

MAKING CELEBRATIONS HEALTHIER

ECO-HEALTHY CHILD CARE® HELPS EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS TO BE AS HEALTHY, SAFE AND GREEN AS POSSIBLE BY REDUCING CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO TOXIC CHEMICALS.



CELEBRATION IS IMPORTANT

Special occasions are an important part of a child's social development. Rituals to celebrate birthdays, new classmates, and graduations are opportunities to share and learn about other communities and cultures. When food is part of a celebration, it's an opportunity to support healthy eating habits by serving fresh fruits and vegetables or other healthy snacks.

Here are some tips to ensure that celebrations are as healthy for young bodies as they are for young minds.

HEALTHY CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES

- **Arrange a field trip** to a local park, library, or museum to celebrate special occasions; take a long lunch and provide healthy snacks.
- **Share the child's favorite book** as a special story time event, or organize a scavenger hunt.
- **Honor a child by planting organic herbs or veggies** that will provide yummy tastings later. Make sure to first test your soil's lead concentration before growing food in it. You may need to bring in clean soil if you have high lead levels and/or use raised, lined, and sealed garden beds.
- **Create a ritual:** What makes a special occasion "special" is that it doesn't happen often. A celebration ritual—ringing a gong, doing a special dance, or wearing a special hat can make an occasion memorable.
- **Offer a non-food "treat".** Create celebrations that are about sharing: soap bubbles for blowing, whistles for tweeting, ribbons for twirling or homemade play dough for sculpting.

DEVELOP A "CELEBRATIONS POLICY"

A "celebrations policy," perhaps as part of a food wellness policy, can help families, staff and teachers agree on guidelines to make celebrations about fun rather than non-nutritious food. In addition to healthy snack suggestions and activity ideas, a policy may include these procedures:

- **Plan ahead** to consolidate birthdays and other celebrations into weekly, bi-weekly or monthly events.
- **Schedule celebrations around routine meal & snack times.**
- **Share monthly special event schedules** with parents, setting clear expectations for them to provide craft or activity ideas.
- **Publish your policy and tips** for how to implement it in a newsletter, emails and/or parent handbooks.
- **Ensure children with food allergies and sensitivities have alternative** celebratory food choices available.



HEALTHY OPTIONS FOR SNACKS & TREATS

- **Warm drinks:** celebrate with apple cider on frosty autumn and winter days. Have children add pesticide-free apple or pear slices, cinnamon, cloves or vanilla to warm cider and steep for five minutes.
- **Infused Water:** offer flavored water with fresh herbs and fruits like lemon and cucumber slices or strawberry and basil. This is refreshing without added sugar. Make sure you test your water for contaminants like lead and carry out mitigation activities if necessary. See [EHCC's Lead Fact-Sheet for more info.](#)
- **Fruit kebabs:** serve local, pesticide-free fresh fruits as a nutritious alternative to sugary treats. Kids love chunks of fruit on skewers with plain, nonfat yogurt for dipping.
- **Vegetables:** serve, local, pesticide-free vegetables, make them special by taking time to cut them into fun shapes.
- **Pesticide-free frozen produce:** choose this option in the off-season.



HEALTHY CELEBRATION RESOURCES

CDC Healthy Celebrations
[Healthy and Active Parties](#)

United States Department of Agriculture, Make celebrations fun, healthy, and active
www.choosemyplate.gov/

Model wellness policies for schools
<http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org>



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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