

PRESCHOOL FOOD INITIATIVE: FOOD GUIDE

A one page “cheat sheet” covering terms and philosophy of the Preschool Food & Healthy Habits Initiative.

The Preschool Food Initiative Nutrition Guide

Introduction

Following the lead of Orfalea's s'Cool Food Initiative, the guide for determining what type of food should be provided preschool children is intended to be as simple and straightforward as possible. The objective is to provide to the children food that as much as possible that meets the following criteria...

Whole

Whole food is food that is in its most natural state. For instance, chicken parts from a whole chicken would be more desirable than chicken nuggets made out of parts of a chicken that have been pressed together and treated artificially. Whole grain bread would be better than bread made from refined flour. Fresh whole fruit would be better than cut up fruit from a can or fruit juice (that often has added sugar).

Unprocessed

Unprocessed means that the food has not been subjected to processing such as treatment with additives or preservatives, heat, cold, or pressure to change its natural form. Unsalted peanut butter with nothing added would be an example of an unprocessed food for children who are not allergic to it. Much peanut butter has added salt and sweetener as well as oils that are hydrogenated (treated with heat and chemicals). White rice is an example of a grain that has been processed by being stripped of its husk, bran, and germ. Bologna is an example of a processed meat that generally has fillers as well as additives. Oranges with dyed skin to make them appear riper or meat that has been dyed red to make it appear fresher would be considered "processed".

Unpackaged

Unpackaged is better both because of the negative impact packaging production and waste has on the environment and because usually something is added to lengthen the life of the product being packaged. Packaged usually means that product is less fresh.

No additives (no artificial anything)

If you can't pronounce it, you probably don't want to eat it. Chemical additives, usually provided to lengthen shelf-life or change appearance, are often linked to cancer, hyperactivity or both.

No added sugars / No added salt

Addition of sugars (high fructose corn syrup is very common; other forms of sugar include glucose, sucrose, dextrose, fructose, maltodextrin along with dozens of lesser used forms) and salt both contribute to obesity and diabetes and high blood pressure (heart disease) respectively.

Locally grown

Locally grown improves the opportunity for freshness, greatly reduces "carbon imprint" (environmental impact), reduces the likelihood that the food comes from slave or mistreated labor, and helps support the economy of your friends and neighbors and, by extension, yourself. Having a connection to someone who grows the food helps kids connect to their food, too.

"Organic"

Organic is both very important and tricky to be sure of. The intention of organic is to ensure that the food is pure and in its natural form, free of pesticides and other chemicals such as hormones or antibiotics. However, not all organic food is created equal. Some forms of organic farming are not good for the environment, even though the food, itself is free of undesired elements. Organic is particularly important for certain kinds of food consumed by children and women who are pregnant, both of whom are more susceptible to the impact of unhealthful elements.