

Fun foods make fun times

SUMMER MONTHS ARE PERFECT
for instilling healthy habits in kids.

NEWHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

Sure you know you and the kids ought to eat more vegetables — but how?

The oldest won't eat anything green. The middle child won't eat anything but fast food. And the baby in the house just won't eat.

There are ways — some open, some sneaky — of getting kids to eat their veggies. If you find you're eating more in the process, even better.

"We need to set the example that when we sit down to a meal we eat vegetables," says Carol Clelland, registered dietitian with the Harrisburg-based PinnacleHealth System.

"You can't expect a child to eat the vegetables when the rest of us sit down and eat the other food groups but not vegetables."

Only 18 percent of American children eat the recommended three servings of fruits and vegetables daily, says Tracy Pawelski, spokeswoman for Giant Food Stores, which runs tours and education campaigns to encourage kids to eat fresh produce.

Young children like colorful finger foods and picking out colors in bite-sized portions, but older kids typically want variety, she says.

Whatever their age, let them feel in charge. At the store or farm, let them choose the vegetable.

Get them involved in cooking. Let older kids find a recipe that sounds good using spaghetti squash or the backyard grill or tacos. Kids as young as 2 or 3 can help stir and do simple jobs in the kitchen.

"They get ownership in preparing their own foods and having decisions over it ... and it teaches them how to cook," Clelland says. "It can be things like tacos where they're chopping up lettuce and tomatoes. That's fine. That's a vegetable."

While it's better to have kids know they're eating vegetables, you can sneak small amounts of pureed vegetables into foods and the finicky eater — whether a child or adult —

won't be the wiser.

Don't give up. If the child won't eat sugar snap peas or asparagus, try again another day.

Children's taste buds mature and change as they grow. What doesn't taste good to a kid today might later, so it's important to keep offering foods they've rejected, says Marg Malehorn, extension educator at Penn State Cooperative | PLEASE SEE KIDS, D2 Extension.

Otherwise, kids can fall into a rut of eating nothing but chicken nuggets and macaroni and cheese.

"Then the mom says, 'That's all they'll eat.' My retort is, 'That's all they've trained you to feed them,'" Clelland says. "We need to keep offering the variety and they need to see us eating it. It's monkey see, monkey do."

The following recipe for kids makes for tiny bites that are sure to delight any age.

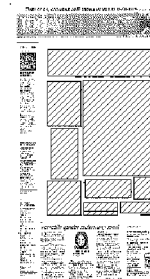
Fairy Queen Quiches

1 (17.3-ounce) package
refrigerated piecrusts
½ cup grated Swiss cheese
2 eggs
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
2 Tablespoons cream
5-6 cherry tomatoes, sliced

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Generously spray a mini muffin pan with nonstick cooking spray. Cut out the piecrusts with a 2- to 3-inch circle or flower-shaped cookie cutter. Place each cutout inside a muffin cup.

Place approximately 1 teaspoon grated Swiss cheese into the bot-



tom of each pastry shell.

In a medium-sized bowl, combine eggs, salt, pepper and cream. Pour into pastry shells, filling each almost to the top.

Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon grated Swiss cheese and bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown and slightly puffed. Remove from oven and cool 5 minutes before removing each quiche from pan. Garnish with a cherry tomato slice.

Makes 10 to 12 individual quiches.

Source: "Fairies Cookbook" by Barbara Beery (Gibbs Smith, Publisher)

Tasmanian Devil Thai Noodles

8 ounces whole wheat spaghetti
1 cup fresh snow peas
1 Tablespoon water
¼ cup reduced-fat peanut butter
3 Tablespoons soy sauce
1 Tablespoon toasted sesame oil
1 Tablespoon honey
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
½ cup grated carrots

Optional garnish:

1 Tablespoon sesame seeds
½ cup unsalted peanuts, chopped
1 Tablespoon cilantro or green onion tops, chopped

Cook spaghetti al dente in boiling water and drain. Keep warm or at room temperature.

Place snow peas and water in microwave-safe dish and microwave for 1 minute to steam. Drain and set aside.

Put peanut butter, soy sauce, sesame oil, honey, cayenne pepper and ginger into a small mixing bowl and whisk to combine ingredients. Stir in steamed snow peas and uncooked grated carrots.

Put spaghetti into serving bowl, add the vegetable-sauce mixture and toss together using tongs. Garnish with sesame seeds, chopped peanuts and cilantro or green onion tops, if desired.

Makes 4 servings.

Serving suggestion: Serve with fresh fruit on the side.

