



# The Buzz

May 2024

## FAMILY-STYLE DINING

**Introducing family-style meal service in family child care homes is a fantastic way to promote independence and motor skill development among children. Here are some tips and activities to help children learn and have fun during mealtime:**

1. **Use Visual Aids:** Hang posters in the dining area that outline the rules for family-style meals and encourage children to participate. Visual cues can help reinforce expectations and make the process more engaging.
2. **Discuss Mealtime Changes:** Take time to talk to the children about the new meal service style. Explain how the food will be served and the role they will play in serving themselves. Discuss important steps and rules for family-style meal service, emphasizing their participation.
3. **Provide Play Opportunities:** Incorporate child-size serving utensils like spoons, tongs, and pitchers into play areas. Allow children to engage in activities that mimic mealtime tasks, such as pouring liquid, scooping, and using utensils. These activities help strengthen their fine motor skills and familiarize them with the tools they'll use during meals.
4. **Start Slowly:** Introduce family-style meal service gradually. Begin with one meal component, such as passing around dinner rolls, before serving all components family style. As children become more comfortable and skilled, you can increase the number of items served this way.
5. **Begin with Snacks:** Start with snacks as they require less preparation and typically include foods that are easier for children to serve themselves. Once they become accustomed to the process, you can incorporate more meal components into family-style service.
6. **Assign Special Roles:** Empower children by assigning them special roles during mealtime, such as setting the table, placing serving dishes, or cleaning up messes. This not only encourages their involvement but also instills a sense of responsibility and belonging.

**By incorporating these strategies and activities, you can make family-style meal service an enjoyable and educational experience for children, fostering their independence and motor skill development in a playful manner.**



## THE BEE ZONE



### Stir-Fry Fajita Chicken, Squash, and Corn

1. Combine brown rice and 4 ½ cups water in a large pot and bring to a rolling boil. Turn heat down to low. Cover and cook until water is absorbed, about 30-40 minutes. Sprinkle with ½ tsp salt-free seasoning blend, granulated garlic, and cilantro. Mix well. Keep warm. A rice cooker may be used with the same quantity of brown rice and water.
2. Heat canola oil in a large skillet or a wok. Cook onions for 2 minutes or until translucent.
3. Add chicken, squash, and remaining salt-free seasoning blend. Stir-fry over high heat for 10 minutes or until squash is tender.
4. Add red peppers, corn, green chilies, tomatoes, pepper, cumin, and garlic powder. Stir-fry over medium-high heat for no longer than 2 minutes so vegetables will remain crunchy. Do not overcook. Reduce heat to low and let simmer 2 minutes. Serve hot.



- 1 ¾ CUPS BROWN RICE, LONG-GRAIN, REGULAR, DRY
- 1 ½ TSP SALT-FREE CHILI-LIME SEASONING BLEND
- ¼ TSP GRANULATED GARLIC
- 1 TBSP FRESH CILANTRO, CHOPPED
- 2 TBSP CANOLA OIL
- 1 CUP FRESH ONIONS, PEELED, DICED
- 4 CUPS COOKED FAJITA CHICKEN STRIPS (16 OZ)
- 3 ½ CUPS FRESH BUTTERNUT SQUASH, PEELED, SEEDED, DICED ½"
- ½ CUP FRESH RED BELL PEPPERS, SEEDED, DICED
- 1 CUP FROZEN CORN, THAWED
- ½ CUP CANNED LOW-SODIUM DICED TOMATOES
- ½ TSP GROUND BLACK PEPPER
- ¾ TSP GROUND CUMIN
- ¼ TSP GARLIC POWDER

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## CRAFT CORNER: CUPCAKE LINER FLOWER CRAFT – MOTHER'S DAY IDEA

- cupcake liners (different colors and sizes work best)
- large craft stick
- green cardstock paper
- green paint
- child's photo
- glue
- scissors

Step 1: Start by painting the craft stick green. Set aside for the paint to dry completely.

Step 2: Spread out and press down the cupcake liners to straighten them up a little.

Step 3: Apply glue on the middle of the larger cupcake liner. Stick the smaller one on top of the larger one.

Step 4: Stick the photo inside the smaller one.

Step 5: Apply glue on one end of the craft stick.

Stick the cupcake liners on the craft stick.

Step 6: Cut a leaf shape out of green cardstock.

Step 7: Stick the leaf on the craft stick.

All done! Your Cupcake Liner Flower Craft is complete.

