



Maintaining Healthy & Sustainable Menus While Prices Rise

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Learning Outcomes:



- Understand the current crisis we all face relating to soaring energy & food costs within our settings
- Increase understanding of the Voluntary Food & Drink Guidelines and how to plan & prioritise nutrient dense menus – protein
- Increase confidence in planning a menu using cheaper ingredients and varied cooking methods
- Improve knowledge on plant-based proteins & the benefits
- Sharing best practise between settings

Food & The Cost of Living...



- Cost of living crisis is worsening and access to good food has never been so important
- Caterers & individuals are NOT to blame
- Food For Life offering additional support to caterers & settings
- Creative to tackle some of these issues – alternative foods & cooking methods
- Nurseries provide a nutritional safety net for children
- Be supportive & share good practise between settings

What foods are on the price increase?



- **Poultry** – chicken feed has rocketed
- **Beef** – increased by 20.1% between October 2020 & October 2021
- **Flour** – poor weather in North American wheat growing areas & rising fuel costs
- **Pasta** – higher feed costs & transport prices have led to 50% increase in one year!
- **Oil** – poor harvests in South America and covid related staff shortages
- **Rice** – supply chain disruption, lack of freight train transport & serious drought
- **Eggs** – farmers cutting flock numbers due to cost of feed & insufficient profit margins. Rising costs in labour, energy & feed





The Lemon Tree Day Nurseries Hull

Case Study

Jackie Kenyon – Director
Catherine - Chef

What inspired us to want to make changes



- What was in place when the nursery was taken over.
- A parent comment
- Why do we feel it is important



Changes to date



- Hiring a cook and sorting recipes.
- Sending menus to **Food for Life** along with product information.
- How much do these little ones eat!





Cost comparisons

- Better quality meat products
- Alternatives



Feedback



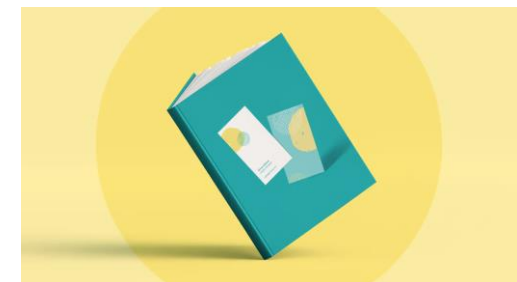
- Children!!!
- Staff
- Parents/Carers



What next?



- Continue to adapt recipes
- Include more seasonal recipes
- Continue to learn about portion size, nutritional values etc.
- Start putting the portfolio together for the award



The Voluntary Food & Drink Standards!



Voluntary food and drink
guidelines
for Early Years settings in
England
actionforchildren.org.uk

A practical guide

**Eat
better,
start
better**



Menu Planning in an Early Years Setting



- **Breakfast** is an important meal for young children. Some may have had breakfast before they arrive and some will need it when they arrive.
- **Lunch:** This may be the main meal of the day for some children and should contain the right balance of foods from the Food Groups.
- **Tea:** Good communication between the setting and parents/carers is key as to whether a child may require tea or if they are having a meal at home with the family
- **Snacks** – 2 -3 offerings per day



Healthy, balanced, nutritious and sustainable meal provision



The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework sets the standards that all early years providers must meet. They ensure that children learn and develop well, and are kept healthy and safe.

Why sustainability is an important part of this:

- Provides social benefits;
- contributes to thriving local economies;
- enhance the diversity of both plants and animals



Voluntary Food & Drink Standards – what changes can we make to menus to still comply with the standards? E.g. Reduce costs, cooking methods, increase pulses, less but higher quality meat, tinned tomato based sauces using lentils to bulk, tinned fruit/veg in water/juice.

