

TRY THIS At Home! MEALTIME ROUTINES



Guessing Game

- MAKE IT A COMPETITION WHO CAN GUESS THE MOST CORRECT FOOD ITEMS!
- EACH FOOD ITEM WILL BE COVERED AND PRESENTED ONE ITEM AT A TIME. CLOSE YOUR EYES. YOU CAN SMELL, TOUCH, AND IF YOU ARE REALLY BRAVE, TASTE THE FOOD. THEN GUESS WHAT IS ON YOUR PLATE!



FANCY DINNER PARTY

- DRESS UP FANCY FOR A DINNER PARTY OR TEA PARTY. LIGHT SOME CANDLES AND PLAY SOME MUSIC.
- BE SURE TO HELP SET THE TABLE AND ARRANGE THE MENU FOR THE EVENT. MAYBE TRY A NEW FOOD OR HAVE AN OLD FAVOURITE! BUT MAKE IT FANCY!
- HAVE A FAVOURITE MOVIE OR TV SHOW? YOU CAN PICK A THEME FOR THE DINNER PARTY! MAYBE YOU LOVE FROZEN AND CAN HAVE COLD FOOD! OR, MAYBE YOU LOVE LUCA AND CAN HAVE ITALIAN FOOD!



Feed the Birds

MAKE SURE TO ASK YOUR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS BEFOREHAND! BE CAREFUL WHEN USING THE BUTTER KNIFE TO SPREAD THE PEANUT BUTTER!

SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR THESE BIRDSEED ORNAMENTS:

- 2 PIECES OF STALE BREAD
- PEANUT BUTTER
- BIRDSEED
- COOKIE CUTTERS
- 2 PIPE CLEANERS



WHEN CHOOSING THE COOKIE CUTTER SHAPES, HAVE FUN! THEY CAN REALLY BE OF ANYTHING THAT YOU WANT!

1. START BY USING THE COOKIE CUTTERS TO CUT OUT THE MIDDLE OF THE BREAD.
2. ONCE YOU'VE GOT THE SHAPES CUT OUT, YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO CAREFULLY POKE A PIPE CLEANER THROUGH EACH SHAPE AND THEN TWIST THE ENDS TOGETHER.
3. ONCE THAT IS COMPLETE, TAKE AND SPREAD PEANUT BUTTER OVER EACH SHAPE AND THEN PLACE THE PEANUT BUTTER SIDE DOWN INTO A BOWL OF BIRDSEED. MAKE CERTAIN THAT YOU PRESS DOWN FIRMLY BUT GENTLY TO COAT THE ENTIRE SHAPE.
4. YOU'RE ONLY GOING TO BE DOING ONE SIDE AS PER THIS RECIPE, BUT IF YOU REALLY WANTED TO TRY BOTH SIDES, GO FOR IT! IT JUST MIGHT BE A LITTLE BIT MESSY BUT WHAT'S THE HARM IN THAT?

YOU CAN ALSO USE PINECONES THAT YOU FIND OUTSIDE INSTEAD OF BREAD! IT MAKES A DIFFERENT CHALLENGE WHEN USING A KNIFE





Mealtimes Methods



Psst... Show this to a parent or guardian!

Why Focus on Mealtimes Routines?

Is mealtimes a challenge in your house due to picky eaters? Does planning dinners for the week cause you stress? You aren't alone if you answered yes (Johnson, 2021)! Every parent has encountered such mealtimes battles at one time or another (Johnson, 2021).

The following tips are from pediatric occupational therapy practitioners who have experience with educating parents on establishing mealtimes routines (AOTA, 2014).

Avoid meltdowns.

Because children of all ages benefit from routines, have meals and snacks at the same time each day. If a meal time is going to change, let children know ahead of time. This preparation can help to avoid behavior issues that may occur when the child faces unexpected change. You can anticipate your child's needs when visiting family friendly restaurants. Bring a small toy to keep your child busy, such as crayons and paper; bring a light snack like Cheerios so your child doesn't get too hungry; and ask the waitress to bring the child's food as soon as possible. Avoid crowded times when service is slow, and plan visits around your child's naptime to avoid outbursts.

Increase participation and responsibility.

Meal planning can be fun for children and help them learn daily skills. Involve children in preparing meals whenever possible—be creative. Even giving small children a pan and a wooden spoon to bang on will help them feel involved. Activities involved in preparing meals may include:

- **Food shopping.** Ask your child to help to pick out items at the store needed for an upcoming meal. Older children can help calculate food costs and read labels for nutritional content.
- **Setting the table**
- **Getting items needed for mealtimes, like salad dressing from the refrigerator**
- **Carrying napkins or plates to the table**
- **Cleaning up.** Your child learns sequencing and responsibility when asked to help wipe the table with a spritz bottle and cloth.

Promote healthy habits

Mealtimes sitting at a table with no TV on or electronics can send the message that mealtimes are for eating and talking. Distracted eating may encourage overeating and decreases socialization because the focus is not on the family members or the meal itself. Giving children assigned seats at the table with a place mat can help them identify their space for eating. Encourage each child to take one bite of a new food, and remember that it will probably take several tries before the food will be accepted or liked. The expectation to try new things will help children learn to do this on their own and will encourage a balanced diet.

Develop cooperation and socialization.

Serving food family style allows children to develop communication skills, social skills, and fine motor skills by passing the plate and requesting what they want to eat. Caregivers can role model and use manners to help children learn how to behave at mealtimes. Engage everyone at the table in a ritual of gratitude, whether it is a prayer or an opportunity to talk about the day. This turn-taking activity helps children learn the social aspects of eating and prepares them for interactions in the school cafeteria.

Promote positive behavior

If a child does not behave appropriately at mealtimes, asking the child to leave the table until the behavior improves is appropriate. Role modeling and praising positive behaviors also helps.

Ways to make Mealtimes Fun!

(Johnson, 2021)

- Read some nonfiction books about how food is grown or where it comes from.
- Theme your dinners around fun movies. Think Chinese food with Mulan, or Italian food with Lady and the Tramp.
- Find some educational programs that show how food is made in factories. Children may start asking to find some of the food they've seen highlighted on these shows.
- Have a no utensils night! Have fun eating with your hands! This also works on fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- Let your children meal plan with you. Give them some cookbooks and let them pick out a few new meals to try.
- Let your children help with the prep work of making dinner or lunch. When possible, let your children choose what goes on their plates. For example, turkey or ham lunch meat, carrots or peppers, cheddar or mozzarella cheese.