

Parent Provider Connection - January 2024

Power Up Breakfast

Whole grains are made up of three parts and each plays a role in bringing a power boost to breakfast. The outer layer is bran, which contains fiber and helps children feel fuller longer. The endosperm gives us the energy we need to stay alert, and the germ provides vitamins, minerals and healthy fats for our bodies.

Sunset Grits

In a medium pot, bring 2 cups water and ¼ tsp salt to a boil. Whisk in ½ cup enriched quick grits and reduce heat to low setting. Cook for 5-7 minutes while stirring occasionally. Scoop ¼ cup grits into a bowl. Top with 1 tbsp of cheese, 1 ½ oz of warmed pulled pork, and 1-2 tbsp of barbecue sauce.

Color and Shape River

Cut an assortment of large shapes from a variety of colors on cardstock paper. Place the shapes in a river pattern on your floor. Have all the children stand at the beginning of your river and call out a "safe" color or shape. They will jump to the nearest color or shape they find. Continue until everyone is on the other side.

Paint with Leaves

On a nature walk, gather fallen leaves. Cut out a large heart from cardstock. Using the leaves, gently press into paint and then stamp onto your cutout. The gorgeous stems and veins will make a beautiful picture.



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New River Gorge National Park, West Virginia

INSTRUCTIONS: *In the body of each newsletter, there is space for you to customize information you would like to convey to the parents. This is an opportunity to share with parents examples of the healthy food you provide, as well as the fun and educational activities their children are engaged in. To customize, open the PDF and click on the blank field to type your newsletter, like the example below. Then save the file and print your copies, or attach them in an email, to distribute them to parents.*

Happy New Year Everyone!

We are excited to share the start of the new year with learning and adventures ahead. This month we will start our year by visiting New River Gorge National Park in West Virginia! The children will have activities while they are in our care and you can try any of these at home as well. The Sunset Grits makes for an excellent, healthy breakfast on these cold winter mornings.

Please note, we will be open on Martin Luther King Day on January 15, 2024. Look for spring field trip and Valentine's Day Celebration information to be coming home soon!

As always, thank you for trusting us with the care of your children. We look forward to a wonderful 2024 together!

Sincerely,
Donna



CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



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New River Gorge National Park, West Virginia

Parent Provider Connection - February 2024

Building Immunity

Phytonutrients are natural chemicals found in plants that help defend your body from getting sick. By eating different colored fruits and vegetables, you can get many different types of phytonutrients - so make sure to eat red, orange, green, purple and white foods each week!

Ohio Ladybug

The state insect of Ohio is the ladybug. Ask the children to help you gather smooth rocks for painting and make sure they are clean. Assist the children while they create their own rock ladybug with paint and googly eyes.

Sasquatch Bites

Mix 2 cups shredded zucchini, 2 eggs, ½ cup bread crumbs, and ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese in a bowl. Scoop 2 tablespoons of the mixture, form into a ball, and place on a lined baking sheet, making 18. Bake at 425° F for 20-25 minutes, then broil for 2 minutes for crispy exterior. Serve immediately.

Camp Activity Charades

There are so many activities we can do at a campsite, like fishing, setting up a tent and gathering wood. Print the camp activity charade cards at cacfp.org and assist the children as they choose and act out the activities.



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Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio

Parent Provider Connection - March 2024

Serving Seafood

Seafood like fish and shellfish are a great choice to include in a meal as lean meat. Seafood is packed with important nutrients like protein, healthy fats and vitamins (B-6, B-12, D). When consumed, these foods can support brain development, strong bones, a healthy heart and the immune system.

Fab Crab Roll

Mix ¼ cup Greek yogurt, ½ tsp lemon juice, ¼ cup finely diced celery and 1 tsp parsley together. Add 4 large boiled and chopped eggs and 6 oz diced or shredded surimi and mix until well combined. Allow to marinate in the refrigerator for 10-20 minutes. Scoop into whole wheat hot dog bun.

Maine Lobster

Cut paper plates in half. Have children paint one half of a paper plate red. When dry, they will add big googly eyes in the middle. Using the template at cacfp.org, have the children paint and cut out the lobster claws. Then ask them to glue the claws on the curved side of the plate to complete their lobster.

Crustacean Crawl

Find a flat area and demonstrate how to do the lobster crawl by sitting on the ground, feet in front, arms supporting behind. Push your tummy to the air, balancing your weight on hands and feet. Move right foot, left hand and vice versa to go forward. Have one child be the Maine Lobster and try to tag another lobster. Then repeat.



