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All meals served under the Child and Adult Care Food Program are served regardless of race, color, sex, age, disability or national origin. There is no discrimination in admissions policy, meal service or the use of facilities. Any complaints of discrimination should be submitted in writing to the:

Secretary of Agriculture
Washington, D. C. 20250

This guide has been adapted by: Emily D. Moore, Dietetic Intern, University of Delaware
from: National Food Service Management Institute. (2003). Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids. University, MS: Author. Retrieved February 1, 2006 from <http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/hmhkindex.html>.

Introduction

The goal of child care center meal service is not just to get food into children today, but rather, to meet the child's nutritional needs and create positive eating habits that will last a lifetime. This is a high goal that will require some thought, planning, and helping the children learn some very specific skills. Family Style Meal Service (FSMS) is a fun and exciting approach to teaching good, lasting nutrition choices.

National nutrition standards consider FSMS, which is the serving of food in bowls and platters and beverages in pitchers on the table, to be the ideal method of offering food to young children. In this philosophy, adults are responsible for setting regular times for meals and snacks, planning and preparing healthy meals and snacks, assuring that the children come to the table at meal and snack times, and creating a pleasant mealtime environment. Children are responsible for deciding which of the healthy foods offered they want to eat and deciding how much food they want to eat.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) encourages FSMS as a method of providing nutritious meals in Child Care Centers, Head Start Programs, and Family Day Care Homes. Facilities choosing to use FSMS should make every effort to insure that CACFP meal pattern requirements are fulfilled. Supervising staff should be familiar with portion size requirements and meal patterns of CACFP.

Advantages of Family Style Meal Service for Children

Family Style Meal Service (FSMS) is a positive experience for children because it:

Reinforces social skills as the children practice:

- Taking turns.
- Passing food in serving dishes to others.
- Saying please and thank you.
- Helping to set the tables.

Strengthens serving skills through:

- Practicing fine and gross motor skills when serving and passing food.
- Learning to serve and pass food without touching the food.
- Learning not to eat out of the serving dishes or off of serving utensils.

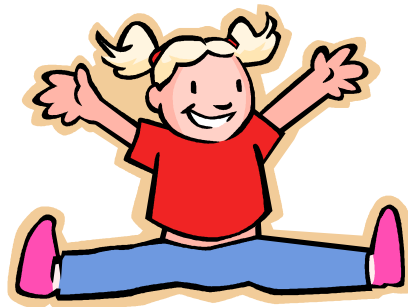
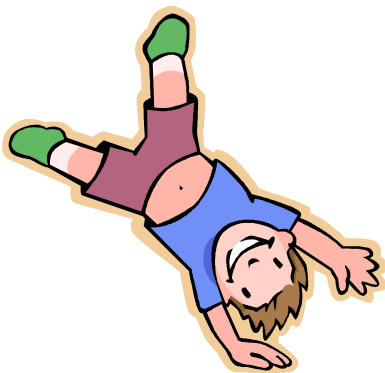
Gives children control of their eating by allowing them to:

- Take small servings of food and take additional helpings throughout the meal.
- Choose not to take a food item initially, but change their mind later in the meal or another time the item is served.
- Feel confident that additional helpings will be available throughout the meal.
- Leave more food for children who are hungrier on any given day.

Indirectly encourages children to try new foods because:

- Children who do not feel pressure and who feel in control of their eating are more likely to try new foods.
- Research shows that children may need to see a new food eight to ten times before they want to try it.

Although it takes some practice, children will learn how to be a part of successful Family Style meals. In addition, children will learn over time to take approximately the amounts and foods they will eat and this can decrease the amount of wasted food we often see.



Advantages of Family Style Meal Service for Teachers and Staff

Family Style Meal Service (FSMS) also has additional advantages. For teachers and staff, a successful Family Style Meal is:

Interactive

- Teachers and staff act as role models, demonstrating appropriate mealtime behavior.
- Teachers and staff are available at the table to redirect behavior before it gets out of hand.

Satisfying

- With reduced food waste, there is enough for everyone, including teachers and staff.
- Teachers and staff can eat the same nutritious meal that the children are eating.

Relaxing

- With all of the food on the table, the teachers and staff will not have to return to the kitchen for more food.
- By eating during the designated meal time, teachers and staff will not have their meal time interrupted by other responsibilities.

Implementing Family Style Meal Service

Family Style Meal Service (FSMS) can be broken down into four areas: food preparation, set-up, meal service, and clean-up. The following are guidelines to help FSMS run smoothly.

