

Food and drink ideas

Tasty ways to include meat and alternatives



Early childhood services



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Healthy Eating Advisory Service



Early childhood services

Children require a variety of foods from the Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/bean food group every day for their growth and development.

Meat and alternatives are an important source of nutrients such as protein, iron, zinc and vitamin B12.

Use these helpful tips and recipe ideas to provide nutritious 'meat and alternatives' on your daily menu.

Note: In this document we use the term 'meat and alternatives' to refer to this food group overall.



Menu planning tips

Tip 1

Save on costs by combining meat and alternatives in the same meal. For example, make a bolognese sauce with lean mince and dried or canned legumes. For 50 children you'll need 2kg lean mince and 1.5kg canned chickpeas/lentils/kidney beans or 1.5kg lean mince and 700g dried lentils/split peas = 1 serve per child.



Menu planning tips

Tip 3

Did you know that legumes are both a protein and iron rich food but also a vegetable? This means each time you use legumes on your menu it's contributing to the total serve for both meat and alternatives and the vegetable food group.



Menu planning tips

Tip 2

Provide meat and alternatives at two meal times. i.e. provide half a serve at lunch and another half at morning or afternoon tea. For example, if you provide 2.5kg of tuna in a tuna and veggie pasta bake for lunch, provide 1kg of a legume based dip such as hummus with wholemeal pita triangles and a selection of colourful vegetable dippers for afternoon tea. This is especially helpful for vegetarian and fish main meal days. See the snack ideas below.



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Menu ideas



Googie goodies

Eggs are packed full of nutrition and provides a child with 1 serve from the meat/alternatives food group.

Baked bean egg cups

Spread margarine on one side of grainy or wholemeal bread and press into muffin tins. Whisk eggs and mix with cheese and salt reduced baked beans before pouring into moulds. Bake in a moderate oven.

Egg slice

Mix grated vegetables (e.g. zucchini, carrot, sweet potato) with chopped onion, grated cheese, flour and eggs and pour into a baking tray. Bake in a moderate oven until golden brown.

Mini frittatas

Beat eggs and milk. Mix in tuna, corn and spring onion. Pour mixture into greased muffin trays, top with cheese and bake in a moderate oven.



Pair with grains

Keys to a healthy sandwich

Follow these four steps to create healthy sandwiches with the following: egg, fish, chicken, turkey, pork, sliced roast beef, hummus.

Toasted sandwiches

- Spread your bread of choice with reduced salt tomato passata or paste, layer with beans/tuna/chicken/beef mince/egg and sprinkle with cheese, toast and serve warm.
- Fill small pita pockets with reduced salt baked beans, sprinkle with cheese and bake in a moderate oven.

Healthy nachos

Toasted pita bread, cheese, Mexican bean mix and or shredded chicken, tomato salsa. Heat in a moderate oven until cheese melts or serve as is.

Rice paper rolls

Get the children involved with making afternoon tea! Have all ingredients prepared in bowls in the middle of the table and help the children build their own roll and wrap it up! This recipe uses pork however any lean mince, strips of tofu or egg omelette will work.



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Soup

Miso soup

This tasty traditional Japanese soup is a great vegetarian morning or afternoon option combined with a fruit or savoury platter. Ingredients include white and dark miso (fermented soy bean), mirin, spring onions, silken tofu and nori or wakame seaweed.

Minestrone soup

This traditional Italian soup is a winner with children and is packed with seasonal vegetables and soft legumes. Serve as a warming lunch or a small cup for morning or afternoon tea.



Tasty bites

Nuggets

Crumb small pieces of chicken breast, firm tofu or thick fish and bake, turning once, until golden and cooked through. Serve as a snack or a main with veggies and a grain food of choice.

Meat or tofu skewers

Thread cubes of chicken breast or firm fish or tofu onto skewers and bake, grill or pan-fry. Alternate the meat or tofu with different veggies (e.g. capsicum, cherry tomatoes, button mushrooms) for a colourful tasty snack.

Edamame poppers (soy beans)

Kids love to pop these beans out of their green shells. Steam or lightly boil and serve naturally with a tiny drizzle of salt reduced tamari/soy sauce.

Tuna and corn patties

Combine tinned tuna, onion, boiled potato (try sweet potato too!), lemon juice, corn, breadcrumbs and egg and form into small patties. Bake in a moderate oven, turning once.

Falafels

Combine drained chickpeas, onion, parsley, coriander, garlic and cumin in a food processor until gritty. Add enough water for it to come together and shape into small patties. Bake in a moderate oven, turning once and serve with tzatziki.

Savoury afternoon teas

Serve a platter with sliced turkey/chicken/beef, marinated tofu, veggie sticks, wholemeal crackers or pita bread and one of the dips below.

Meatballs

Mix lean mince, onion, breadcrumbs, reduced salt tomato passata or paste, egg and parsley. Roll mixture into small balls and bake until cooked through and golden. Serve with a tomato relish or a yummy dip on a savoury platter.

Baked chicken rolls

Mix shredded or minced chicken with tomato passata, herbs and cream cheese or cottage cheese. Spoon mixture onto a filo pastry or pita bread and roll up. Place the rolls onto a lined baking tray and bake in a moderate oven until golden and cooked through.



Tuna and corn fritters

Serve as a snack or a main with veggies and a grain food of choice.



Fresh ideas

Creamy corn and tuna dip

Mix canned tuna and corn (optional: ricotta or cream cheese and herbs).

Chickpea and beetroot dip

Combine drained and rinsed chickpeas, cooked beetroot, a touch of cumin and or sumac and olive oil in a food processor (optional: stir in yoghurt). Blend until smooth.

Hummus

Combine drained and rinsed chickpeas, olive oil, garlic, tahini, cumin and lemon juice in a food processor. Blend until smooth.

White bean dip

Combine drained and rinsed white beans, lemon juice, garlic, and pepper in a food processor until smooth (optional: stir through some natural yoghurt).

Tofu and spinach dip

Blend silken tofu, defrosted frozen spinach, cream cheese, lemon juice, garlic and onion powder.

Sweet potato and salmon dip

Mix cooked sweet potato with canned salmon, olive oil and cottage cheese.

Sweet treats

Fruity bread pudding

This baked recipe is a winter favourite, and the egg content provides half a serve of meat/alternatives.

Fruit smoothies

Combine your milk of choice, silken tofu and seasonal fruit. Adding tofu boosts the kids' protein and iron intake for the day without affecting the flavour.

Chia puddings

Mix chia seeds, fruit, yoghurt (or silken tofu) and a couple of drops of vanilla bean extract. Pour into little serving cups and refrigerate until thick, preferably overnight. Serve topped with a sprinkle of dried coconut.