Food groups	Examples of food included	Main nutrients provided	Recommended servings
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	Bread, potatoes and sweet potatoes, starchy root vegetables, pasta, noodles, rice, other grains, breakfast cereals	Carbohydrate, fibre, B vitamins and iron	Four portions each day Provide a portion as part of each meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and provide as part of at least one snack each day
Fruit and vegetables	Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit, vegetables, and pulses	Carotenes (a form of vitamin A), vitamin C, zinc, iron, and fibre	Five portions each day Provide a portion as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and with some snacks
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	Meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, meat alternatives, pulses, nuts*	Protein, iron, zinc, omega 3 fatty acids, vitamins A and D	Two portions each day Provide a portion as part of lunch and tea (Two to three portions for vegetarian children)
Dairy and alternatives	Milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, custard, puddings made from milk	Protein, calcium, and vitamin A	Three portions each day provided as part of meals, snacks and drinks

* Be allergy aware – information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from www.allergyuk.org



What are the foods that we need to look at and address on menus?

- meat
- poultry
- rice
- pasta
- milk
- eggs

Good choices of foods to serve	Typical portion sizes as served (cooked) ^{††}	Portion sizes in practice, images not to scale ^{††}
<p>Meat: includes beef, lamb, pork, mutton and venison.</p> <p>Poultry: includes chicken, turkey and duck.</p>	<p>Meat and poultry served by itself: 1 slice or 1–2 tablespoons chopped meat (30–40g)</p> <p>Meat and poultry in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90g–120g)</p>	 <p>Chicken (40g) Pork (40g) Beef bolognaise (110g)</p>
<p>White fish: includes cod, haddock, plaice, coley, pollack, halibut, hake and canned tuna.</p> <p>Oily fish: includes salmon, mackerel, trout, herring/kippers, sardines, pilchards, whitebait and fresh tuna.</p>	<p>Fish served by itself: 1 slice or ½ fillet or 1–2 tablespoons (30–40g)</p> <p>Fish in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90g–120g)</p>	 <p>Tuna (40g) Salmon (40g) White fish (40g)</p>
<p>Shellfish: includes prawns, mussels, shrimps and crab.</p>	<p>Prawns served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–40g)</p>	
<p>Eggs: includes boiled, scrambled and poached.</p>	<p>Eggs served by themselves: 1 egg (50g)</p>	
<p>Meat alternatives: includes soya bean products such as soya mince and tofu, textured vegetable protein and Quorn™.</p>	<p>Meat alternatives served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g)</p> <p>Meat alternatives in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90–120g)</p>	
<p>Pulses: includes beans (such as kidney beans, haricot beans, butter beans, pinto beans, broad beans), chick peas, red and green lentils, split peas, processed peas and baked beans.</p>	<p>Pulses served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g)</p> <p>Pulses in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90–120g)</p>	 <p>Boiled egg (50g) Kidney beans (40g) Baked beans (55g)</p>
<p>Ground nuts* and nut butters: includes ground almonds, hazelnuts, brazil nuts, peanuts, peanut butter and cashew butter.</p>	<p>Ground nuts/peanuts served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g)</p>	



- Increasing plant based proteins such as beans, peas, lentils, pulses are cheaper alternatives to meat and poultry!
- Lets see more & more of these foreign objects on our menus!

^{††} Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years, and are not suitable for children under one year old.

* Be allergy aware – information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from www.allergyuk.org

Food for Life Award – Food Quality:



Providing sustainable menus supports the criteria for the Food Quality section of the award:

- Free range eggs
- No GM ingredients
- No undesirable additives/trans fats
- Animal welfare standards are met
- No endangered fish (MSC)
- 75% dishes are freshly prepared



Things to watch out for...UPFs...



- Packed Lunch items: Often ultra-processed and have a long shelf life
- Snack items: Often ultra-processed, packaged in wrappers and have a long shelf life (early years wafers, crisps, chicken raiders etc). These products are also hyperpalatable which encourages higher consumption.
- Vegetarian or vegan alternatives: We are advised to reduce the meat content in menus or opt for less but higher quality meat. Be careful not to substitute meat for vegetarian or vegan products that tend to be ultra-processed.
- Recent developments in the food industry have enabled new plant-based meats and dairy substitutes to be created. A number of these are classified as ultra-processed foods. Examples include vegan burgers, Quorn sausage rolls, or vegan ham. They are commonly marketed as healthy as they may fall under the vegan label.
- Breakfast cereals or bread are often ultra-processed. Choose natural products such as yogurt, fruit, nuts, eggs, homemade granola and fresh fruit.