Food preparation

- Design menus that meet the CACFP Meal Pattern Requirements. The chart is provided on page 14. Choose a variety of foods, considering differences in texture, color, tastes, temperature, etc. Avoid foods high in sugar and fat content.
- Prepare enough food for the children and adults at the table. Be sure to satisfy the minimum portion size for each child as required by CACFP of all foods on the menu for the meal. Refer to the portion sizes on the Meal Pattern Requirements for Children chart on page 14.
- Provide the same food for the adults and the children eating together.
- Have everyone participate in food preparation.
- Ensure that all of the food is ready before beginning the meal.

Set-up

- Allow “quiet time” before the meal to calm children after play or other activities.
- Have everyone participate in set-up.
- Provide tables and chairs appropriate for the children.
- Serving dishes:
 - Choose small bowls with a wide rim or lip to prevent spilling.
 - Avoid platters because they are difficult for small children to use.
 - Separate the same food into several small bowls so that they are not too heavy.
 - Use bowls that do not become too hot to handle when filled with hot foods.
- Serving utensils:
 - Use small scoops and tongs - they are easier for children to use than long-handled spoons or sharp serving forks.
 - Try $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup measuring cups with handles - they are often an ideal size and shape for children to manage.
- Pitchers:
 - Select small pitchers with lids and pouring spouts for young children.
- Cleaning Supplies:
 - Have a dust pan and brush, a small bucket with soapy water, and sponges available for quick clean-up.
- Have a staff member check that the table is set with dishes, napkins, cups, eating and serving utensils, and serving bowls and pitchers of foods and beverages before everyone sits down.
- Seat five to six children and one adult at each table for adequate supervision.
- When possible, allow children to decide where they would like to sit at the table.
- Everyone sits down together.

Meal Service

- Be sure everyone is present when the meal is served.
- Everyone waits until all others are seated before serving or eating.
- Encourage children to place hands in lap until supervising adults are ready to begin meal service.
- Encourage and assist children in serving themselves, including pouring of milk and passing the food to one another.
- Offer all children the minimum portion size of all of the required meal components so that you can receive CACFP reimbursement for the meal.
- Serve all of the meal components at one time, as required by CACFP.
- Encourage the children to choose a variety of healthy foods.
- Provide plenty of food so that everyone is satisfied.
- Demonstrate a positive and calm attitude as well as interest in the meal. Avoid negative comments, facial expressions or critical remarks regarding the food.
- Promote meal time conversation:
 - Encourage the children and compliment them as their skills improve.
 - Discuss the nutritional value of foods served to stimulate appetite and encourage consumption of foods.
 - Have children name the food groups.
 - Have children name examples of fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meats or meat alternatives, and grain products.
 - Have children name their favorite healthy foods and explain what they like about them.
 - Ask children how they can help in mealtime activities at home.
- Allow time for a relaxed rather than rushed meal.

Clean-up

- *Expect spills!* Avoid reprimanding or criticizing children for spills. Have the child help clean up quickly and return to the meal. The staff can thoroughly clean after the meal.
- After everyone has finished eating, encourage children to assist in clean-up by scraping their plate, putting soiled items in the designated area, and clearing and wiping the tables.

Questions and Answers on Family Style Meal Service

What is Family Style Meal Service?

Family Style Meal Service (FSMS) is the serving of food in bowls and platters with beverages in pitchers on the table. FSMS is a dining style that allows child care providers and children to participate in table setting, serving, eating and clean-up. Refer to page 10 for tips on involving children. During the meal service there is time for conversation and teaching of appropriate eating habits.

Who can serve meals Family Style?

FSMS is encouraged in Daycare Centers, Head Start Programs, and Family Day Care Homes. It can be used with all children. Younger children will require help from caregivers.

How can we serve Family Style in a sanitary way?

First, make sure that all adults and children follow food safety practices by washing their hands before food preparation and/or set up, before meal service, and after clean up. Display signs with proper hand washing procedures near sinks. Next, talk to the children about holding the bowls on the outside using two hands and not letting their fingers touch the food. Explain the importance of not eating off of the serving utensils or using eating utensils to serve food. Lastly, discard all food left in the serving dishes after the meal.

How can I ensure that all children get their fill and none overeat?

Serving utensils or scoops should meet the minimum portion size for the food. The staff should be fully trained on the serving sizes of each food for each age group. The staff can then suggest that each child take a single serving as they pass the food around and that they may take additional helpings after everyone has been offered the food. Extra food should be available for additional servings.

