



# MEALTIME MEMO

JUNE  
2024

## HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS



Healthy snacks taste delicious and fuel children's growing bodies, laying the foundation for a lifetime of healthy choices. This *Mealtime Memo* will explore practices to incorporate nutritious, fun, and creative snacks into menus.

The primary goal of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern is to establish healthy eating patterns at an early age. Offering a variety of nutrient-dense foods at snack time, including whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and meats/meat alternates, can help promote good nutrition.

### Plan for Variety, Nutrition, and Appeal

Balancing variety, nutrition, and appeal is necessary to help provide a varied and healthy menu. Check out these helpful tips.

#### Variety

- Serve different foods throughout the day and week. Try not to repeat.
- Vary the forms of foods (e.g., raw vs. cooked).
- Introduce new foods with familiar foods.

#### Nutrition

- Serve a variety of vegetables and fruits.
  - A USDA best practice is to serve a vegetable or fruit for at least one of the two required components of a snack each day.
  - A fruit and vegetable can be served as the two components at a CACFP snack. For example, you can serve carrots and grapes or apple slices and jicama sticks.
  - Serve a rainbow of colors. The different colors provide an array of vitamins and minerals essential for good health.
  - Include whole fruits and veggies (fresh, frozen, canned) instead of juice.
- Include a variety of whole grains (quinoa, brown rice, popcorn) and meat alternates (beans, peas, lentils, eggs, nut butters, tofu, yogurt).
- Reduce highly processed (high-fat, high-salt, and high-sugar) foods and prepare recipes from scratch.
- Serve water with snacks when the two creditable meal components do not include a beverage. This provides a more filling snack while water satisfies thirst. Remember, water does not meet a meal component requirement, but keeping children hydrated keeps them healthy.



#### Appeal

Offer foods that create contrast through different shapes, colors, textures, and tastes.

- Explore different shapes—square, rectangle, cube, round, and wedge-shaped.
- Include a spectrum of colors—yellow, orange, red, green, purple, blue, white, and brown.
- Provide foods with various textures—soft, fluffy, crunchy, crisp, creamy, and smooth.
- Introduce diverse tastes—mild, sweet, sour, salty, spicy, starchy, and tart.



## Healthy and Fun Snack Ideas

Here are some fun, festive, and creative categories for healthy snack ideas.

### Theme Names

Give snack items festive names that coincide with seasons (fall, winter, spring, and summer) and holidays (Halloween, Cinco de Mayo, St. Patrick's Day, Valentine's Day, etc.). Here are some examples:



- **Seasons:** Frosty fruit salad, warm apples with cinnamon, cool cantaloupe, refreshing raspberries
- **Halloween:** Ghoulish grapes, mummy mangoes, gooey guacamole, monster mashed potatoes, kooky kiwi cups
- **St. Patrick's Day:** Green pepper four-leaf clovers, green foods (avocados, green grapes, green apples, honeydew melon, kiwi, peas, spinach)
- **Independence Day:** Red, white, and blue fruit pizza (strawberries, bananas, and blueberries)

**Learning Connection** Consider pairing snack color themes with the color of the week. You could also ask children to count the number of items on their plates and compare to the number of the week. This gives you the opportunity to extend your curriculum beyond the classroom.

### Colorful Names

- Crimson cranberry sauce
- Emerald pesto pasta
- Fiery red peppers
- Sunburst oranges
- Midnight black bean soup
- Ocean blueberry bursts
- Rainbow fruit salad
- Robust red radishes
- Ruby red grapefruit

### Sports or Superhero Names

- Grand slam subs
- Kickoff quesadillas
- Mighty melon
- Peewee chickpeas
- Power pack peppers
- Touchdown tacos
- X-ray vision carrots



### Sweet Snacks



- Yogurt parfaits (layers of yogurt, fruit, and cereal/granola)
- Carrot or zucchini muffins and mandarin oranges
- Watermelon chunks and mini cinnamon rice cakes
- Baked fruit (cinnamon apples, bananas, or pineapples) and cornbread

### Savory Snacks



- Roasted edamame and a crescent roll
- Hot, soft, whole wheat bread sticks with marinara sauce
- Trail mix with popcorn, pretzels, and nuts
- Snap peas and hard-boiled eggs
- Soft pretzel bites and cheese sauce
- Roasted vegetable 'fries' (sweet potatoes, zucchini, jicama, carrots) and tahini dip (sesame seed butter)

## Nontraditional Snacks

- Pasta salad, sandwich, salad, soup, or wrap
  - Pita or pocket bread can be used to hold small salads or sandwich fillings.
- Veggie rollup (whole wheat tortilla, nut or seed butter, vegetable slices)
- Breakfast for snack
  - Pancakes or waffles topped with mixed berries, chopped mango, or applesauce
  - Cereal, oatmeal, or yogurt with berries, peaches, or bananas
  - Breakfast burrito (whole wheat tortilla, brown rice, scrambled eggs, cheese, salsa, and veggies)



## Fun With Dips

- Apples or celery and nut butter
- Zesty zucchini strips and cottage cheese
- Jicama strips and ranch dip (yogurt with ranch seasoning)
- Guacamole and toasted pita wedges



Enjoy some of USDA's recipes with dips.

- [Corny Salsa with Tortilla Chips](#)
- [Savory Yogurt-Hummus Dip with Veggies](#)
- [Baked Carrot Fries with Yogurt-Sunflower Seed Butter Dip](#)

## Healthy Snack Resources

- The ICN resource, [Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers](#), features cycle menus, including snack ideas and a variety of USDA-standardized recipes.
- [Snack Inspiration](#), a resource from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction provides 240 snack ideas pairing the five meal components.
- [Snacks That Count: Recipes for Nutritious Snacks](#) from the Texas Department of Agriculture includes easy recipes that include CACFP crediting information.
- The USDA Snack Menu Planner, [Let's Make a Snack](#), includes nutrition education, sample menus, standardized recipes, and CACFP crediting information.



## Snack Ideas

Below is a week of healthy snacks using the categories from this *Mealtime Memo*.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Nontraditional</b>	<b>Halloween</b>	<b>Breakfast for Snack</b>	<b>Color &amp; Texture</b>	<b>Beach Day</b>
Baked Potato Bar with Toppings (Veggies, Salsa, Cheese)	Monster Meatball Sub on Whole Wheat Coffin Roll	Egg Sandwich on Whole Wheat English Muffin	Festive Fruit Salsa Crunchy Cinnamon Pita Triangles	Cauliflower Clouds Broccoli Trees Hummus (Brown Sand)
1% Milk	Water	Water	Water	Water

## Recipes



- The [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#) has USDA-standardized recipes for child care centers and family child care homes.
- The [Child Nutrition Recipe Box: New CACFP Lunch/Supper Recipes](#) has standardized recipes per age group (3–5 and 6–18 year-olds) and for 6, 25, and 50 servings.

## References

- Institute of Child Nutrition. (n.d.). *Baked carrot fries with yogurt-sunflower seed butter dip – USDA recipe for child care centers*. <https://theicn.org/cnrb/ages-3-5/age-3-5-25-50-servings/baked-carrot-fries-with-yogurt-sunflower-seed-butter-dip-usda-cacfp-snack-recipe-for-ages-3-5/>
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