

Planning and Preparing: Family Style Dining - Part 2

You have made the decision to carry out family style dining, but where do you begin? The most important step is planning and preparing. Without this step, you will face many challenges with implementing family style dining. Let's look at key steps in this process.



STEP 1: Begin by setting a start date

During this time, research family style dining and create a plan for implementing it in your program. Use the 30-day preparatory period to buy supplies, train staff, and educate parents and children in what to expect when family style dining is implemented.

STEP 2: Buy supplies for meal service

Your standard kitchen utensils are typically unsuitable for young children. Standard kitchen bowls, spoons, and tongs are usually sized for adults. It's important to buy supplies that children can easily use. This will make it more likely that the children will be successful in the new dining experience. Take a look at the chart below displaying the recommended utensils with estimated sizes.

Family Style Dining Utensils	Estimated Sizes
Brightly Colored Plates	7.25 inches
Serving Bowls	6.75-8.75 inches
Bowls	2-4 inch diameter
Spoons	5.125 inches
Serving Spoons/Ladles	7-8 inches
Tongs	4-6 inches
Cups	8-10 ounces
Pitchers	13 ounces

Other items include centerpieces and tablecloths or placemats.

Buy hard plastic utensils that are stain, odor, and scratch resistant for durability and safety. Consider purchasing short polycarbonate ladles with measurements on the handles. This will help to ensure that the children receive the right portion sizes when serving themselves.

STEP 3: Train staff

It is important that all staff members receive training and have a willingness to carry out family style dining. Schedule a staff meeting to introduce family style dining. Include step-by-step instructions, information on what to expect, and solutions for possible challenges. Share tips on how to talk to children about nutrition and the food being served, as well as positive ways to encourage children to eat the food being offered. Ask everyone to start watching behaviors and making mental notes of each child's abilities and skills. This will be key information for determining which children will need help in serving or eating, which children will feel more comfortable having you near, and which children will need your attention to redirect behaviors during the meal. If time permits, allow staff to role-play family style dining, so they are aware of the associated challenges and solutions. In addition, encourage them to try family style dining at home, so they can grow accustomed to the uniqueness of this service.

STEP 4: Educate parents and children

After all staff receives training, introduce family style dining to parents and children. Host a parent meeting to talk about the new dining service. Explain to parents the benefits of family style dining. Give parents literature that supports why you are choosing to incorporate family style dining. Display a table with the family style dining supplies for parents to view.

Next, begin introducing family style dining to children. Children need to know what to expect during mealtimes, and they need time to adjust to the change. Talk about family style dining during morning circle time and other appropriate times throughout the day. Begin practicing small tasks, such as pouring water into cups or scooping dried beans during small group activities. Add different play cups, bowls, and other eating utensils to some of the play areas for children to enjoy during free play. As children begin to develop serving skills, allow the children to serve themselves one item during snack. Continue to add food items, until children are serving themselves the entire snack.

STEP 5: Begin a pre-meal routine

Develop a routine for mealtimes that includes a calming pre-meal routine, where children are able to shift gears from playing to eating. A pre-meal routine makes the perfect transition from active play to mealtime. During this time, choose a quiet activity that children can do on a daily basis. Activities can include reading a story, setting the table, helping with meal preparation, or making flower arrangements for the table (with silk or fresh flowers). Then, right before you're ready to sit and eat, incorporate a routine song that lets children know it's mealtime.

Remember, the more you practice pouring, passing, and transitioning, the more successful children will be when first beginning family style dining.



Nutrition Tip of the Month

How much sugar do you consume when you drink sugary sodas and juices? Imagine you just purchased a 12-ounce cola with 39 grams of sugar. If you drink the whole soda, you are consuming 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons of sugar per serving. Imagine you purchased a 20-ounce cola with 70 grams of sugar. If you drink the whole soda, you are consuming 17.5 teaspoons of sugar per serving. Now, can you imagine eating 9 or 17 teaspoons? This is why it's important to choose healthier drinks, such as water or low fat milk.

To calculate the total teaspoons in your sugary beverages per serving, divide the total grams of sugar by 4 (for example, 70 grams divided by 4 equals 17.5 teaspoons of sugar).

Nutrition Fact of the Month

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, each year, 1 out of 6 Americans suffers from foodborne illnesses. Take action today to help prevent foodborne illnesses. Handwashing is one of the most important ways to prevent foodborne illnesses. Remember to always wash your hands the right way - rub them together with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds. Store food properly. For example, place foods requiring higher cooking temperatures, such as poultry on the bottom shelf and ready-to-eat foods on the top shelf in the refrigerator. For more tips on minimizing your chances of developing a foodborne illness, check out <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/facts.html>

Vegetable of the Month



It's veggie time! The vegetable of the month is the bell pepper. Bell peppers were first grown in Mexico, Central America, and South America. Historians tell us that Christopher Columbus discovered bell peppers in his quest to find peppercorn plants. Since then, the peppers were brought to the United States, where California and Florida are the leaders in harvesting bell peppers. Bell peppers come in a variety of colors, such as red, yellow, green, orange, purple, and chocolate brown. They are great

sources of vitamin C and B6. When shopping for bell peppers, only choose those that are firm with no wrinkles, shiny, and with a fresh green stem. Introduce bell peppers to children by planting bell pepper seeds and watching them grow.



September 2013, continued

CACFP Rock Star of the Month

The CACFP Rock Star of the Month is Ms. Shaila Hisey. Ms. Hisey is a center director in Kearney, Nebraska. She is best known for her commitment to providing children with healthy meals. Ms. Hisey implemented curriculum that focuses not only on standard subjects, but involves weekly nutrition education lessons. She also implemented a “Healthy Celebration Policy” for special occasions, where parents have a list of ideas for making occasions fun and healthy. Ms. Hisey has worked hard to encourage her staff in becoming more physically active. She believes when children see the adults being physically active, the kids are more prone to model their behaviors.

It's News Time

The National CACFP Sponsors Association will host their 27th Annual Conference on September 15-17, 2013, in Minneapolis, MN. This year's theme is “It's Time for Change, Variety, and Diversity in the CACFP Community”. Register today at <http://www.cacfp.org/ListProduct.asp?bSub=T&idCategory=3>

The Child Care Food Program Roundtable will host their 22nd Annual Conference on October 28-30, 2013, in Sacramento, CA. This year's theme is “Training for CACFP Success”. Register today at <http://www.ccfproundtable.org/Conferences.aspx>

Sources

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