

# Making Celebrations Healthy and Active



*Health is the thing that makes you feel that now  
is the best time of the year.*

## Part 1

slightly revised from

### Create Healthy, Active Celebrations

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service

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# Make Celebrations Happen

## All Gatherings Are Special

Many gatherings can feel like a party, especially when you focus on enjoying the company of family and friends. Encourage everyone to laugh, act out stories, tell jokes, dance, play, and just enjoy being together. The food can be simple – just make your guests feel important and welcome. All it takes is sharing your time and attention in a friendly and fun way.

## Fun, Festive Foods and Activities

Eating healthy and being physically active work together to promote good health. Both can be fun parts of parties and gatherings.

For children, playtime is priceless—children learn through games. They learn to follow rules, and to give and take. Play teaches children to get along with each other. They discover what they are good at and what they enjoy.

This guide provides tips that parents can use in planning celebrations for families, friends, and children. Keep reading for information on:

- ▲ New ways to promote good health while having fun
- ▲ Making foods festive!
- ▲ Offering thirst quenchers that please
- ▲ Savoring the flavor
- ▲ Splurging on colors and textures
- ▲ **Using MyPlate to plan food for your events**
- ▲ Planning pleasing parties
- ▲ Planning events for children
- ▲ Ways to keep it simple for kids
- ▲ Making moving a part of every event!
- ▲ Ideas and recipes for making your celebrations healthy and happy

## Celebrate in a Healthy and Happy Way

- ▲ **Come together to have fun!** Food and drink are only part of the event.
- ▲ **Start with a warm and friendly welcome.** A few minutes with each of your guests will make them feel special.
- ▲ **Make choosing foods easy.** Make it easy for guests to select healthy choices by offering a variety of tasty new foods and old favorites.
- ▲ **Create excitement** by trying new and different things. Try new foods and activities along with familiar ones.
- ▲ **Show by example.** Choose foods for good taste and health.
- ▲ **Get Moving.** Encourage everyone to move around at your gathering. Include activities that are fun and easy ways to move more.

# Enjoy Family and Friends

Your time with family and friends is special. Make time to enjoy each other and celebrate. Celebrations give parents and kids the chance to practice healthy habits that can last a lifetime. You can create traditions that help build lifestyles that support good health with a little thought, time, and action!

## Get Going With Healthy Habits

It's never too early for adults to set an example of healthy habits. Adults may not realize it, but children pay attention to what they do. Children follow their parents' choices about what to eat and how active to be. Family meals and get-togethers are good times to show how to eat new and healthier foods, and to be more active. Set an example but also respect the choices your family and guests make.



## Set an Example for Your Family and Friends

- ▲ Make your own healthy choices about food and physical activity.
- ▲ Arrange for children to play and be physically active in safe places.
- ▲ Allow children to make choices from food and activities you provide. Try new foods with kids. Remember that with time, children will learn to like the taste and texture of the foods adults enjoy.



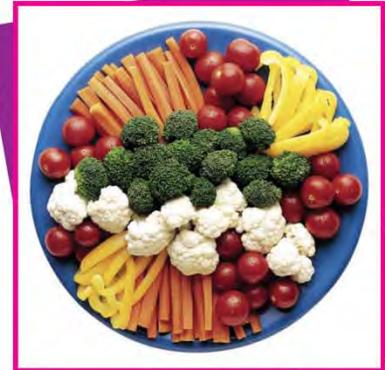
# Make the Foods Festive

## Tips To Make Foods Taste Great

We eat with our mouth and nose, as well as our eyes. Prepare foods that look, smell, and taste delicious too:

- ▲ **Make food look festive!** Sprinkle coconut, sliced almonds, green onions, or herbs on food.
- ▲ **Decorate foods** so they look interesting and appealing.
- ▲ **Use new shapes** for sandwiches, vegetables, and fruits (for example, by using cookie cutters).
- ▲ **Try something new**, such as adding new ingredients to a favorite recipe or serving a new side dish with a well-liked main dish.

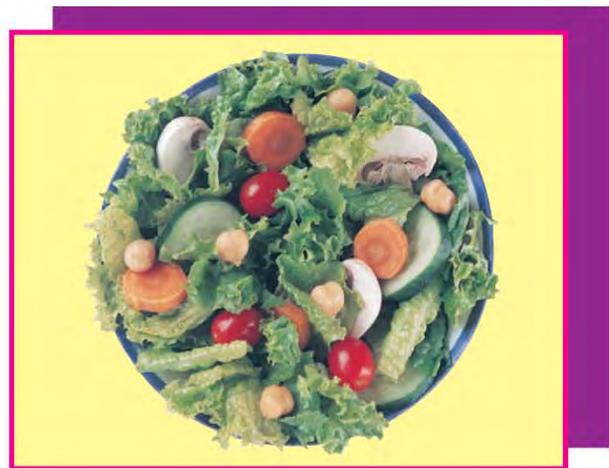
- ▲ **Shop smart to eat smart.** Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they are in season. They can cost less and taste better. Be sure to check dates on meat, milk, and other fresh foods.
- ▲ **Wash salad ingredients ahead of time and store them in the refrigerator.** Toss with salad dressing right before serving for a crisp, crunchy taste.
- ▲ **Serve hot foods hot and cold foods cold.** Milk tastes best cold to most people. Most soups are more flavorful when hot. Besides being safer, the right temperature helps foods taste better. For more information on keeping food safe, go to <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>
- ▲ **Make sure foods are properly stored and cooked.**



# Splurge on Colors and Textures

Serve colorful fruits and vegetables at family events. They can add eye appeal to the foods you offer. They can also save you money.

