**Web Content and Newsletter Articles for WRDSB**

Developed Spring 2015 by Region of Waterloo Public Health

**Contains four single paragraph newsletter articles and four full-page newsletter articles with recipes.**

**Healthier Celebrations**

Celebrations are important, and they should be enjoyed! There are lots of ways to make celebrations fun, festive and exciting without overloading on unhealthy treats. Consider shifting the focus from food to fun next time you want to send something in to the class to help celebrate a birthday or holiday. Send in game supplies, pencils, stickers, craft supplies, small containers of play dough or other small tokens instead of candy or cupcakes. Classroom activities such as playing a game or having a dance party are memorable and also a great way to get kids moving. To recognize the birthday student you could make a button, sign, sash, crown or badge for them to wear. Celebrating in these ways might feel even more special for the student and also teaches them that fun doesn’t depend on unhealthy food. Find more unique and healthy party ideas here: <http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/healthy_school_celebrations.pdf>

**Foodimals**

Looking for a fun activity that motivates kids to eat more vegetables and fruit? Challenge your kids to create ‘foodimals,’ animal-like creatures made out of vegetables and fruit! This activity encourages children to use their creativity and provides an opportunity to try new foods. Bring kids to the grocery store or farmer’s market to be inspired by the different shapes and colours of fresh produce. Encourage them to choose several vegetables or fruit to experiment with at home and turn into ‘foodimals.’ After they have admired their creation and washed the produce well they can enjoy eating the fruits of their labour! Search ‘foodimals’ on [www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca) for some ideas to get started.

**Spotlight on Healthy Fats**

Did you know that some fats are healthier than others? Our bodies need some fat for good health and to help us absorb certain vitamins. Canada’s Food Guide recommends including a small amount of healthy unsaturated fat in your diet every day (2 to 3 tablespoons or 30 to 45 ml). This could include soft, non-hydrogenated margarines as well as vegetable oils like canola, olive and soybean used in cooking or salad dressings. Nuts, seeds and avocado are also great sources of healthy fats to include in small amounts every day. Try sliced avocado on a sandwich or sunflower seeds in a salad or rice dish. However, we should limit sources of saturated and trans fat, like butter, hard margarine, lard, shortening, high fat meats and processed foods. Consuming too much saturated and trans fat may increase our risk of developing heart disease. Keep the focus on healthy fats!

**Why Whole Grains?**

Whole grains are more nutritious than processed grains like white flour and they have more flavour too! Whole grain products are made from all three parts of the grain including the bran, the germ and the endosperm. The bran has fibre and B vitamins, the germ has healthy fats, vitamins and minerals and the endosperm is the starchy part that has carbohydrates and protein. When grains are processed into white flour, the germ and the bran are removed along with the fibre, healthy fats and most of the vitamins and minerals! Sometimes it is hard for people to adjust to the flavour of whole grains when they’re not used to them, but before long our taste buds adapt. Keep offering nutritious and delicious whole grains and even picky eaters can learn to enjoy them. Canada’s Food Guide recommends we make at least half of our grain products whole grain each day, so enjoy variety in your diet. Try whole grain bread or pasta, oats, barley, brown rice, quinoa or wild rice at your next meal.

**Making Smart Choices from the Kids’ Menu**

Going out to a restaurant can be a fun opportunity for kids to learn about different foods and eat in a new environment. Unfortunately the options on the kids’ menu can be very limited and usually don’t offer up much nutrition. Here are some ideas to help make healthier choices when eating out:

* Choose a restaurant with a kids’ menu that offers more than the standard fare. Many only have nutrient-poor choices like fries, chicken fingers, grilled cheese, pizza or pasta with butter.
* If you do choose an item from the kids’ menu, ask for veggies, rice or baked potato on the side instead of fries. You can also ask for fewer fries or half fries and half veggies as other options.
* Consider ordering an appetizer for your child instead of a kid’s meal. Fresh spring rolls, quesadillas, bruschetta or a salad with grilled chicken could be healthier options.
* A regular entrée might be large enough to share between you and your child (or between two children). Consider options like a vegetable soup and sandwich, a stir-fry or grilled salmon.
* Bypass the sugary drinks and order water or milk to drink.
* If the meal comes with dessert, ask for extra spoons for sharing or substitute a fruit salad.

