

Outdoor feasts

This resource complements Playnotes *Food glorious food* January 2010

Preparing and sharing food outdoors offers wonderful opportunities for socialising, engaging parents and real-world learning. You may want to include outdoor food-related activities throughout the year in your setting or offer special feast days as part of your parent and community links and/or fundraising programme.

Curriculum links

Preparing food to eat offers children a range of experiences that can support all areas of learning. Describing the qualities of different fruit and vegetables introduces new vocabulary, inspires role play and offers meaningful contexts for introducing reading and writing – for example, through mark-making to create shopping lists and/or recipes or a menu.

Preparing food helps with hand-eye co-ordination while sorting, counting, weighing, measuring, pouring and mixing can promote problem-solving, reasoning and number work. Cooking offers a sense of achievement and independence, and sharing food can help develop an understanding of differences – likes, dislikes and cultural variations.

Activities and resources

Planning ahead can help you make the most of opportunities for preparing, cooking and eating food outdoors.

Hold a multi-cultural barbecue or picnic

Get a team together, including parents, and gather recipe ideas. Think about other activities that will go on during the barbecue or picnic such as games, story-telling and crafts. Plan a date and time and allocate team roles and responsibilities. Don't forget to undertake a risk assessment and think about taking photos plus opportunities for publicity or fundraising.

You will need:

- a safe place for a bought or borrowed barbecue
- fuel – no accelerants
- seating for children and adults
- a food preparation area
- appropriate utensils and oven gloves
- food to cater for all (for example, Halal food)
- fire-extinguishing equipment
- an adult with a food hygiene certificate to supervise food hygiene arrangements.

Children as young as three can help cut up soft vegetables and fruit for salad or vegetable kebabs. Older children with practice will manage to cut vegetables such as courgettes, mushrooms, tomatoes and peppers into bite-sized chunks and then thread them on to kebab skewers. Younger children will have fun shelling fresh peas (which can be eaten raw in salads) and stripping the leaves from sweetcorn.

Make sure children know to wash their hands before and after preparing and eating food. Use knives that are not too sharp to cause damage but are sharp enough to actually cut through the fruit and vegetables.

Everyday eating at your setting

- Have lunch and snack time outdoors when you can.
- If you have limited space take your children out on picnics in the park.
- Prepare and serve warm soups outside in winter, and make iced fruit drinks to drink outside in the heat.

Eating together as a community

- Plan a summer time strawberry tea (the children could pick the berries from your garden, a local allotment or a pick-your-own farm).
- Hold a teddy bears' picnic (the children could bring their favourite dish and favourite teddy from home).

Grow your own

Eating outdoors is especially meaningful and enjoyable if you are growing some of your own crops on site. As part of a growing project (see Playnotes *Get growing* March 2009) think about strawberries – they are easy to grow and give a high yield. You can grow them vertically if you don't have much space. Remember to check whether any of your children are allergic to strawberries.

Home links

- Encourage children to prepare and share their favourite foods from home.
- Introduce children to vegetables that are more common in other parts of the world – for example, yam from Africa or the Caribbean, different kinds of beans from South America or pak choi from China. If you are lucky enough to have children and parents for whom these are their native food, encourage them to come in and share recipes and tastings.
- Give parents a copy of the sheet over the page for their child to use on a trip to the supermarket. Can they find... an apple? A banana?

In the supermarket I found...

Fruit

pineapples



lemons



strawberries



bananas



apples



Vegetables

peas



peppers



chillis



potatoes



mushrooms



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