

Play
School



Play School's Let's Eat Useful Book!

Parent approved
recipes included



Play School's Let's Eat Useful Book!

Are you feeling inspired after watching Play School's Let's Eat?

Now it's time to follow up with this collection of activities and mealtime ideas - recommended by parents, enjoyed by children!

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A note for parents, carers and educators

Dietitian and PICNIC Project coordinator, Richard Ball, consulted on Play School's Let's Eat. His insights are based on 20 years' experience supporting families with positive mealtimes ...

Children's eating journey can be such an exciting time, but too often I hear parents say feeding their children has become stressful. Mealtimes which were intended to be harmonious and a time to connect end up leaving everyone exhausted, unsatisfied and with parents worried.

We all want the best for our children and hope they instantly take to all the nutritious foods we serve, however, eating is a complex learning process.

They are learning to chew, swallow, explore new tastes and textures all of which are new and can be scary. Some children get it straight away and some take much longer than others, like a lot of things in child development! Each has their own journey but get there in the end - if we allow them to reach eating milestones on their own terms. This requires opportunities to learn without pressure.

It's common for parents to worry their children 'won't get what they need to grow and develop'. This leads to feeding behaviours which can make us feel better in the short-term, but they can also lead to daily battles and negatively affect long-term eating dietary patterns.

Most of the support and guidance for new parents focuses on 'what children eat' without adequate consideration of 'how we feed', creating a kind of 'cart before the horse' scenario. When we get this right, not only do we benefit immediately with a much more pleasant and less stressful feeding journey, but children will grow up to eat a better quality diet, eat more variety, have a 'healthy relationship' with food and eat the amount of food that's right for them.



About Play School's Let's Eat

You're invited to dine with Play School! Enjoying a balanced diet helps children to grow, play, and learn, but mealtimes in the early years are not always a piece of cake!

Play School's Let's Eat explores positive mealtimes for toddlers and pre-schoolers. In consultation with a childhood dietitian and the [PICNIC Project](#), we see crafty puppets try new foods, enjoy a fresh food picnic in the story and celebrate crunchy-munchy mealtime moments with all the toys!

This special episode reflects *what* we eat, *when* we eat and *where* we eat – supporting children and families to build a lifelong friendship with food and celebrate its vital role in sustaining healthy bodies and happy minds!

Food for thought! Key messages for parents and carers

1. You provide the nutritious food and children decide to eat or not!
2. Hold your nerve when your child's eating doesn't meet your expectation - don't be tempted to pressure.
3. Make sure the timing of meals is decided by you. Keep meals relaxed and without distraction.
4. Serve the same food you eat to the whole family. Keep serving the foods your child is still learning to eat.
5. Don't stress over your child's eating at one meal or over a day, think over the longer term. Don't worry about what the other children (or parents) are doing ... and finally enjoy your food!



For more information go to the [PICNIC](#) website.



Mealtimes in early education and care

Promoting healthy nutrition and positive mealtime behaviour is an essential part of early childhood education planning and practice.

Ideas in Play School's Let's Eat special episode broadly link to children's healthy eating guidelines and nutrition in [The National Quality Framework](#). NQS Quality Area 2 requires early education and care services to promote healthy eating appropriate for each child. [The Early Years Learning Framework](#) (EYLF) reflects this standard encouraging educators to "engage children in experiences, conversations and routines that promote healthy lifestyles and good nutrition" by providing;

- a range of healthy foods
- opportunities to learn about food choices
- relaxed and enjoyable mealtimes.

Engaging children in simple mealtime rituals develops a respect and understanding for the preparation of food, nutrition and the pleasure that comes from enjoying a meal.

Providing opportunities for children to actively participate in mealtimes promotes learning about nourishing the body while building independence and cooperation.