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Acadia National Park, Maine

Parent Provider Connection - April 2024

Dried & Delicious Fruits

Fruit that has been dehydrated shrinks into flavorful, shelf-stable bite size pieces that come whole, sliced or chopped. Most small, dried fruits are loaded with nutrients like iron and fiber. Try papaya, prunes, dates or apricots together with cereal for a fun snack!

Fish with Mango Salsa

Preheat oven to 450° F. Place one pound (16 oz) of fish fillets on a greased, foil-lined baking pan in a single layer, seasoning with salt & pepper to taste. Bake uncovered 8 to 9 minutes. In a bowl, mix together 1 ½ cup chopped mango, 1 ½ cup chopped avocado, 2 tbsp diced red onion, and 1 lime juiced. Top fish with the mango salsa to serve.

Nature Eye Spy

As spring is awakening, there are so many things for kids to notice. Using the template at cacfp.org, give each child their own guide to take on a nature walk. Walk slowly pointing out different items on the card. Each time anyone spies something on the card say, Nature Eye Spy!

Textured Orca

Cut out the orca template from cacfp.org. Have the children use black paint on the parts marked with a number one. Then have the children glue white felt mosaic pieces they have cut onto the parts marked number two. Add a googly eye to finish.



Channel Island National Park, California

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Parent Provider Connection - May 2024

Food Safety

Keeping deli meats fresh and safe to serve can sometimes be a challenge. The best way to store deli meats, once opened, is to keep them in a tight-lidded container inside the refrigerator. Freshly-sliced deli meat can last between 3-5 days in the refrigerator after opening.

Goodnight Gator

Preheat oven to 450° F. Assemble each slider with 1 slice each of ½ oz of turkey salami, ham and cheese on a whole wheat slider bun. Spread ½ tsp each of the mustard and relish under the top buns. Place all sliders on a sheet pan and cook for about 10 minutes or until the bun is toasted and the cheese has melted.

May I, Mr. Crocodile?

One child will be Mr. Crocodile. The other children will stand across. Mr. Crocodile will call out directions to the children, such as take two giant leaps forward. They will say, "May I?" If they do not ask, they have to go back to the start.

Craft Stick Croc

Have children wrap green chenille stems around the center of a large green craft stick, leaving an inch off the side for legs, to make the body of their crocodiles. At one end, they can glue googly eyes and draw the mouth with a marker.



Everglades National Park, Florida

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Parent Provider Connection - June 2024

Strong Foundations

The bones in our body give us our shape, structure and protect our organs. To keep these bones strong, we need calcium, vitamin D and protein. All three nutrients can be found in pasteurized cow's milk. Soy milks that have been fortified with vitamin D are also great for building healthy bones.

Cheese Crisps

Preheat oven to 350° F. Spread butter on 3 (6") whole wheat tortillas and bake for 5-6 minutes or until the edges are golden brown. Remove from oven, sprinkle ½ cup shredded cheese evenly on top of each tortilla, and return to the oven for another 1-3 minutes or until cheese is fully melted. Serve warm.

Cacti, Cacti, Ouch!

Played like Duck, Duck, Goose - have children sit in a circle. One child will go around the circle and say cacti until they're ready to say ouch! The child they touch will chase them around the circle back to their spot. If they make it back before the cactus, they are safe. If not, they are the new cactus.

Fork Painting

Using the Saguaro cactus template at cacfp.org, ask the children to color the cactus lightly. Then have the children dip a plastic fork into paint and use it to stamp on the needles with the fork tines.



Saguaro National Park, Arizona

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Parent Provider Connection - July 2024

Wild About Rice

Rice is a staple food in many cultures. Switch to brown rice or wild rice, which are both whole grain-rich and filled with nutrients like fiber, B vitamins and iron. Try rice dishes like tofu musubi, stir-fried rice and poke bowls for variety.

