

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.

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. You 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	

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 other preferred foods, 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

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