Restaurant meals tend to be high in fat, sodium and sugar so try to limit eating out to no more than once a week (or 2 to 3 times per month). When you have indulged in a less than healthy restaurant meal, focus on healthier fare with lots of vegetables for the rest of the day. For more smart solutions when eating out with kids visit EatRight Ontario at: <https://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Child-Toddler-Nutrition/You-can-ask----for-healthy-foods-for-your-kids.aspx>

Try this recipe for a kid-friendly and healthier twist on egg fried rice, a popular restaurant dish:

**Egg Fried Rice**

Preparation time: 15 minutes Cook time: 15-20 minutes Makes: 6 servings

**Ingredients:**

2 cups (500 ml) brown or basmati rice, dry

6 cups chopped vegetables (carrot, green onion, broccoli, celery, cabbage, mushrooms, etc.)

2 Tbsp (30 ml) canola oil

4 eggs

6 Tbsp (90 ml) low sodium soy sauce

**Directions:**

1. Cook rice according to package directions.
2. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large wok or non-stick fry pan over medium-high heat. Add chopped vegetables and stir-fry until crisp tender, approximately 10 minutes.
3. Remove vegetables from pan and set aside. Add eggs to pan and scramble while cooking.
4. Once eggs are cooked add rice, vegetables and soy sauce to pan and combine well.

**10 Ways to Eat More Veggies and Fruit**

**1. Boost Your Breakfast:** Add berries, dried fruit or sliced banana to your cereal, yogurt or oatmeal. Try peppers, mushrooms, onions or chopped greens in a delicious omelette.

**2. Double the Veggies:** Add extra vegetables into your soups, stir-fries, casseroles and pasta dishes. Load up on veggie toppings for pizzas and sandwiches.

**3. Salute the Snack:** Revolve snack time around vegetables and fruit. Pre-cut or peel fruit like oranges to make it more appealing and easier to eat quickly during snack breaks.

**4. Take a Smoothie Break:** Whip up large batches, freeze in single portions and take on the go when needed! Try adding a handful of greens with fruit, yogurt, milk and ice.

**5. Dig the Dip:** Dip apples, pears or bananas in yogurt or one to two tablespoons of peanut butter. Veggies are great paired with hummus, salsa or low fat sour cream. Try the easy dip recipe below, you can flavour it however you like!\*

**6. Reinvent the Chip:** Bake thinly sliced sweet potatoes, beets, torn kale or collard greens to satisfy that crunch! Toss bite-sized pieces in a small amount of vegetable oil and your choice of spices before baking until crispy.

**7. Weekly Featured Vegetable:** Give everyone in the family their own week to choose a feature vegetable to cook with. Try to choose vegetables that are in season.

**8. Use Frozen Veggies (and Fruit!):** Over the winter buy more affordable frozen vegetables and then steam them, puree into soups and sauces or bake them in a casserole. Frozen fruit is great on cereal or in smoothies.

**9. Delight in Dessert:** Frozen grapes or bananas make a delightful dessert. Other simple ideas include fresh fruit, a baked apple, fruit salad or fruit kabobs with yogurt for dipping!

**10. Half Your Plate Twice a Day:** Meet your recommended number of servings in a flash by making half of your plate vegetables at lunch and at dinner!

**Garlic & Dill Veggie Dip**

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

**Ingredients:**

1 cup (250 ml) light sour cream or plain yogurt (1% M.F. or fat-free)

3 Tbsp (45 ml) light mayonnaise

1 Tbsp (15 ml) lemon juice

1 tsp (5 ml) minced garlic

¼ cup (60 ml) chopped fresh dill or parsley

\*You can use any combination of fresh or dried herbs and spices to flavour this dip. Instead of dill, try it with 1 tablespoon (15 ml) of dried herbs or spices like curry powder and paprika or Italian seasoning.

**Directions:**

1. Stir together all ingredients in a small bowl and chill until ready to serve. Prepare up to one day in advance for even more flavour.

Recipe adapted from *500 Best Healthy Recipes* by Lynn Roblin, MSc., RD

**Family Mealtime**

Looking to make some healthy changes to your lifestyle? What about trying to have more family meals?