How can I make sure there is enough food, but it is not wasted?

Although we cannot assure that an unlimited amount of all foods will be available, we should be able to offer children a choice of several foods for additional servings so that they can satisfy their appetites. Keep track of how much of each food item is left after a meal so that the amount of food prepared can be increased or decreased the next time the meal is served.

How can I encourage the children to choose a variety of foods?

Once you get established with the basics of FSMS, try implementing a “clean plate club”. Reward children with points for each menu item they serve themselves and another point for eating at least the appropriate serving size. Post points on a chart where meals are served using stars or food stickers. When a child earns a total number of points, reward him or her with a small prize, such as a coloring book.

How can I involve the family?

Send your own version of the sample family letter on page 11. Ask for feedback from household members.

How do I implement Family Style Meal Service smoothly?

The most common mistake in starting FSMS is deciding it sounds like a good idea and then serving all meals Family Style right away. Make FSMS a learning experience and practice with the following activities before you begin. Once you have practiced, start with serving only one component of a snack or meal Family Style. Then try serving the entire snack Family Style, as it has the smallest number of meal components (two components). Next begin serving the breakfast (three components) Family Style, and then add lunch/supper (five components). Encourage children to be involved with set up and clean up while using your current style of service so they can become accustomed to participation one step at a time.

PRACTICE!

- Placemat Guide – Use the placemat guide on page 13 as a coloring activity. Teach the children where items will go on the placemat when you set the table. Then, practice setting the placemats with dishes, cups, and utensils before you begin with meal service.
- Utensils – Let the children practice picking up items with tongs and other serving utensils.
- Serving – Encourage the children to practice passing dishes and serving themselves with pretend food.
- Pouring – Have the children practice with pouring water during outdoor play or practicing with sand or beans. Some centers have been successful at having children pour their own milk into a cup by using the standard milk carton as the pitcher. Once this has been mastered, they can move to slightly larger pitchers that are shared at the table.

Of course you should not expect all children to master these skills at the same rate. Some will be able to serve themselves, while others will need more assistance. Encourage the children and be consistent with your rules on how your center serves meals Family Style.

What resources are available if I have other questions?

- **CACFP website** <http://childnutrition.doe.k12.de.us/>
Follow the “Webnotes” and “Links to Related Sites” for valuable information on nutrition, training, food safety, menu development, recipes, and more.
- **Mealtime Memo for Child Care**
CACFP website: <http://childnutrition.doe.k12.de.us/>. Click on Child and Adult Care Food Program. Scroll down to Webnotes, Resources for Quality CACFP Operations. You will find *Mealtime Memo for Child Care* under Meal Time Tips. The 2003-2 newsletter contains more tips for serving Family Style as well as additional resources.
- **CACFP organization**
Child and Adult Care Food Program
Department of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite #2
Dover, Delaware 19901
Phone: 302-735-4060
Fax: 302-739-6397

Conclusion

Family Style Meal Service (FSMS) provides a learning opportunity at an early age for the children. By modeling positive food habits and creating an encouraging mealtime atmosphere, we provide the basis for children to develop positive food habits of their own.

FSMS may seem difficult at first. You may even suffer a few spills. However, as the staff and children adjust to this dining style, you will find it is not much different than the method used by many at home.

Try meal service Family Style and make it a positive experience.

Tips for Involving Young Children in Family Style Meal Service

With Family Style meal service, food preparation through clean up is an interactive learning time. During the meal, the children pass food and serve themselves, allowing them to decide how much and what they will eat. Below are some ways to involve children in food preparation, set up, and clean up.

Staff should always be responsible for handling raw meat and using sharp knives. Find safe ways for children to participate.

2-year-olds can:

- Wipe table tops
- Scrub vegetables
- Tear lettuce greens
- Break cauliflower
- Move pre-measured ingredients from one place to another
- Snap green beans
- Wash salad greens
- Play with utensils



4-year-olds can do what 2- and 3-year-olds can plus:

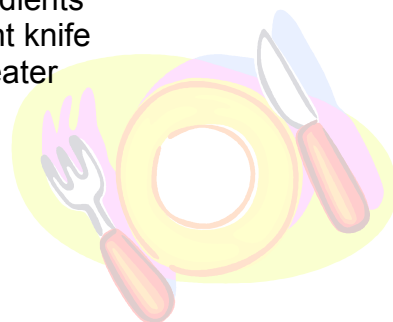
- Peel oranges or hard cooked eggs
- Shape foods
- Mash bananas
- Cut with dull scissors—green onions, parsley, dried fruit
- Set table

