

Food Program Philosophy



The Goals of Mealtime

- For the children's caloric & nutritional needs to be met
- For the children to experience a variety of colors, textures, smells, and flavors of different foods through looking, touching/feeling, smelling, and tasting
- For the children to develop a positive relationship with both food and their own body
- For the children to build foundational developmental skills in a meaningful context
- For the children to experience the connections between food, identity, and culture
- For the children to establish secure attachments to caregivers who are providing for their physical, emotional, and developmental needs

Our Beliefs About Eating & Feeding

- ◇ Hungry children can't feel sufficiently secure to thrive at school
- ◇ Mealtime should be a joyful experience free of judgement, guilt, and shame where children can build a positive self-image
- ◇ Communal dining provides valuable opportunities for caregiver bonding, peer & adult modeling, and prosocial interactions
- ◇ Predictable meal times & schedules support secure attachment
- ◇ Children may need to experience a food **many** times before feeling comfortable tasting/eating it
- ◇ Children thrive in eating environments where biases such as racism, ableism, and fat-shaming are dismantled

Eating, Feeding & The 5 Pillars

Creative	⇒ Combining foods & flavors or inventing recipes ⇒ Finding solutions to mealtime dilemmas
Resilient	⇒ Taking risks like exploring a new food/ flavor ⇒ Finding desirable foods amidst challenging options
Engaged	⇒ Participating in the routines of communal dining ⇒ Making observations about foods & eating ⇒ Communicating with peers & teachers during meals
Curious	⇒ Exploring new foods with various senses ⇒ Asking questions about how foods are grown or prepared
Empowered	⇒ Expressing needs to teachers & peers ⇒ Describing food preferences & beliefs ⇒ Assisting with meal set up, serving, & clean up

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We believe that a balanced meal:

- ◇ Is rich in various nutrients (fat, protein, carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins/minerals & water)
- ◇ Includes foods that are familiar and comfortable for each child
- ◇ Features foods that represent new experiences and appropriate challenges

Division of Responsibility

Program	Children	Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Decide when & where we eat⇒ Establish developmentally appropriate community norms for mealtimes⇒ Scaffold children to higher skill levels⇒ Develop a holistically balanced menu, comprised of well-balanced meals⇒ Determine menu modifications based on individual & classroom needs⇒ Foster an eating environment free of judgment, guilt, and bias⇒ Obtain, store, and dispose of foods in safe, ethical, and sustainable ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Decide whether or not to eat⇒ Decide which foods they eat, and in what order⇒ Decide how much they eat⇒ Communicate needs in developmentally appropriate ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Share family & cultural beliefs about eating and feeding with teachers⇒ Communicate individual needs surrounding eating such as preferences & allergies⇒ Support their children in building developmentally & culturally appropriate skills around eating⇒ Partner with teachers and administrators to create eating experiences which meet their child's needs and are a positive & culturally relevant experience

We believe that a balanced menu:

- ◇ Includes a variety of different foods throughout each day, week, and month
- ◇ Features a variety of flavors, textures, and cooking methods
- ◇ Includes foods which represent the diverse cultures & identities of both the local population and the enrolled families
- ◇ Is responsive to seasonal fluctuations in harvest & food supply