

FORWARD CORNER

July is National Culinary Arts Month

Culinary Arts Month typically recognizes the work of professional cooks and chefs. Culinary means "related to cooking" and cuisine arts are often described as the "preparation, cooking, and the presentation of food". In early childhood we can celebrate the culinary arts in two ways: by introducing cooking projects to the science and math corner with a focus on presentation (see Pinterest for preschool food-art) and adding cooking and restaurant play to our dramatic play or home living corners. When setting up dramatic play options, keep in mind the NAPSACC (Nutrition and Physical Activity: Self-Assessment in Child Care) best practice of maximizing the number of resources (posters, books, learning materials and props) that promote healthy eating and minimize those that promote unhealthy foods. July is a good time to sort through your dramatic play kits and props. Consider these tips and strategies.

- Take inventory making sure that your home living/restaurant healthy food-props (boxes, cans, containers, plastic food-models, posters, sample menus, and so on) far outweigh the number of unhealthy options.
- When introducing restaurant play, make sure there are healthy menu options and that staff role-play healthy menu selections.
- When introducing the ice cream shop, donut shop, pizza place, etc. as restaurant play options, take a minute to acknowledge that these are "whoa" foods. We can have these foods as a special treat, now and then, but not every day.
- When children order soda, fried foods and desserts, consider it a "teachable moment". Remind them these too are "whoa foods" and treats for now and then, like when we dine out. Discuss with them healthier options: "I'll have milk or water to drink". "I'll have fruit for desert". "Can you broil my steak or bake my potato?"
- Include in your monthly newsletter, website, or newsletter tips to help families make dining out with kids a healthier experience.
- Include these messages/resources:
 - [Dining Out with Kids](#) (American Academic of Nutrition and Dietetics)
 - [Tips for Eating Out](#)
 - [Eating Out](#)
 - [Salir a Comer](#)

JOIN THE HEALTHY MOVEMENT TODAY BY TAKING ACTION!

July Call to Action for Families: Start with baby steps. Select one practical tip for each time your family eats out. For example, skip the soda and drink water or fat-free milk instead. Opt for the fries but pick grilled chicken over a burger. Order an extra veggie for the table and skip the potato or pasta side. Ask the wait staff to remove the bread basket. Limit the buffet line to just one trip.

July Call to Action for Early Childhood Providers: To enhance your restaurant dramatic theme play, consider these inexpensive printable resources from Pre-K Pages which can be found at <https://www.pre-kpages.com/dramatic-play-restaurant/>.

For information on healthy eating and activity initiatives in DuPage, check out www.forwarddupage.org.