



Food Concepts

Materials:

- Any foods you have at home, no extra shopping necessary
- Knife to cut some items
- Containers as needed
- Kitchen towel or sponge for quick clean-ups

Directions:

These activities are suggestions for ways to incorporate concepts into daily mealtime activities. You can then include most, if not all, of the food items in your meal. No waste!

Children can taste along the way if you like. Children who are not eating orally or who have a limited diet can explore and play by touch. Be aware that children with sensory concerns may not want to touch all the items. That is ok! They may need multiple opportunities or may just not like certain items! You can try placing challenging items inside of plastic bags or giving your child a tool (spoon, toothpick, etc) to explore the foods with so they don't have to touch it with their hands. The idea is to have FUN and participate in exploring as they like.

Here are just a few ways to incorporate basic concepts into daily cooking and mealtime activities. Please use the foods you have available and create your own activities as you go!

Wet/Dry: **Apples:** Dry outside...cut and feel that the inside is slightly wet.

Oranges: Dry outside (talk about the bumpy peel, too!) ...cut in different ways and feel that the inside is wet and sometimes drippy!

Loud/Quiet: **Crackers** are LOUD to eat and crush with your hands!

Bananas are QUIET when you eat or smash them with your fingers!

Hint: put the peeled banana in a zip-lock if your child doesn't want to touch it.

Cold/Warm: Play with ice cubes or crushed ice. Talk about how items from the refrigerator are COLD. When you leave it on the counter or table, it will become warmer!

Examples: fruit +vegetables are foods that are safe to leave outside of the refrigerator for a short time to come to room temperature.

Talk about how foods that have been warmed on the stove or in the microwave become WARM. Let your child touch the warm container after you have checked it for safe temperatures.

- Thin/Thick:** Some foods can be cut into THICK and THIN pieces. These include items like cheese, string cheese, vegetables, and fruits. Some foods can be purchased in both sizes. These include pretzel sticks and cheese slices.
- Big/Little:** Use your imagination to cut foods in various sizes. You can also use words like LARGE/SMALL and TINY/HUGE! Some children may be ready to be introduced to other 'size' words like MEDIUM.
- Hard/Soft:** Foods like pretzels, crackers, raw carrots, and ice cubes are HARD. Other foods, like applesauce, bananas, purees, or cooked potatoes are SOFT. Kids can feel how hard or soft a food is by using their fingers, biting with their teeth, or poking with a fork.
- Full/Empty:** Fill a small container with any food you have. Let your child explore the FULL container - is it heavy? What happens if you shake it or turn it upside down? Either allow your child to dump everything onto a plate or pour it out yourself, then let your child explore the EMPTY container.
- Shapes:** Talk about the shape of various foods. A zucchini is ROUND and LONG. A pizza may be a CIRCLE or a RECTANGLE and can be cut into TRIANGLES. You can take a bite and change the shape of a food!

Think of your own concepts and ways to explore them with food!

Have fun!

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