

ANSWER SHEET

Activity 2 – Different ways to serve the meal

In this activity, we are going to explore ways to prepare or present food and meals differently.

Required Resources

- Pen and paper
- HEAS recipe for [Malaysian Fish Curry](#)

Objectives

1. For cooks to understand the benefits of providing young children with options and choices during the mealtime.
2. For cooks to consider and have ideas for alternative ways to serve snacks and main meals to young children.

Knowledge summary

There are different ways to serve the main meal to reduce fussy eating:

- Including familiar foods alongside new foods
- Including sides as options to the main meal
- Deconstructing the meal. This involves preparing as many ingredients as practical, separately, and then allowing children to serve themselves from the food provided on the table.

Benefits for children

- Allows for autonomy – children choose from the options on offer
- Children eat according to how hungry or full they are
- Exposes children to many different foods – they may not eat everything presented, but are still exposed to different food
- Helps children develop other skills, such as using serving utensils
- Makes mealtimes more social, with less mealtime battles

Note: Children under 2 will need help serving food on their plates or bowls. Educators/cooks may need to bring the dishes to them to show what is on offer.



Figure 1: Example of a deconstructed meal: serving sides alongside a main meal and keeping the spaghetti pasta separate to the Bolognese sauce.

Question 1

Using the example recipe below, suggest some different ways this meal can be served to children.

| Malaysian Fish Curry | |
|---|--|
| Ingredients | Method |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown rice • Canola oil • Garlic • Fresh red chilli • Lemongrass paste • Curry powder (no added salt) • Ground turmeric • Reduced-salt vegetable stock powder • Sweet potato, cut into 1cm pieces • Green beans, trimmed, halved • Zucchini, halved lengthways, thinly sliced • Firm white fish fillets, cut into 3cm pieces • Light coconut milk | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cook rice according to packet instructions. 2. In a small food processor or blender, add chilli, garlic, oil, lemongrass, curry powder and turmeric and blitz until a paste forms. 3. Heat a large non-stick wok on medium-high heat. Add curry paste and cook for 1 minute or until fragrant. Add sweet potato, stock and water and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes or until the sweet potato is just tender. 4. Reduce heat to medium and add fish, beans, zucchini, and coconut milk. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 10-15 minutes, until the fish is cooked through, and the vegetables are tender. 5. Serve curry with rice. |

Suggestions

Example responses:

1. Serve the rice separate to the curry. Allow children to serve themselves how much rice they would like to eat and how much curry they would like to it.
2. This recipe includes three different vegetables – sweet potato, zucchini, and green beans. Extra serves of these vegetables (all or some) could be steamed separately and served individually alongside the curry to provide choice.
3. Like the vegetables, additional portions of the white fish could be prepared and served separately.
4. Allow children to serve themselves, selecting from the rice, curry, and/or separate steamed vegetables and fish if prepared.

Question 2

List a few of your current recipes or meals at your centre. Write some ideas for how they could be prepared and served differently. The aim is for the meals to be served alongside optional side dishes, or where possible, 'deconstructed'.

Note: Some meals may not be practical to serve 'deconstructed' such as lasagne, pasta bake, pies, and frittatas. You may like to serve sides with these meals instead, to provide more options. For example, cooked rice, pasta, salad, or steamed vegetables.

| Existing meal/recipe | Ideas to prepare and serve differently |
|----------------------|---|
| Spaghetti Bolognese | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Bolognese sauce separate to pasta • Optional side salad or vegetable/s • Side bread/dinner roll • Children to serve themselves from what is prepared and served to the table |
| Tacos | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare each component separately • Rotate different meat/meat alternatives – chicken, beef, pork, fish, tofu, kidney beans, etc. • Include different salad options (all or some) – lettuce, spinach, tomatoes, cucumber, cabbage, corn, etc. • Children to serve themselves from what is prepared and served to the table |
| Burrito bowls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as for tacos – keep protein + salads separate in their own bowls • Replace taco shell/wrap with rice • Children to serve themselves from what is prepared and served to the table |
| Stir fry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep noodles/rice separate • Separate protein from vegetables if possible – rotate the protein used (beef, chicken, pork, tofu, etc.) • Prepare some side vegetables (and/or meat) from those used in the stir fry recipe • Children to serve themselves from what is prepared and served to the table |
| Homemade pizzas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide all pizza toppings in separate bowls • Allow children to select what they would like on their pizza • Help children to make their own pizza for bonus interaction with the food! |
| Curry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve rice separate to main curry |

| Existing meal/recipe | Ideas to prepare and serve differently |
|----------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep some of the vegetables, and/or meat, separate to serve alongside the curry • Children to serve themselves from what is prepared and served to the table |
| Mushroom risotto | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional side salad or vegetables • Side dish of plain cooked rice • Side bread/dinner roll • Children to serve themselves from what is prepared and served to the table |

Facilitated discussion questions

1. Are you having to make significant changes to your menu to accommodate fussy eating?
2. Have you found any changes to your food preparation or presentation of foods and/or meals that has helped at your centre?
3. Do you feel providing more options and choices at snack and mealtimes will help support and managing fussy eating at your centre?

These questions aim to provide cooks with the time and space to discuss and reflect on their experiences with managing fussy eating at their centre. It's also an opportunity to start thinking about some changes they might be able to make to their existing menu and to share these ideas with other cooks. It's important and helpful for cooks to hear from each other to gain inspiration and new ideas.

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