Ensuring protein content remains high in meat-free meals



Plant-based proteins:

- Increase fibre in the body
- Lower the risk of cardiovascular disease & some types of cancers
- Benefit for weight management – give feeling of fullness for longer
- Provide plenty nutrients & antioxidants – improve health by supporting the immune system
- Accessible/Affordable
- Softer, more palatable texture to some low quality meat



Quick Tomato & Bean Soup

Serves 6



Ingredients (allergens in bold>)

- 1 medium onion – peeled and finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove – peeled and crushed
- 2tbsp rapeseed or olive oil
- 400g canned chopped tomatoes
- 400ml passata (or another can of tomatoes)
- 1 **vegetable stock cube**, made up with 200ml boiling water
- 1 x 410g can borlotti beans – drained and rinsed
- Salt and pepper



Method

1. Put the onion, garlic and olive oil in the saucepan and cook slowly, stirring, until the onion is soft but not brown.
2. Add the tomatoes, passata and vegetable stock.
3. Bring to a simmer then continue to cook over a medium heat for about 10 minutes until the tomatoes have softened.
4. Add half the borlotti beans and either use a hand blender to whizz to a thick purée or mash with a potato masher until blended.
5. Add the remaining beans and cook for 5 minutes until it's all piping hot.
6. Season the soup to taste and thin it down with more boiling water if needed.

Equipment

- chopping board
- sharp knife
- wooden spoon
- can opener
- measuring jug
- medium-sized saucepan
- hand blender or potato masher

Recipe notes and tips

This is a nutritious soup with the natural sweetness of tomatoes.

Look for reduced salt stock cubes or powders.

Canned plum tomatoes can be used – just chop them up a bit in the tin.

For an extra portion of veg, add fresh or frozen spinach or canned sweetcorn at stage 5 of the method.

- Cheap
- Quick
- Filling
- Full of protein
- 3 of 5 a day
- Accessible ingredients
- Healthy & tasty!



Houmous

<https://youtube.com/shorts/JsBrkAaPwQM>

Cooking methods & their costs!!



COST OF COOKING CHART				
APPLIANCE	COST PER DAY	COST PER WEEK	COST PER MONTH	COST PER YEAR
ELECTRIC COOKER	87P	£6.09	£26.38	£316.54
DUAL FUEL COOKER (GAS AND ELECTRIC)	72P	£5.08	£22	£264.03
GAS COOKER	33P	£2.32	£10.07	£120.83
SLOW COOKER	16P	£1.15	£4.98	£59.76
AIR FRYER	14P	£1.01	£4.40	£52.74
MICROWAVE	8P	58P	£2.50	£30.02

Activity!









Look at the following examples of lunches & teas typically served in an Early Years Setting.....

1. What alternative ingredients could be used to save costs?
2. What method of cooking could be used for this dish to save costs?
3. Any other suggestions for additional cost savings?









Activity!



Lunches

		
Chicken and Sweetcorn soup	Peanut butter sandwich with carrot and cucumber	Pitta bread with falafel, houmous & carrot salad
		
Jacket potato with vegetable chilli	Jacket potato with tuna sweetcorn & soft cheese	Veggie pizza with salad

Teas

			
Baked bean and sausage casserole	Tuna pasta	Chicken and mushroom pie	Goulash
			
Fish pie and mixed vegetables	Creamy chicken and leek hotpot	Vegetable biriyani	Easy minestrone

Non dairy protein for vegetarians

Recipe ideas....



Quorn curries
(korma) or chillies

Baked bean
curries/JP

Chickpea
patties/enchiladas/
stews

Spanish omelette

Pumpkin & borlotti
bean risotto

Lentil
curry/soup/spag
bol

Moussaka –
veg/lentil

Mixed veg mini
frittata's

Houmous with pitta
and veg sticks

Vegetable fritters



Lentil soup

<https://youtu.be/UkUNS3matGw>



What changes are settings currently making to tackle the cost of living crisis?



