other modifications as needed, depending on the age of the children.



Culinary colors



Yellow:

Yellow split pea dip, Yellow crookneck squash, Yellow pear tomatoes, Star fruit, Pineapple, Lemon cucumbers



August 2011, continued

Orange:

Cantaloupe, Apricots, Peaches, Carrot coins, Pumpkin soup or muffins, Sweet potatoes



Nutrition by the numbers

- 2 – Two-tone mashed potatoes – white and sweet potatoes mashed served side-by-side; double melon soup, pureed cantaloupe and pureed honeydew melon, pour side-by-side at the same time
- 3 – Yogurt topped with three different berries or chunks of fruit, 3-bean salad or baked beans
- 4 – Four sticks and dip – use any combination of vegetable pieces and hummus, bean or split pea based dips; 4-Ps – green, yellow, orange, and red pepper strips with a bean-based dip; Papaya, Pineapple, Peaches and Pear salad with cottage cheese.
- 5 – 5-layer dip of refried beans, plain yogurt, chopped fresh cilantro, diced tomatoes, and shredded cheese served with whole wheat tortilla wedges; Five different varieties of apple slices with nut butter.

Green:

Honeydew melon, Pea pods, Avocado, Granny Smith apples, Broccoli florets, Kiwi slices



Red:

Watermelon, Raspberries, Salsa, Cherry Tomatoes, Blood Oranges, Beets, Strawberries



Blue:

Blue potatoes, Blueberries



Purple:

Eggplant, Grapes, Huckleberries, Purple cabbage, Plums



White:

Jicama, String cheese, Potatoes, White asparagus, Flesh of cucumber, or zucchini



Luscious Letters

- A** – Apples, Apricots, Asparagus
B – Baked beans, Bananas, Beets
C – Cabbage, Cantaloupe, Cherry, Couscous
D – Date, Dried fruit, Dill pickle
E – Eggplant, Eggs, English Cucumbers, Egg roll
F – Fig, Fruit mix, Fruit bread
G – Grape, Grapefruit, Grits, Guava
H – Ham, Honeydew Melon, Hummus
I – Iceberg lettuce, Ice cream
J – Jicama, Juice, Jerusalem artichoke
K – Kidney beans, Kiwi, Kohlrabi, Kumquat
L – Lasagna, Lentils, Lemon, Lettuce, Lime
M – Mango, Melons, Milk
N – Nectarine, Noodles, Nut butters
O – Oatmeal, Okra, Oranges, Orzo
P – Peas or pea pods, Pear, Plantains, Plum
Q – Quesadillas, Quiche, Quinoa
R – Radish, Raspberries, Rye bread
S – Squash, Strawberries, String cheese
T – Tangelo, Tomatoes, Tortilla,
U – Ugli Fruit
V – Vegetable soup, Vermicelli
W – Watermelon, Water chestnut, Wheat crackers
X – Xigua (she – gwah) Chinese for Watermelon
Y – Yellow pear tomatoes, Yellow peppers, Yogurt
Z – Ziti, Zucchini

Yellow Pea with Ginger Dip

- 1 cup of cooked yellow split peas
- 1 cup of plain Greek yogurt
- 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger, to taste
(start with less and add more as needed)

Puree all ingredients until smooth. Serve with fresh vegetable pieces.

Yield: 2 cups or 32 T of dip.



Sources

National Dairy Council (1998), *Chef Combo's fantastic adventures in tasting and nutrition*. Rosemont, IL.

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