



FoodPlay's Top 10

Making Fruits and Veggies Fun!

by Barbara Storper, MS, RD

1 Make fruits and veggies kid-friendly. Kids often prefer the bright colors and crunch of raw veggies to cooked ones. Rather than serving fruits and veggies whole, cut them into fun shapes and name them carrot "coins," zucchini "pick-up sticks," broccoli "trees," and red pepper "pinwheels." Cut apples and oranges into "smiles" and bananas into "wheels." Kids love to dunk, so serve veggies along with a dip like hummus or salad dressing, and dip fruits into flavored yogurt or peanut butter.



6 Create refreshing alternatives to soda. Each year, the average child drinks over 500 cans of soda, and at 10 teaspoons of sugar per can, children are consuming more than 50 pounds of sugar from soda every year! Instead, have kids make their own 'natural soda.' Fill a glass halfway with 100% fruit juice and top off with seltzer. Encourage kids to create their own combinations, and think up a fun name or even an advertising jingle!

2 Make fruits and veggies easy to grab. Make "Veggie Grab Bags" with your children—plastic bags of crunchy veggies like baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, snow peas, or whatever is in season. Keep bags in the fridge, and invite kids to grab a few on their way out. They're great to munch on throughout the day, especially when you're on the run and would be tempted to buy a junk food snack when you're hungry.

7 Involve kids in the preparation of healthy fruit and veggie snacks. The more they've helped, the more likely they'll be to eat them up! Even the youngest of children can lend a hand, from washing an apple to tearing a piece of lettuce. Kids can create their own fruit smoothies, or put together a "Rainbow Stick" with pieces of cut up fruit on a chopstick or popsicle stick!



3 Start a fun family food ritual! Invite your children to go food shopping with you and create a tradition like "Freaky Fruit Friday" or "Veggie of the Week Club" where each child chooses a new fruit or vegetable to try. Create an ongoing family cooking show where your kids prepare and serve a fun fruit or veggie snack.



8 Sneak veggies into sauces, soups, and stews for more resistant children. Sauté or stir-fry veggies in olive oil with a bit of garlic and soy sauce to make them irresistible! Encourage children to at least take one bite of an unfamiliar food. Studies show that it can take from 10 to 15 tries for a child to come to like a new food.

4 Help kids discover where foods come from by visiting local farms or farmers markets, celebrating the seasons by going apple picking in fall or strawberry picking in summer, or growing a garden together—even if it's only a windowsill herb garden. Try to buy fresh fruits and veggies in season, and when possible, locally grown. They'll taste better and cost less.

9 Be a good role model. Show your children how much you like eating fruits and vegetables. Don't pass on the peas, and be enthusiastic when you munch on carrots. Serve healthy food when kids are at their hungriest—after school or before dinner. Promote choice, but limit choices to two options, and make them healthy ones. Instead of asking an open-ended question – "what do you want for a snack?" Ask "do you want a banana or a pear?"



5 Explore cultural and ethnic food traditions. Help kids discover how different cultures use fruits and vegetables in their cuisines. Instead of serving sugary treats for celebrations, try treats from other countries such as 'mango-on-a-stick' from Mexico, or edamame (soybeans in pods), a Japanese favorite.

10 For more tips and snack recipes, visit www.foodplay.com! For more food fun, check out our new children's book, Janey Junkfood's Fresh Adventure!, our Fruit + Veggie Tracker Bands, and more at www.foodplay.com/shop.

