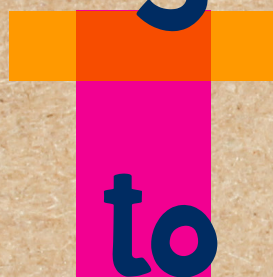


Using



to Inspire

Healthy Food Choices

by Molly Jones, RDN, LD

Talking and learning about food can be fun! Encouraging your child to develop a healthy relationship with food can also be easy, even though it may seem to be the opposite.

Caterpillar Fun



Butterfly Snacks



Talking about food can become hard when kids hear parents and other adults refer to foods as “bad” or “good.” They might also hear about having to “diet.”

This can lead children to start to associate certain foods with feelings of guilt or dread. Some parents might also refer to their child as a “picky eater” which can limit their confidence and ability to try new foods or develop a taste for new foods.

Rather than using labels to describe foods and eating habits, try introducing foods and healthy eating patterns through fun activities. Encouraging children to have fun with food can be a wonderful way for them to learn that they have an important part to play in choosing foods and in learning about them at the same time. Creative play with food allows for positive experiences and memories to be made for all.

Painted
Butterfly
Pasta



DIY Food Stamps

Food-centric Arts and Crafts

To help your child see food in a new way, try incorporating food into your next arts and crafts project! Using food in a different way can help children to not just view a certain food as “good” or “healthy,” but actually spark their interest in a new food by creating a positive memory. Food crafts are limitless when you begin to use your imagination!

Here are some fun examples of food-centric crafts for the whole family:

Citrus Stamped Tea Towels

A fun project that can also be a great gift! Slice a variety of citrus fruits in half, dip them in bright colors and use them to stamp a creative design on tea towels. Learn more: MakingHomeBase.com

Painted Bowtie Pasta Butterfly Craft

With a few extra craft supplies, turn bowtie pasta into a butterfly themed decoration or spring-time centerpiece. Learn more: HowDoesShe.com

DIY Food Stamps

Turn any vegetable into a stamp by slicing it in half or at an angle. Then dip the vegetables in paint and create a masterpiece ready for your kitchen refrigerator door! Or consider using the stamps on blank note cards, gift bags or wrapping paper to make gift-giving fun.

Rainbow Pasta Play

Let your preschooler pick their favorite pasta shape in the pasta aisle, and then when cooking the pasta according to the package directions, add two tablespoons of food coloring of your choice. Then, after the pasta has cooled, place it in a large bowl for sensory play. Cook up more than one color or shape and let them sort and combine for added fun. To learn more, visit: Tablespoon.com

Heart-Shaped Popcorn Bird Feeder

Using some wire and popcorn, create a treat all the birds in the neighborhood will enjoy! Learn more: KiwiCo.com

Butterfly Snacks

Decorate clothespins with markers to look like a butterfly, fill a snack-size baggie with a healthy snack and then place the clothespin in the center of the baggie to create a fun way to enjoy a snack at school or home! Learn more at: JugglingWithKids.com



Rainbow Pasta Play



“It’s amazing how our attitude toward food and our association with it can change when we’re able to explore food in a low-stress environment.”

Looks Almost Too Good to Eat

You can turn everyday food into edible art to help spark your child's interest in healthy foods and food preparation. Allowing children to help you create these edible masterpieces is a surefire way to encourage them to actually eat them too.

INSPIRED FOOD CREATIONS:

Berry Waffle Ice Cream Cones

Our friends at Driscoll's Berries have come up with a breakfast or snack recipe that any kid will find fun! All you need are: blueberries, a raspberry, Greek yogurt and frozen whole wheat waffles! For the recipe, please visit: Driscolls.com

Berry Waffle
Ice Cream Cone



Wild Eats

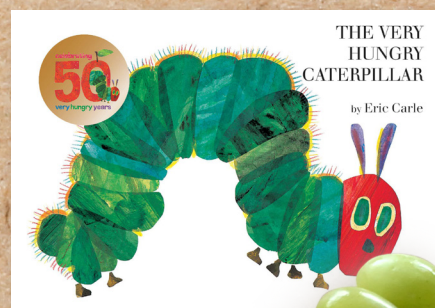
An empty plate, a banana and black and green grapes are all you need to create a fun sheep snack! For this and even more fun ways to create fun and healthy snacks, check out *Wild Eats and Adorable Treats* by Jill Mills the next time you are shopping on Amazon or visiting your local library or bookstore.

Caterpillar Fun

Make and eat your own caterpillar! Get started today by trying this easy snack idea from LittleFoodJunction.com:

- Thread some grapes and a cherry tomato on a wooden skewer.
- Dab some peanut butter onto the cherry tomato and stick on the candy eyes (you can also use a food marker, chocolate chips or peanuts for eyes if the candy variety is hard to find).
- Finally, use a food marker to draw a mouth.

You might also want to read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle to learn even more about food and the eating habits of a very funny caterpillar.



Raising a Health-minded Generation

It's amazing how our attitude toward food and our association with it can change when we're able to explore food in a low-stress environment. If you've ever desperately encouraged your child to "just take one more bite" of his or her vegetables, you know the dinnertime conversation can quickly lead to power struggles and that all-too-familiar game of bargaining.

Instead of labeling foods in black and white categories, bring out your child's curious and creative side by allowing them to have fun with food! Hands-on activities give them an engaging activity to occupy their mind (*and time*), teach them about healthier food choices that are good for the body, and teach the value of a balanced way of eating.

I hope these fun food-centric arts and crafts not only encourage a habit of healthy eating, but also allow you and your child to bond together and have loads of fun in the process!

About the Author:

Molly Jones, RDN, LD, is a registered dietitian currently working with both the bariatric surgery and telehealth programs at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC. She has helped to expand MUSC's telenutrition program by 4000 percent over the past six years, making healthcare more accessible to adults and children living in rural and medically underserved communities across the state. She is especially passionate about childhood and adolescent obesity prevention and awareness and finds that technology can be helpful in connecting with the younger generation.



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



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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**



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