Poke Bowl

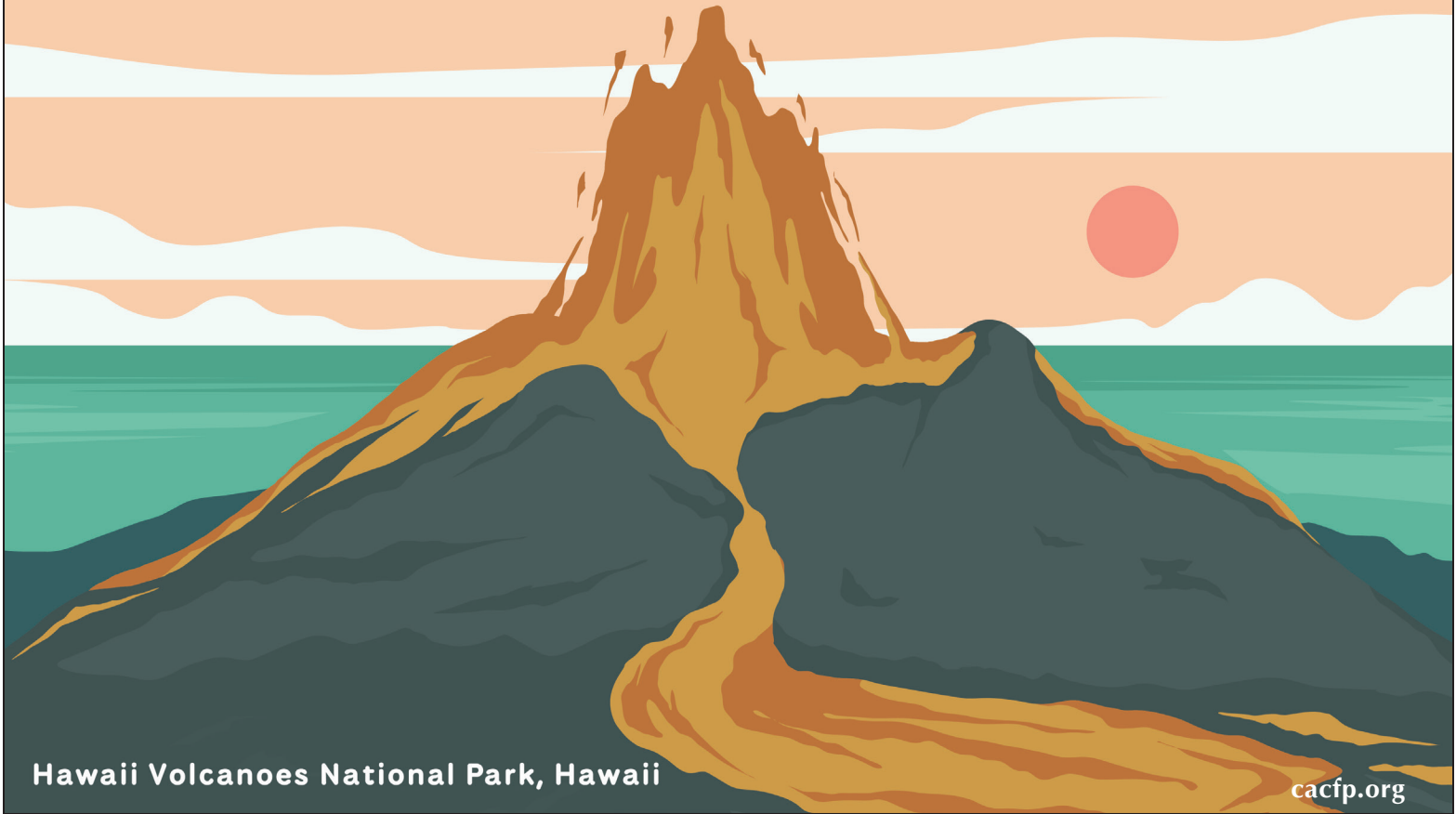
Invite children to scoop $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked brown rice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pineapple tidbits and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of edamame out of separate bowls to make a Hawaiian inspired meal! Offer them poke sauce or sesame ginger dressing too if they want to add flavor.

Lava Escape

Make safe spots by placing carpet squares or cardstock on the ground in a designated area. When one child calls out, "Lava Escape!" all others will jump as quickly as they can onto a safe spot. You can also place these in a path so they can pretend to get from one end to the other without touching lava.

My Pretty Pineapple

Assist children in gluing torn bits of yellow tissue paper to the pineapple template from cacfp.org. Then help them trace and cut an outline of their hand from green paper. They will glue this to the top to create the stem.



Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii

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Parent Provider Connection - August 2024

Game Animals

Venison or bison are popular types of lean meat that can replace ground beef and are equally nutritious. Before you start cooking with game meat, be sure it has been inspected by the USDA or state agency. Try using meat savory pies, soup, stews or pot roast.

Snow Top Mountain Chili

Bring 16 oz of chicken broth to a boil and add 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breast. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook for 8-12 minutes. Remove chicken, finely dice it, and then return it to the pot along with 1/2 medium diced onion, 1 (15 oz) can Navy beans (drained and rinsed) and 1 tbsp white chicken chili seasoning mix. Allow ingredients to warm up and it is ready to serve!