3-year-olds can do what 2-year-olds can plus:

- Wrap potatoes in foil for baking
- Knead and shape yeast dough
- Pour liquids (not hot liquids)
- Mix ingredients
- Shake liquids
- Spread soft spreads
- Place things in trash

5- and 6-year-olds can do all of the above plus:

- Measure ingredients
- Cut with a blunt knife
- Use an egg beater



Sample Participation Chart

| Child's Name | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Wipe table | Carry utensils to table | Carry drinks to table | Carry food to table | Set Table |
| | Set table | Wipe table | Carry utensils to table | Carry drinks to table | Carry food to table |
| | Carry food to table | Set Table | Wipe table | Carry utensils to table | Carry drinks to table |
| | Carry drinks to table | Carry food to table | Set Table | Wipe table | Carry utensils to table |
| | Carry utensils to table | Carry drinks to table | Carry food to table | Set Table | Wipe table |

The above tips were adapted From: United States Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. (March 1999). *Tips for Using the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children 2 to 6 years old.* p.12: Kids in the Kitchen.

Sample Family Letter

Dear Family:

Over the next few weeks we will be discussing good behavior at the table. We will be discussing that at our center:

- we all participate in food preparation or table set-up;
- we all come to the table at the same time;
- we wait until everyone is at the table before we start serving the food; and
- we all participate in clean up by clearing our own plates if able.

Your child will be learning:

- how to serve food for her/himself;
- how to pass food to others at the table;
- how to select a variety of nutritious foods to eat; and
- how to select proper utensils and use them including knives to cut their foods into bite size pieces (older children).

We invite you to discuss these ideas with your child and help him or her with serving skills at home.

Sample Checklist

This checklist may be helpful in implementing Family Style Meal Service at your facility. Add notes as you learn what works for you and the children in your program.

Equipment

- Menus that follow CACFP regulations
- Child size tables and chairs
- Placemats with set-up guides
- Tableware – plates/bowls and cups
- Eating utensils appropriate for children – child size forks and spoons; dull knives if needed and if appropriate for the age group of the children
- Small serving dishes – bowls with wide rims are best for young children
- Serving utensils appropriate for children – small scoops and tongs
- Pitchers for beverages
- Cleaning supplies – sponges, dust pan, small buckets

Begin!

- Choose a snack as your first Family Style meal. Add breakfast and lunch/supper when ready.
- Choose quiet before meal activities so that the children are calm and ready to participate.
- Make sure the staff and children wash their hands before food preparation and/or table set up, before meal service, and after clean-up.
- Involve the children in preparation of easy to serve foods such as small sandwiches.
- Involve the children in table set up.
- Assure that the children come to the table.
- Ask the children to wait with their hands in their lap until everyone is seated.
- Check for all items on table: food, condiments, drinks, and utensils for eating and serving food.
- Pass the food and drinks around the table, encouraging children to serve themselves.
- Insure all children are offered the serving size of each food item before anyone takes an additional helping.
- Encourage pleasant mealtime conversation.
- Involve the children in clean up – have them clear their dishes, throw away uneaten food, and participate in other clean up activities as they are able.

Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern Requirements for Children

| Breakfast | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Select all three components for a reimbursable meal.</i> | | | |
| Food Components | Ages 1-2 | Ages 3-5 | Ages 6-12⁽¹⁾ |
| 1 Milk (fluid milk) | ½ cup | ¾ cup | 1 cup |
| 1 Fruit/Juice⁽²⁾/Vegetable | ¼ cup | ½ cup | ½ cup |
| 1 Grains/Bread⁽³⁾ | | | |
| <i>bread or</i> | ½ slice | ½ slice | 1 slice |
| <i>cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or</i> | ½ serving | ½ serving | 1 serving |
| <i>cold dry cereal or</i> | ¼ cup | 1/3 cup | ¾ cup |
| <i>hot cooked cereal or</i> | ¼ cup | ¼ cup | ½ cup |
| <i>pasta or noodles or grains</i> | ¼ cup | ¼ cup | ½ cup |

