



Eco-Healthy Child Care

Eco-Healthy Child Care is a national program created by the Oregon Environmental Council to ensure that child care settings are as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.



Healthy Food for Healthy Celebrations

Celebration Is Important

Special occasions are an important part of a child's social development. Rituals to celebrate birthdays, new classmates, graduations and holidays are opportunities to practice sharing, and learn about other communities and cultures. When food is part of a celebration, it's an opportunity to support healthy eating habits by serving fresh fruits and vegetables or healthy snacks. Here are some tips to ensure that celebrations are as healthy for young bodies as they are for young minds.

Healthy Celebration Activities

1. Arrange a field trip to a local park, library, or museum to celebrate special occasions, taking along lunch or healthy snacks.
2. Share the child's favorite book as a special story time event, or organize a scavenger hunt.
3. Plant organic herbs or veggies in honor of a child that will provide yummy tastings later.
4. Create a ritual: What makes a special occasion "special" is that it doesn't happen often. A celebration ritual—ringing a gong, doing a special dance, or wearing a special hat can make an occasion memorable.

5. Offer a no-cal "treat". Create celebrations that are about sharing: soap bubbles for blowing, whistles for tweeting, ribbons for twirling or homemade play dough for sculpting.

Develop a "Celebrations Policy"

A "celebrations policy," perhaps as part of a food wellness policy, can help parents, staff and teachers agree on guidelines to make celebrations about fun rather than extra un-healthy food. In addition to healthy snack suggestions and activity ideas, a policy may include these procedures:

- Plan ahead to consolidate birthdays and other celebrations into weekly, bi-weekly or monthly events.
- Schedule celebrations around routine meal & snack times, so that healthy and nutritious treats are not added calories.
- Share monthly special event schedules with parents, setting clear expectations for them to provide craft or activity ideas.
- Publish your policy and tips for how to implement it in a newsletter, emails and/or parent handbooks.

Healthy Options for Snacks & Treats

1. Fresh fruit kebabs: Local, organic or pesticide-free fresh fruits are a nutritious alternative to sugary treats. Serve chunks of fruit on skewers with plain, nonfat yogurt for dipping.
2. Local, organic or pesticide-free vegetables: Make them special by taking time to arrange them or cut them into fun shapes.
3. Choose local frozen produce in the off-season. Cooked sweet potatoes are usually a hit with kids, as are local berries.
4. Cool drinks: On hot summer days, offer cold water flavored with fresh lemon, lime, or cucumber slices. This is refreshing without added sugar.

A Cool Weather Warmer:

On frosty autumn and winter days, celebrate with apple tea:

- Apple or pear slices
- Cinnamon
- Nutmeg or cloves
- Vanilla



Have the kids add ingredients to warm water and steep for five minutes.

Serve warm on the playground!

Healthy Celebration Ideas on the Internet

- ✓ Model [wellness policies](http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org) for schools, as developed by the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity: www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org
- ✓ A list of [children's story books](http://childrensbooks.about.com/od/holidays/Holidays.htm) with holiday themes, for special celebration story hours: childrensbooks.about.com/od/holidays/Holidays.htm
- ✓ [Craft and activity](http://www.dltk-holidays.com) ideas for holidays and special days: www.dltk-holidays.com
- ✓ [Seasonal ideas](http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options_healthycelebrations.html) for healthy celebrations and other nutrition information from Center for Science in the Public Interest: cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options_healthycelebrations.html
- ✓ Sample grade school [healthy celebration policy](http://www.vasaelementary.com/?page_id=203) at Valley Arts & Sciences Academy: www.vasaelementary.com/?page_id=203
- ✓ [Best Practices For Healthy Eating](http://static.nemours.org/www-filebox/nhps/childcare-kit.pdf): Guide to healthy food choices and portion size for children, developed by health professionals. static.nemours.org/www-filebox/nhps/childcare-kit.pdf

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