- Reducing beef on menus
- Batch cooking
- Growing their own produce
- Reducing Ultra Processed foods
- Buying ingredients/produce on offer
- Freezing
- Planning ahead
- Using local/seasonal produce

Suggested Recipes

- 2 ingredient pizza
- 2 ingredient flat bread
- Banana pancakes
- Homemade houmous
- Vegetable Fritters
- Bean Balls
- Falafel Burgers
- Aloo Tikka potato cakes



Vegetable Fritters
Makes 16 small fritters

Ingredients (allergens in bold)

- 40g chickpea flour (gram flour and known as besan)
- 2 medium free-range eggs
- 2 spring onions, cleaned and finely sliced
- 100g potato, scrubbed, grated & the excess water squeezed out
- 100g courgettes, grated
- 100g frozen or canned sweetcorn, drained
- 100g carrot and sweet potato or beetroot, peeled and grated
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and crushed, optional
- 1 clove dried herbs, eg mixed herbs, thyme or oregano, optional
- ½ tsp chilli powder or hot smoked paprika, optional
- ½ tsp ground cumin, optional
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- 2tbsp olive oil for shallow frying

Method

1. Whisk together the chickpea flour and the 2 eggs to make a batter. Divide this basic batter into 2 or 3 bowls so you can make fritters with different combinations of vegetables and seasonings.
2. Mix combinations of the vegetables and seasonings in separate bowls that might work well are:
 - o Potato, courgette, spring onion, pepper
 - o Sweetcorn, carrot, spring onion
 - o Beetroot, carrot, sweet potato
3. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a non-stick frying pan. Spoon the batter into the pan to make small fritters. Try to separate mini fritters. Fry for 2 mins each side until golden brown and press them down a little. When they are browning, lift the fritters from the pan.

Equipment

- small mixing bowl x 2 or 3
- fork or hand whisk
- grater
- wooden spoon
- teaspoon
- tablespoon
- non-stick frying pan
- fish slice or palette knife
- rolling pin

Banana pancakes

Ingredients (makes 2 small pancakes)

- 1 banana
- 1 egg
- Mixed berries
- Honey (optional)
- Oil

Method

1. Mash the banana into the egg and mix until smooth
2. In a heated frying pan, put 1 teaspoon of oil
3. Fry for 2 mins each side until golden brown
4. Top the pancake with fresh strawberries or blueberries and drizzle with honey (optional)
5. Enjoy!

Aloo Tikka (POTATO CAKES)
Serves 6

These flattened balls of spicy potato mixture are traditionally fried but in this recipe they are baked to lower the fat content. Serve hot with a chutney or side dish.

INGREDIENTS

- 400g potatoes - boiled and mashed or baked for scooping out
- 1 small onion, or 4 spring onions - finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons rapeseed oil
- 1 large handful of coriander leaves - finely chopped
- 1 or 2 green chillies - finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 egg yolk
- 2½ gram flour (chickpea flour)

EQUIPMENT

- Small frying pan
- Masher
- Chopping board
- Sharp knife
- Tablespoon
- Teaspoon
- Fork
- Mixing bowl
- Baking tray
- Baking parchment
- Pastry brush
- Palette knife

Method

1. Mash the potatoes in a bowl and mix with the onion, coriander, chillies, turmeric and cumin.
2. Add the egg yolk and flour and mix well.
3. Roll the mixture into balls, about 2cm in diameter.
4. Flatten each ball with the palm of your hand.
5. Bake in a preheated oven at 200°C for 20-25 minutes.

www.foodforlife.org.uk

The turning point.....



Although we are going through a really challenging period, with regards to children's eating habits and health longer term, this could be the turning point!

We want to see beans & pulses becoming the norm and not so much the foreign bodies that children (and adults) often think they are! These plant based proteins will contribute towards a healthy, sustainable and nutritious part of children's diets and our future generations.



Useful Early Years resources



Eating Well Sustainably:
A Guide for Early Years
Settings

Eating well: snacks for
1-4 year olds

Eating well: vegan infant
and under 5s

Eating well: Packed lunches
for 1-4 year olds

Eating well recipe book
Simple, cost-effective ideas
for the whole family

Good food choices and portion
sizes for 1-4 year olds



FIRST STEPS NUTRITION TRUST

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Thank you for your time!