Geyser Watch

This is an adult-only activity for the children to observe using soda and mentos to create a geyser. In an outdoor area, far from the children, open a 2-liter bottle of soda and drop 3-5 mentos down the neck of the bottle. Back away and join the children to watch the geyser erupt.

Pop Up Prairie Dog

Have children count off by number. When you call their number, they will do 5 squats in place, popping up and down like prairie dogs do in the plains.



Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming

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Parent Provider Connection - September 2024

Get the Pulse on Beans

Pulses are the seeds of legume plants, such as lentils, peas and beans, and are rich in fiber and protein. Each pulse brings a different flavor and texture to a dish, so try them all.

Queso Bean Dip

Place 1 (15 oz) can drained and rinsed black beans, 1 (4 oz) can mild green chilies, 2 cups shredded Mexican cheese blend, 1 cup mild salsa and 8 oz cream cheese in a bowl. Microwave on high, stirring after each minute, for 5-6 minutes until cheese is melted. Serve with corn tortilla chips.

Sitting Position

Have children sit in a circle and complete exercises that use the upper half of their bodies. They can show you how to kayak, reach for the stars, stretch from side to side and bend at the waist to touch the ground.

Starry Starry Night

Teach the children about constellations and help them create their own. They can place gold star stickers on black paper and connect them by drawing lines with white chalk to create a constellation.



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Big Bend National Park, Texas

Parent Provider Connection - October 2024

Stop and Smell

Dried herbs and spices are a great way to add flavor to your recipes. When substituting for fresh, cut the amount called for to 1/3 of the amount, because dried herbs and spices have a concentrated, stronger taste.

Veggie Stack

In a large resealable plastic bag, place 3 cups raw, mixed vegetable sticks, 2 tbsp vegetable oil, 1 cup panko crumbs and 1/8 tsp smoked paprika. Seal the bag and shake all ingredients together. Place on a lined sheet pan and bake at 425°F in the oven for 15-25 minutes.

Mountain Climb

Draw a large triangle mountain with sidewalk chalk or with tape on the floor. Mark numbers 1-6 inside the triangle. The child will roll a die, stand on the number they get, and keep rolling until they reach the top of the mountain.

Watercolors

Using watercolor paper and paint, ask the children to paint any pattern they choose. While it dries, have them cut out a large and small triangle from gray construction paper. Then, they can glue the triangles on to create mountains with a beautiful background.



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Great Smoky Mountain National Park, Tennessee

Parent Provider Connection - November 2024

Seasonal Produce

Serving seasonal fruits and vegetables is an opportunity to include a variety of produce from your local farmers' market, community-supported agriculture or grocery store. Want to serve local produce when it's out of season? Freeze it!

Pear Parfaits

Mix 3 cups diced pears, 1/2 tsp cinnamon, and 1 tsp honey. Microwave, covered, for 2-3 minutes on high setting, and stir. To assemble, scoop 1/2 cup of the pear mixture into a bowl topped with 1/4 cup of vanilla yogurt, and a sprinkle of graham cracker crumbs.

Rainbow Architecture

Cut heavy cardboard in the shape of an arch. Give children various colors of yarn and demonstrate how to wrap the cardboard with yarn to cover. They will make their arch into a beautiful rainbow.

Arch Limbo

Have two people hold each end of a pool noodle to create an arch. Start with it up high while each child tries to pass underneath from one side to the other without falling down. Lower the arch each round.



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Gateway Arch National Park, Missouri

Parent Provider Connection - December 2024

Cooking Methods

Healthy cooking reduces the amount of unhealthy fats in a recipe. Try baking, sautéing, grilling, steaming, braising, or toasting to add texture and flavor in a variety of ways.

Salmon Patties

Drain and flake 1 can (14.75 oz) of salmon with a fork into a bowl. Mix in ½ tsp salmon seasoning, 2 eggs, 1 tbsp milk and ¼ cup breadcrumbs. Use 1/3 cup scoop to form six patties (3" wide, 1/2" thick). Heat skillet over medium heat and cook patties for 3-4 minutes on each side.

Bald Eagles

Using the Eagle template at cacfp.org, show the children how to glue white feathers on to the head and brown feathers to the neckline. Complete the Bald Eagle with a googly eye and yellow beak cut from construction paper.

Ring Toss

Make a mat with horizontal lines across the mat. Each line is worth a different point. Have children stand in a designated spot away from the mat and toss rings, trying to land them on one of the lines to earn points.



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Katmai National Park, Alaska