Source: "Batter Up Kids: Sensational Snacks" by Barbary Beery (Gibbs Smith, Publisher)

Polka Dot Rice

1½ cups uncooked long-grain brown rice, plain or basmati
2½ cups water
2 cups peas, fresh and lightly steamed, or frozen
2 cups chopped broccoli, steamed or blanched until just tender
2 cups diced carrots, steamed or blanched until just tender
½ small red bell pepper, diced
2 scallions, trimmed of roots, sliced into thin rounds (whites and green parts)

Soy sauce

Combine the rice and water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Turn the heat to a low simmer, cover the pot and cook undisturbed for 40 minutes, or until the rice is tender. Remove from heat and fluff with a fork to let the steam escape and transfer to a bowl.

(Kids can help with these steps).

If you are using frozen peas or corn, place each in a strainer or a colander and run under room-temperature tap water to thaw. Drain thoroughly and transfer to separate bowls.

Place all the other vegetables in separate bowls.

Put a large spoonful of rice in a bowl and customize with the vegetables. Sprinkle in a few drops of soy sauce, mix well, and eat.

Serves 5 or 6.

Source: "Salad People and More Real Recipes: A New Cookbook for Preschoolers & Up" by Mollie Katzen

Orange Puree

3 medium to large carrots, peeled and sliced thick
1 medium sweet potato or yam, peeled and chopped
2 to 4 Tablespoons water

Boil the carrots in a medium-size pot for about 5 minutes. Add the

sweet potato and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes. Drain the veggies then puree them in a food processor with 2 tablespoons water.

If necessary, add more water, a tablespoon at a time, blending until smooth.

Sneak this recipe into pizza and tomato sauce, muffins, macaroni and cheese or the following pancake recipe.

Makes 2½ cups.

Source: "The Sneaky Chef: Simple Strategies for Hiding Healthy Foods in Kids' Favorite Meals" and Family Fun magazine

Golden Pancakes

2 cups flour
2 Tablespoons sugar
2 Tablespoons baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1¼ cups buttermilk (or more)
¾ cup Orange Puree
2 eggs
3 Tablespoons butter, melted and cooled slightly

Whisk together the dry ingredients in a medium-size bowl.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, Orange Puree, eggs and melted butter.

Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients, then pour in the buttermilk mixture. Whisk gently until just combined. If the batter is too thick, add another 2 or more tablespoons of buttermilk.

Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Grease the hot skillet, then pour batter onto the skillet ¼ cup at a time, spreading each cupful to about 4½ inches in diameter with the back of a spoon.

Cook the pancakes until bubbles form on the surface, about 2 minutes, then flip them and cook until golden, about 2 minutes more.

Makes 16 pancakes.

Source: "The Sneaky Chef: Simple Strategies for Hiding Healthy Foods in Kids' Favorite Meals" and Family Fun magazine

Zucchini Moons

2 small zucchini
1 teaspoon butter (more or less)
2 Tablespoons water
Salt and pepper
2 teaspoons grated Parmesan
cheese (or to taste)

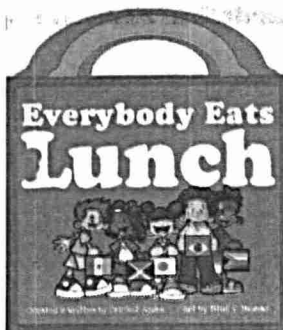
Cut the zucchini into rounds about 1/4-inch thick. Heat the pan to medium-hot. Put the zucchini, butter and water in the pan. Shake in some salt and pepper.

Stir and cook until it seems done. This will take about 5 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese.

(Children love this part. And once the cheese is on, they like to mix it up and smush it around before they settle down to eat it. ... If it's too hot to eat right away, ask your child to count to 10 while you blow. If it's still too hot, trade jobs and do it again.)

Serves 2 or 3.

Source: "Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers & Up" by Mollie Katzen



Whole wheat spaghetti and fresh snow peas are ingredients for Tasmanian Devil Thai Noodles, which can be served with fresh fruit on the side.

'EVERYBODY EATS LUNCH'

Even the pickiest eaters might enjoy taking a culinary tour around the world with "Everybody Eats Lunch," created and written by professional chef Cricket Azima (\$16, Glitterati Inc.).

■ The interactive, lunchbox-shaped kids' book is educational and playful as it explores culture and ethnic foods typically eaten by kids in Brazil, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico and South Africa.

■ Removable puzzle pieces reveal recipes for international dishes.



PHOTOS COURTESY GIBBS SMITH

A flower-shaped cookie cutter creates individual Fairy Queen Quiches for kids.