Having meals together helps families to communicate and feel more connected. Research also suggests that children who have family meals more often eat a healthier diet! Cooking and eating together gives parents an opportunity to teach children food skills, share family traditions and find out about each other’s day. Here are some tips for successful family meals:

* Enjoy meals at the kitchen or dining room table away from distractions like TV and cell phones
* Plan meals ahead of time to avoid a scramble at the end of the day
* Choose simple meals that you will have time to prepare and enjoy with your family
* Include food from three or four of the food groups on Canada’s Food Guide
* Involve children in meal preparation and setting the table
* Keep food safety in mind – remind children to wash their hands before and after handling food

Families should eat together as often as possible, but sometimes life gets busy which makes that a hard goal to reach. Ideally, aim to have one meal together as a family each day (breakfast, lunch or dinner may work best depending on everyone’s schedules). If this sounds too difficult to fit in, start with a goal of one family meal each week and gradually work your way up to most of the days!

Need some ideas to get started? Try the recipe below or check out this Family-Friendly One Week Sample Menu Plan from EatRight Ontario: <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Menu-Planning/Family-Friendly-One-Week-Sample-Menu-Plan.aspx#.VGziMdh0y1s>

**Mac and “Squeese”**

Preparation Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 15 minutes Makes: 4 servings

**Ingredients:**

1 ½ cups (375 ml) whole grain macaroni, dry

1 Tbsp (15 ml) margarine

2 cups (500 ml) cubed butternut squash

½ cup (125 ml) low-fat milk

1 clove garlic, minced

½ cup (125 ml) shredded Swiss or cheddar cheese, reduced fat

2 Tbsp (30 ml) parmesan cheese

**Directions:**

1. Cook pasta according to package directions, drain and return to pot. Stir in margarine.
2. Meanwhile, place cubed squash in a separate pot and cover with water. Cover pot with lid and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes or until squash is very tender.
3. Drain squash and return to pot. Add milk and minced garlic. Mash squash using a potato masher or hand blender until it is combined with the milk and garlic and has a smooth, creamy texture.
4. Combine squash, pasta, shredded cheese and parmesan together and stir well to coat pasta.
5. Serve with green veggies such as salad, baked kale chips or steamed broccoli ‘trees’.

Recipe adapted from Kids Recipe Challenge by EatRight Ontario ([www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca))

**Top Five Tips for Packing Healthy Lunches**

Packing healthy lunches and snacks at school is a great way to get more servings of healthy foods from *Canada’s Food Guide*. Here are some ideas to help with packing healthy lunches, for students at school and for adults at work too!

1. Provide a refillable water-bottle with packed lunches. Water is the best choice for beverages and kids should be able to refill it from the water fountain at school throughout the day.
2. Aim to include at least one food from each of the four food groups on *Canada’s Food Guide*: a Vegetable or Fruit, a Grain Product, a Milk or Alternative, and a Meat or Alternative.
3. Try a bento box style lunch – Pack a variety of finger foods (at least one from each food group!) in a reusable container with separated compartments. Kids have a limited time to eat lunch at school, so finger foods are a great idea since they are quick and easy to eat.
4. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold for food safety. Use a thermos to keep hot foods hot until lunch time – warm the thermos with boiling water before filling it with steaming hot food. Keep cold foods cold by packing them in an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack.
5. Get kids involved in packing their own lunches. Set aside time the night before to prepare lunches together to avoid a stressful scramble during busy mornings.

For more lunch ideas check out the Child and Youth Resources at [www.regionofwaterloo.ca/nutrition](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/nutrition) or the mix-and-match menu at: <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Frequently-Asked-Questions/Packing-Healthy-School-Lunches-and-Snacks-FAQs.aspx#.VMfxWdh0zwo>

**Veggie and Bean Pita**

Preparation Time: 5-10 minutes Makes: One pita

**Ingredients:**

1 whole wheat pita pocket, cut in half

½ cup baby spinach, kale or mixed greens

½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved

1 medium carrot, shredded

½ cup baked beans (homemade or canned, look for one with the lowest sodium)

**Directions:**

1. Stuff each half of the pita with greens, cherry tomatoes, shredded carrot and baked beans.
2. Add a piece of fruit and milk to drink for a complete lunch.

Recipe adapted from[www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca)