

The background of the page is a photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, smiling and focused on preparing food in a kitchen. The girl is on the left, wearing a light blue sweater, and the boy is on the right, wearing a white shirt. They are both using knives to cut ingredients on a cutting board. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# Combining Creative, Healthy and Fun into Family Dinner

*by Michelle Vicari*

Many of us have been eating home cooking for months and we're running out of ideas for meals, let alone meals that are healthy, creative and fun. It can be especially challenging to make a meal everyone in the family will eat. Something that appeals to the adults is not always a winner with the kids in the house.

The answer is the **DIY (Design-It-Yourself) Meal**. The best part of the DIY meal: it doesn't require recipes or any elaborate preparation. All you need is a small spread of ingredients and each family member can customize their own meal!

# Here are five **DIY** (Design-It-Yourself) themes that are sure to become your family's most-requested meals.

## DIY Fiesta

### ● What you will need:

- Tortillas and/or tortilla chips.

### ● Toppings to choose from:

- Protein – Chopped chicken, steak, shrimp, beans (*black, pinto or refried*) or plant-based meat alternatives.
- Vegetables – roasted vegetables or fresh ones like lettuce, shredded cabbage, green onions or tomatoes.
- Finishing touches – Greek yogurt, shredded cheese, cilantro, salsa, or hot sauce.



## Breakfast for Dinner Night

### ● What you will need:

- Waffles or pancakes (*use whole grain if you can*).

### ● Toppings to choose from:

- Fruit – Fresh or frozen strawberries, blueberries, raspberries or sliced bananas.
- Protein – almond or peanut butter.
- Other toppings – Chocolate chips, applesauce, low-sugar jams or maple syrup.

## Super Salad Bar Night

### ● What you will need:

- Lettuce, spinach or any type of greens.

### ● Toppings to choose from:

- Protein – cooked chicken, steak, shrimp, tuna, crab, hard-boiled eggs or chickpeas (*tip: If you are grilling on the weekend, toss an extra piece or two of chicken on the grill for your salad bar night*).
- Fresh vegetables – tomatoes, cucumber or shredded carrots.
- Additional toppings – pickled vegetables, shredded cheese, nuts and seeds, dressings of your choice or Greek yogurt.



“ The best part of the DIY meal: it doesn't require recipes or any elaborate preparation. ”

# DIY Meals Are Perfect for Everyone!

DIY meals are a great opportunity for adults to model making healthy food choices. Creating meals with your children is not only fun, but also a great way to incorporate family time and stay healthy!

## Potato with the Works Night

### What you will need:

- Baked potatoes (*regular or sweet potatoes*).

### Toppings to choose from:

- Protein – cooked chicken, steak, crumbled sausage or bacon, beans or chili.
- Plant-based toppings – sliced green onions, sliced black olives, diced tomatoes or roasted vegetables.
- Condiments – barbecue sauce, shredded cheese, salsa or plain Greek yogurt.



## Groovy Grain Bowl Night

### What you will need:

- Cooked quinoa, brown rice, farro, bulgur wheat, millet or freekeh.

### Toppings to choose from:

- Protein – (Meat) Shrimp, tuna, crab, chicken or steak. (Plant-based) Chickpeas.
- Fresh vegetables – tomatoes, cucumber, shredded carrots, chopped peppers or sprouts.
- Finishing touches – pickled vegetables, nuts and seeds, tahini sauce, hummus or Greek yogurt.



# WOULD YOU RATHER?

Extend the creativity and fun of making choices with an after-dinner game of "Would You Rather?"

Hop on one leg five times

OR

do five push-ups?

Go for a walk

OR

play a game of Tag?

Make up a dance

OR

make up a song?

Pretend to be a bear

OR

pretend to be a bird?

Visit the mountains

OR

visit the beach?

Talk to animals

OR

speak all human languages?

Pretend to ride a horse

OR

pretend to ride a bike?

Live for a week on the space station

OR

in a submarine?

Play catch

OR

build a fort?

Watch a funny movie

OR

watch an action movie?

Do 10 jumping jacks

OR

three cartwheels?

Pretend to be a spider

OR

pretend to be a monkey?

## **About the Author:**

Michelle "Shelly" Vicari is the Immediate-Past Chair of the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), majored in Child Development & Family Studies and Political Science at San Diego State University, and is the former Curriculum Director of the largest National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited Child Care Centers in Southern California. She has authored many curriculum guides for teachers working with young children and was lucky enough to have once met Mr. Fred Rogers.



# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

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