- ▲ **Serve foods with contrasting colors.** Combine yellow corn and black beans with some low-fat salad dressing. Serve orange wedges along with green and red grapes.
- ▲ **Add a splash** of salsa, or sprinkle seasonings. They give a lively look to spreads, dips, and side dishes like hummus, bean dip, rice, or potatoes.
- ▲ **Buy a few special eye-catching fruits and vegetables.** Choose in-season fruits and vegetables. Fresh berries, apricots, or nectarines or snow peas provide color and crunch.
- ▲ **Make it quick and easy** by using canned or frozen fruits and vegetables. Serve canned pineapple or frozen peach slices. Canned green beans, peas, and carrots are tasty in salads.
- ▲ Many **colorful fruits and vegetables may cost less** than many other packaged snacks.



# Savor the Flavor

## Change Old Favorites and Try Dishes From Other Cultures

Try new foods and recipes to liven up your special event.\* Try a lower calorie version of some recipes:

- ▲ Instead of the familiar cake with frosting, slice an angel food cake and layer it with sliced peaches, pudding, and a yummy fruit sauce.
- ▲ Offer turkey burgers or veggie burgers at your barbecue.
- ▲ Serve a home-made dessert of pudding, fruit, and vanilla wafers instead of pie.
- ▲ Add flavor and texture to salads by including nuts, cheese, or dried fruit.
- ▲ Offer some new dishes from other cultures at your celebration.



## Try Something New

Use a new recipe to make tasty main dishes, casseroles, salads, vegetables, or desserts. Ask your friends how they make one of their family's favorite foods.

### Try these ideas:\*

- ▲ Sizzling *Fajitas* are fast and easy to make. Quickly cook onions, red and green peppers, and thinly sliced meat and serve in folded, hot tortillas.
- ▲ Offer a *Parfait* of yogurt, cereal, nuts, and dried or sliced fruit in layers.
- ▲ *Pasta Primavera* is a nice change from regular spaghetti. Mix cooked bow-tie pasta with cooked broccoli florets, red and green sweet pepper slices, and cut string beans or yellow squash. Add a sprinkle of cheese.
- ▲ Make a *Trifle* by layering unfrosted cake slices with berries and pudding. Additional ideas can be found in the Recipe section of this publication.

## Take a Chance

**Try something different.** Serve an unusual food along with familiar foods.

**Encourage curiosity.** Taste new foods when they are in season, such as different types of plums or pears.

\*Choose lean meats and low-fat or fat-free foods and beverages.

### Explore the United States Department of Agriculture's Web sites for recipes

*Snap-Ed Connection Recipe Finder*  
<http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/>

*MyPlate Healthy Eating Tips – Sample Menus and Recipes*  
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/sample-menus-recipes.html>

*Food Group Recipes*  
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/sample-menus-recipes/Recipes.pdf>

# Offer Thirst Quenchers That Please

When deciding what beverages to serve guests, there are many different options for kids and adults.

Here are some ideas:

- ▲ **Offer milk or drinks made with low-fat or fat-free milk.** Make blender drinks like smoothies or flavored hot drinks such as hot chocolate with low-fat milk. Offer adults any of these: iced tea, coffee with low-fat milk, hot tea with lemon and/or milk.
- ▲ **Go easy on juice.** Offer “homemade soda” made from water, club soda, or seltzer water mixed with different 100% fruit juices.
- ▲ **Make water more exciting** by adding slices of orange, lemon, or lime.

- ▲ **Make fun ice cubes** by freezing fruit juice (using ice-cube trays with different shapes for the cubes) and then add cubes to club soda for a fizzy iced drink.

- ▲ **Make a “float”** by adding a scoop of sorbet or sherbet to club soda instead of serving soda pop.

- ▲ **Make plain water available** for those who would like some.



# Use MyPlate To Plan Foods for Your Event

Offer a variety of foods at your event or celebration, whether it's a full meal or a "mini-meal." Use MyPlate to help you choose a variety of foods. Here are some examples of tasty celebration foods:

## Foods From the Fruits Group

Fruit kabobs, strawberries, grapes, watermelon, cantaloupe, mandarin oranges, frozen fruit popsicles

## Foods From the Vegetables Group

Green beans, broccoli florets, celery, potatoes: baked, mashed or roasted strips, baby carrots or cooked sweet potato slices

## Foods From the Grains Group

Whole wheat crackers, animal crackers, fortune cookies, fun shaped pastas - bow ties or spirals, corn tortilla chips, pretzel rods, popcorn sprinkled with garlic powder or taco seasoning

## Foods From the Dairy Group\*

Ice cream sandwiches, smoothies, hot chocolate, pudding or custard, cheese cubes or strips

## Foods From the Protein Group\*

Garbanzo and other bean dips, almonds, walnuts or pecans, turkey, chicken, other lean sliced meat, lean beef or pork

## Combinations From the Food Groups\*

Macaroni and cheese, pizza with peppers, olives, and onions, sandwiches with meat, cheese, lettuce, and tomato, cut in squares or triangles, french toast

\* Choose lean meats and low-fat or fat-free foods or beverages.

## Family Goals for Healthful Eating and Active Living

- ▲ Choose foods for good health, and enjoy them.
- ▲ Eat whole-grain products, vegetables, and fruits, and choose fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- ▲ Choose foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.
- ▲ Go lean with protein. Choose lean meats and poultry and bake, broil, roast, or grill them. Vary your protein choices—with more fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds.
- ▲ Sit less and move more. Being physically active is fun!
- ▲ Read Nutrition Facts labels and ingredient labels when choosing foods to help you get the most nutrition for your money. To learn how to use the Nutrition Facts label to make smart food choices go to: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ReResourcesForYou/Consumers/NFLPM/ucm275409.htm>