For curriculum links and tips for creating positive mealtimes visit:

- [Links to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: Eat a Rainbow of fruits and vegetables from the South Australian Government](#)
- [ACECQA We Hear You: Creating positive mealtimes](#)
- [Raising Children Network: Eating family meals with toddlers](#)
- [Care for Kids: Creating peaceful mealtime environments](#)
- [Get Up & Grow: Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood](#)

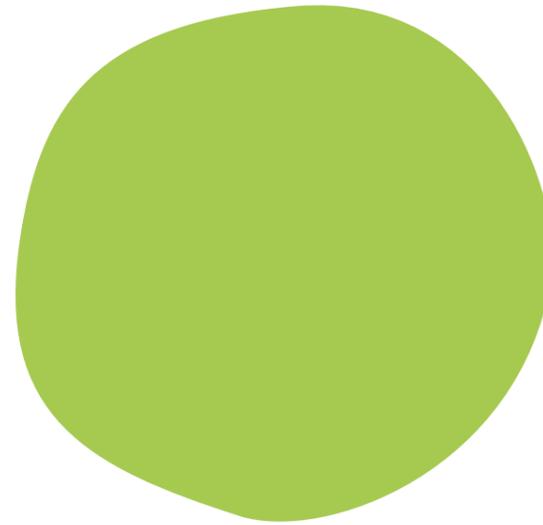




Parent approved mealtime ideas and Play School activities!

These recipes are kindly shared by parents participating in the PICNIC Project

- ✔ nutritional value
- ✔ easy preparation
- ✔ inexpensive ingredients
- ✔ flavours enjoyed by little diners



Zippy zucchini slice

Ingredients

- 5 eggs
- 1 cup sifted self-raising flour
- 2 zucchini
- 1 brown onion
- 5 rashers rindless bacon
- 1 cup grated tasty cheese
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil

How to make it

1. Preheat oven to 170°C.
2. Grease and line a 30cm x 20cm slice tin.
3. Dice onion and bacon.
4. Grate zucchini, squeeze out excess liquid.
5. Lightly beat eggs in a large bowl until combined. Add flour and whisk until smooth.
6. Add zucchini, onion, bacon, cheese and oil. Stir to combine.
7. Pour into prepared tin and bake in oven for 35-45 minutes or until cooked through.
8. Allow to cool and cut into squares before serving.

Super simple sushi

Ingredients

- 4 nori (seaweed sheets)
- 1 cup sushi rice
- 1 ½ cups water
- ½ cup rice wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons caster sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons Teriyaki marinade
- 200g chicken breast fillet (or tofu)
- Sliced avocado
- Lettuce

How to make it

1. Cut chicken into thick strips, place in a bowl, pour over Teriyaki and marinate for 15 minutes.
2. Cook sushi rice as per packet instructions using the absorption method.
3. Combine vinegar, caster sugar and salt in a small bowl. Gradually add to cooked rice and mix.
4. Transfer to a large baking tray, use a fork to break up any lumps and allow to cool.
5. Cook chicken in oven or under the grill until cooked through.
6. Place a nori sheet, shiny side down, on a sushi mat. Place a couple of spoonfuls of sticky rice onto the nori sheet and flatten out using the back of a spoon.
7. Arrange some chicken, avocado and

lettuce on top of the rice. Hold your fillings in place and roll the sushi mat over to make a seaweed cylinder.

8. When you've almost finished rolling, dip your fingers in some water and dab along the end of the nori roll so the ends stick together. Repeat with remaining seaweed sheets.
9. Make sushi rolls by cutting through the seaweed cylinders into 2cm thick slices.
10. Arrange sushi on a plate and serve.

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LIKING NEW FOOD

SOME CHILDREN



WILL EAT AFTER A FEW TRIES

OTHER CHILDREN



WILL TRY 20 TIMES AND STILL NOT THERE



EVERY CHILD HAS THEIR OWN PACE

PICNIC PROJECT TIP #1

No two children will follow the same eating pathway. Some are more comfortable with crunchy textures, some smooth, some enjoy strong flavours earlier than others. What we do know is children need to get here by themselves, without any pressure, promoting, coaxing or bribing.

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Surprise toasty eggs

Ingredients

- 1 slice bread
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon grated cheddar cheese (optional)

How to make it

1. Cut a hole in the middle of the bread using a round cookie cutter.
2. Melt butter in a frying pan over medium heat.
3. Place bread in pan and crack egg into the hole.
4. Cook for about 2 minutes until bread is lightly browned. Then turn and cook the other side.
5. Sprinkle cheese over top during last minute of cooking and serve.



Make an edible garden

Whether you have a big backyard, or a little pot on the window sill, growing and harvesting veggies and herbs is a great way to encourage healthy eating right from the start.

For more gardening inspiration, visit [ABC Kids listen's 'Gardening Buds'](#) and check out the [Gardening Buds Early Education Guide](#).



Noodle scramble

Ingredients

- 1 packet instant noodles (any flavour)
- Fresh parsley to taste
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ½ onion
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon water

To boost the veggie content try adding grated zucchini, chopped cherry tomatoes, frozen peas or corn.

How to make it

1. Cook instant noodles as per packet instructions. Drain water, then stir seasoning packet and chopped parsley into noodles.
2. Heat oil in non-stick frypan over medium heat. Add onion, cook and for 2 minutes until fragrant. Add noodles and cook for another 2 minutes.
3. Whisk eggs, water and salt together in a bowl. Pour over noodle mixture in frypan. Cook and stir eggs until set and cooked through. Garnish with fresh parsley to serve.



Time to sing!

'I'm A Banana'

(By Judith Kayzer and Peter Dasent)

Listen to Rachael singing this song in Play School's Let's Eat, then you can learn it too!

*I'm a Ba nana – nana na
I'm a Ba nana – nana na
I'm a Ba nana – nana na
Na-na na-na na-na na
I'm long and thin with yellow skin
Peel me back and see what's in
Delicious fruit soft and sweet
Anytime – for a yummy treat
I'm a Ba nana – nana na
I'm a Ba nana – nana na
I'm a Ba nana – nana na
Na-na na-na na-na na*

*Sometimes I like to hang around
In a bunch
And moneys love to eat me
For breakfast dinner and lunch
I'm a Ba nana – na na na
I'm a Ba nana – na na na
I'm a Ba nana – na na na
Na-na na-na na-na na*





Hey presto, pesto!

Ingredients

- 1 broccoli head
- 1/3 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 3-5 fresh basil leaves
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 small garlic clove
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 500g dried pasta (wagon wheel, penne or bow tie)

How to make it

1. Cook pasta as per packet directions.
2. Steam the broccoli in a large saucepan of boiling water until tender, for about 1 minute.
3. Add the broccoli to a food processor along with the rest of the ingredients. Blitz to make a smooth pesto.
4. Mix a few spoons of the pesto mixture with an individual serving of cooked pasta. Garnish with fresh basil.
5. Serve with mini beef meatballs.



Tell a story

Exploring picture books can spark children's interest in healthy foods. Here are some suggestions;

- 'Eating the Alphabet' by Lois Elhert
- 'Pancakes, Pancakes!' and 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle
- 'From the Garden' by Micheal Dahl and Todd Ouren
- 'Usborne Lift-the-flap: Questions and Answers about Food' by Katie Daynes and Peter Donnelly

Loaded veg mac and cheese

Ingredients

- 1 medium zucchini
- ½ cauliflower
- ½ tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion
- 350g macaroni pasta
- 3 rashers rindless bacon
- 1 ¼ cup grated tasty cheese
- 2 ½ cups milk
- 50g butter, chopped
- ¼ cup plain flour
- Chives to garnish

How to make it

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Cook pasta as per packet directions and set aside.
3. Cut cauliflower into large florets. Peel and slice zucchini. Steam vegetables in saucepan of boiling water until tender and purée with stick blender.
4. Finely dice onion and bacon. Heat oil in a small frypan and sauté. Set aside.
5. Melt butter in saucepan over medium heat. Add flour. Cook, stirring with a wooden spoon for 1-2 minutes or until mixture bubbles. Gradually stir in milk. Bring to the boil and then reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring with a whisk for 4-5 minutes or until sauce thickens. Stir in 1 cup grated cheese until melted.
6. Remove cheese sauce from heat. Add onion and bacon mixture, together with puréed vegetables and mix.
7. Stir the loaded veg cheese sauce through the cooked pasta. Pour into an ovenproof dish and top with remaining grated cheese. Bake until cheese is golden and melted on top. Top with freshly chopped chives.



MEAL SCHEDULES:

HELP KIDS LISTEN TO THEIR HUNGER
& FULLNESS SIGNALS

HELP KIDS TO FEEL MORE
SAFE WHEN TRYING
NEW FOODS

CREATE A POSITIVE
ENVIRONMENT

HELP FUSSY EATING -
KIDS MORE LIKELY TO ARRIVE AT
MEALTIMES WITH APPETITE!



PICNIC PROJECT TIP #2

Children need time to get hungry (between meals) and time to eat (at a meal). This helps children stay in tune with how they feel and when to stop eating, a very handy skill to have to take into life for long term health! They also get to see you eat and learn to eat the foods you do. If you provide food when they demand it, eating patterns can get very messy, with nutrition suffering.



