

Mealtime: Growing Time

Staff will:

- Sit with children during mealtime, with one staff at each table.
- Share the same menu as children, including beverages.
- Actively encourage and allow all children to serve themselves food and beverages at mealtime. This promotes small muscle development, eye-hand coordination and a feeling of competence.
- Have Children clean their own spills during the meal.
- Through role modeling teach children manners, such as passing serving containers and requesting politely for a food item.
- Encourage, but not force, all children to taste each food item.
- Not use any games, such as “Clean Your Plate” gimmicks, to encourage children to eat, nor will eating dessert be dependent on cleaning one’s plate.
- Explain to children reasons why another may not be eating the same meal due to health conditions.
- Interact verbally with all children at mealtime, speaking in friendly, reassuring tones.
- Use food as objects of sensory, intellectual and vocabulary development.
- Encourage each child to socialize and communicate with staff and other children.
- See that the mealtime atmosphere is enjoyable and relaxed with each child setting his/her own pace according to personal preferences.
- Encourage children as they finished eating, to scrape their plate and then go back to the classroom where an adult is present to supervise. If this is not possible, an adult at each table will lead a “quiet” activity with the children to foster learning.
- Not use food as punishment or reward.