| Lunch/Supper | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Select all four components for a reimbursable meal.</i> | | | |
| Food Components | Ages 1-2 | Ages 3-5 | Ages 6-12⁽¹⁾ |
| 1 Milk (fluid milk) | ½ cup | ¾ cup | 1 cup |
| 2 Fruits/Juice⁽²⁾/Vegetables | ¼ cup | ½ cup | ¾ cup |
| 1 Grains/Bread⁽³⁾ | | | |
| <i>bread or</i> | ½ slice | ½ slice | 1 slice |
| <i>cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or</i> | ½ serving | ½ serving | 1 serving |
| <i>cold dry cereal or</i> | ¼ cup | 1/3 cup | ¾ cup |
| <i>hot cooked cereal or</i> | ¼ cup | ¼ cup | ½ cup |
| <i>pasta or noodles or grains</i> | ¼ cup | ¼ cup | ½ cup |
| 1 Meat/Meat Alternate | | | |
| <i>meat or poultry or fish⁽⁴⁾ or</i> | 1 oz. | 1½ oz. | 2 oz. |
| <i>alternate protein product or</i> | 1 oz. | 1½ oz. | 2 oz. |
| <i>cheese or</i> | 1 oz. | 1½ oz. | 2 oz. |
| <i>egg or</i> | ½ egg | ¾ egg | 1 egg |
| <i>cooked dry beans or peas or</i> | ¼ cup | 3/8 cup | ½ cup |
| <i>peanut or other nut or seed butters or</i> | 2 tbsp. | 3 tbsp. | 4 tbsp. |
| <i>nuts and/or seeds⁽⁵⁾ or</i> | ½ oz. | ¾ oz. | 1 oz. |
| <i>yogurt⁽⁶⁾</i> | ½ cup | ¾ cup | 1 cup |

| Snack | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Select two of the four components for a reimbursable snack.</i> | | | |
| Food Components | Ages 1-2 | Ages 3-5 | Ages 6-12⁽¹⁾ |
| 1 Milk (fluid milk) | ½ cup | ½ cup | 1 cup |
| 1 Fruit/Juice⁽²⁾/Vegetable | ½ cup | ½ cup | ¾ cup |
| 1 Grains/Bread⁽³⁾ | | | |
| <i>bread or</i> | ½ slice | ½ slice | 1 slice |
| <i>cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or</i> | ½ serving | ½ serving | 1 serving |
| <i>cold dry cereal or</i> | ¼ cup | 1/3 cup | ¾ cup |
| <i>hot cooked cereal or</i> | ¼ cup | ¼ cup | ½ cup |
| <i>pasta or noodles or grains</i> | ¼ cup | ¼ cup | ½ cup |
| 1 Meat/Meat Alternate | | | |
| <i>meat or poultry or fish⁽⁴⁾ or</i> | ½ oz. | ½ oz. | 1 oz. |
| <i>alternate protein product or</i> | ½ oz. | ½ oz. | 1 oz. |
| <i>cheese or</i> | ½ oz. | ½ oz. | 1 oz. |
| <i>egg⁽⁶⁾ or</i> | ½ egg | ½ egg | ½ egg |
| <i>cooked dry beans or peas or</i> | 1/8 cup | 1/8 cup | ¼ cup |
| <i>peanut or other nut or seed butters or</i> | 1 tbsp. | 1 tbsp. | 2 tbsp. |
| <i>nuts and/or seeds or</i> | ½ oz. | ½ oz. | 1 oz. |
| <i>yogurt⁽⁷⁾</i> | 2 oz. | 2 oz. | 4 oz. |

Additional Meal Pattern Guidance:

¹Children age 12 and older may be served larger portions based on their greater food needs. They may not be served less than the minimum quantities listed in this column.

⁴A serving consists of the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.

⁵Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch or supper requirement.

⁶One-half (1/2) egg meets the required minimum amount (one ounce or less) of meat alternate.

References

This guide has been adapted from the following resources:

1. National Food Service Management Institute. (2003). *Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids*. University, MS: Author. Retrieved February 1, 2006 from <http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/hmhkindex.html>.
2. National Food Service Management Institute. (2003). *Mealtime Memo for Child Care: Serving Meals Family Style*. University, MS: Author. Retrieved February 1, 2006 from http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/Newsletters/Mealtime_memo_index.html#2003.
3. United States Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. (March 1999). *Tips for Using the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children 2 to 6 years old*. p.12: Kids in the Kitchen.
4. National Food Service Management Institute. (2003). *From the Trainer's Tablet: Lessons for Family/Home Child Care Providers, Family Style Meals*. University, MS: Author. Retrieved February 1, 2006 from <http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/from-the-trainer.html>.