Brekkie buffet

Ingredients

- 1 slice bread
- 2 strawberries
- 1 egg
- 4-6 firm tofu cubes
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- A few slices of capsicum (red, yellow, orange, green)
- 2 baby tomatoes
- Cream cheese spread

How to make it

1. Cut strawberries in half.
2. Whisk egg and fry omelette style by pouring into a large star cookie cutter shape.
3. Fry tofu in a little oil until brown.
4. Slice baby tomatoes in half.
5. Thinly slice capsicum and form into rainbow shape on a small plate.
6. Cook bread in toaster, spread with cream cheese and cut into soldiers.
7. Arrange small portions of each prepared ingredient in separate bowls or plates on a wooden board, tapas style.

The presentation of this meal gives children a feeling of autonomy when trying new foods and is often a successful way to encourage them to try new textures and flavours.



Create your own 'Cruncher and Muncher'

What you'll need

- Empty tissue boxes with plastic removed
- Glue / tape
- Wool (hair)
- Patty pans (eyes)
- Cardboard (teeth)
- Large wooden pop-sticks

After decorating, attach a large pop-stick to the top of the box and use it as a handle to bring your puppet to life!

Chicken and veggie sizzle

Ingredients

- 6 red potatoes
- 1 onion
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried or fresh rosemary
- ½ teaspoon sweet paprika
- 2/3 cup breadcrumbs
- 15g parmesan cheese
- 6 bone-in chicken thighs, skin removed
- 6 cups fresh baby spinach, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste



How to make it

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.
2. Dice potatoes into bite sized chunks. Place in a baking tray with diced onion, oil, garlic, ½ teaspoon rosemary and toss together.
3. Mix paprika, remaining rosemary, salt and pepper in a small bowl.
4. Sprinkle chicken with paprika mixture and arrange over vegetables in baking tray. Roast until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are just tender, about 35-40 minutes.
5. Remove chicken to a serving platter and keep warm.
6. Top vegetables with spinach, breadcrumbs, grated parmesan cheese and a drizzle of olive oil. Roast for another 8-10 minutes until vegetables are tender, spinach is wilted and cheese has melted. Serve with chicken cut into strips.

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Play School's pick-and-choose pizza

Ingredients

Your favourite toppings! Luke and Rachael used a selection of green, red and white options:

- Red capsicum
- Red onion
- Cherry tomatoes
- Baby Spinach
- Green olives (pitted)
- Green capsicum
- Bocconcini
- Mushrooms
- Cauliflower
- Tomato paste
- Store bought wholemeal flat bread (as pizza base)

How to make it

1. Preheat oven to 180°C
2. Chop ingredients to desired size and place in small bowls.
3. Place pizza base on an oven tray and spread with tomato paste.
4. Assemble toppings.
5. Bake till cheese is melted and the edges of your base go crispy.

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Easy-peasy green pancakes

Ingredients

- Handful of baby spinach
- 1 egg
- 1 cup of rolled oats
- Splash of water
- 1 ripe banana
- A spoonful of almond butter (optional)

How to make it

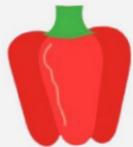
1. Blend the egg, spinach, oats, banana and almond butter. Add a splash of water to create a smooth batter.
2. Heat a little oil in your fry pan (don't let it get too hot).
3. Lift off the blender jug off the base and pour out your pancake batter onto the pan in even portions.
4. Wait a minute till you start to see tiny bubbles appear on the top, then flip over each pancake.
5. Serve with a combination of yoghurt, chopped fruit and a drizzle of honey or almond butter.

Play School

EATING NEW FOOD

THE PLAN

PARENTS OFFER



KIDS EAT IT



THE REALITY

		
REFUSE	SMELL	LICK
		
YUCK	NO	IGNORE
		
SMELL	LICK	BITE

KIDS EAT IT

PICNIC PROJECT TIP #3

The most effective way to ensure your child doesn't eat a new food is to stop serving it to them. Hold your nerve and keep serving these 'still learning' foods.

Your child's diet variety will increase over time, sometimes it will creep up without you noticing. Did you know on average parents stop serving a new food after 3 tries? That's not enough time for some children to get to know and like a food.



Early Education

Acknowledgments

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