



## FAMILY STYLE DINING

Family style meal service provides an opportunity to encourage a pleasant eating environment that will support and promote mealtime as a learning experience. USDA recommends family-style dining for all children 3 years and older. In family style meal service, children serve themselves from common platters of food with assistance from adults.

### Why do Family Style?

1. Allows children to identify and be introduced to new foods, tastes, and menus.
2. Children can choose the amount of food on their plate.
3. They feel more in control to judge their hunger and fullness during the meal.
4. Children practice good table manners (taking turns, sharing, politely turning down foods) and new skills (passing, pouring and scooping foods).
5. Family style dining may seem difficult at first; however, children can develop healthy habits and positive self-esteem from this learning experience.

### How to do Family Style:

1. All food for the meal is placed in serving bowls on the table.
2. The amount of food placed on the table must meet the CACFP portion sizes for each child.
3. All beverages (milk, water, juice) are served in child-size containers/pitchers.
4. Place all foods on the table before children sit down to eat.
5. Let children pass the food to each other.
6. Encourage children to at least taste a bite of each food item.
7. Allow second servings after everyone has been served.
8. Adults should sit at the table with the children and eat the same meal.
  - ~ Teachers act as role-models. If teachers are seen enjoying the meal, the children will learn that eating is enjoyable.
9. Teachers and children should talk about the foods served (where they come from, sensory characteristics, why they are healthy).
  - ~ It is recommended to have topics prepared prior to the meal so teachers know what to discuss with the children.



### Child-Size Is the Right Size

- Child-size tables and chairs make it easier for the children to serve themselves.
- Child-size plates and cups are easier for children to handle.
- Light weight plastic bowls and pitchers are easier for children to grasp.
- Serving tools—tongs, spoons, scoops—that help with serving the right portions of food are easier for children to use.

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Barriers to family-style dining	How to overcome those barriers
<p>Children may take <b>too large of servings</b> because they really like a certain food or don't have the skill to properly use the serving utensil.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow children to serve themselves <b>small portions</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Assist</b> children who need help, and offer second helpings when appropriate.</li> <li>• <b>Assure</b> the child that the food will be offered again.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sanitation</b> issues – children may contaminate the serving dishes by sticking their hands in the dishes or the serving utensil in their mouth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Model</b> good food safety practices when passing and serving food.</li> <li>• <b>Respond</b> when a child is about to contaminate food or has already done so.</li> <li>• Provide <b>new serving utensils</b> or <b>replace</b> contaminated food.</li> </ul>
<p>It may get <b>messy</b> – there is more opportunity to spill when children serve themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expect children to <b>clean up</b> their own spills, but don't make a fuss about it.</li> <li>• Small size <b>sponges</b> and <b>buckets</b> should be available. An adult can help if the child asks for it or seems to need help after he or she has begun to clean it up.</li> </ul>
<p>The children's <b>skill levels vary</b> – some may be slower in learning the skills necessary for family style dining than others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seat children who need more help <b>near a teacher</b> at the table. Let the child serve themselves what they can. Then the teacher can serve them the other foods.</li> <li>• Keep the <b>conversation</b> at the table <b>light</b> - avoid nagging, criticism, and other unpleasantness, and don't allow fighting or rudeness.</li> </ul>
<p>Takes <b>more time</b> for the children to pass the serving dishes and serve themselves.</p>	<p>It will take time to get family style dining into place, but with <b>practice</b>, children will learn the necessary <b>skills</b>, and family style dining will become the normal <b>routine</b>.</p>

### Encourage Foods By

- Telling the child he or she might enjoy the taste of the unfamiliar food.
- Explaining that it is not necessary for children to eat everything on their plates.
- Explaining to the child that the food is needed for growth.
- Complimenting the children for trying new foods.

