



# Mealtime Memo

## for Child Care

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## Time Saving Tips for the Child Care Kitchen

Time management is important and beneficial in all aspects of food preparation. When you have good time management skills, you are more efficient and have better control in the kitchen. Whether serving 10, 45, or 225 young children, learning how to manage your time wisely will help you prepare healthy meals and serve them in a timely fashion. Use the tips in this month's Mealtime Memo to help manage and save time when preparing meals in child care settings.

### Tip #1: Start with a clean and organized kitchen.

- Contain the clutter by organizing your equipment and ingredients ahead of time.
- Assign a specific place for each piece of equipment and all food items. Keeping equipment and food organized will save time when you are gathering and storing items for recipes.



- Clean as you go; put the ingredients and equipment back in their place as soon as you finish using them.
- Properly clean the kitchen for the next meal service at the end of each meal.

### Tip #2: Use your menu to determine which recipes are being prepared.

- Determine how much time each recipe will take, and prepare accordingly. For example, prepare the soup and allow it to simmer before you begin cooking the grilled sandwiches.

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## Time Saving Tips for the Child Care Kitchen

- Use a timer to remind you when to start recipes and when they are finished.

### Tip #3: Prepare fruits and vegetables ahead of time while controlling for food quality and safety.

- Wash and store fruits and vegetables with a tough outer surface such as apples, oranges, carrots, and celery ahead of time.
- When cutting fruit into pieces, you may find some fruits such as apples turn brown after storing. One way to reduce the browning of freshly cut fruit is to add 100% sugar free citrus juice to prevent browning.
- Preserve quality of tender fruits and vegetables such as strawberries, blueberries, lettuce leaves, and tomatoes by waiting to wash just before use. Be sure to date pre-washed fruits and vegetables and store in the refrigerator.

### Tip #4: Prepare recipes in large batches.

- Use half of the recipe, and chill and freeze the other half to use at a later time.
- Be sure to follow proper food safety guidelines to cook, chill, freeze, thaw, and reheat foods. Use the *Kitchen Companion* as a tool for proper handling of food: [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Kitchen\\_Companion.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Kitchen_Companion.pdf)
- When storing food, place hot foods in shallow pans in the refrigerator or rapidly cool in an ice bath.
- Cover food properly to retain moisture and prevent it from picking up odors from other foods during storage. Use the USDA storage chart guidelines to keep food qualities optimal when freezing or refrigerating: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/c\\_crecipes3-6supp.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/c_crecipes3-6supp.pdf).



## Nutrition Fact



It is important to eat at least half of your grains as “whole grains.” In their natural state, all grains begin as whole grains, containing every part of the kernel: the germ, the endosperm, and the bran. The bran is the multi-layered outer skin of the kernel that contains antioxidants, B vitamins, and fiber. The germ is the seed inside the kernel, and it has the capability to sprout into a new plant. It also contains many B vitamins, some protein and minerals, and healthy fat. The endosperm surrounds the germ, giving the germ its food supply and energy. It is the largest part of the grain, and it contains starchy carbohydrates, proteins, and small amounts of vitamins and minerals. Refined grains remove the bran and the germ of the kernel, leaving only the endosperm. Without the bran and the germ, about 25% of a grain’s protein is lost, along with many key nutrients. When searching for whole grain products, look for whole grain, whole wheat, stoneground whole grain, brown rice, oats, oatmeal, and wheatberries as the first ingredient on the Nutrition Facts label.





## Vegetable of the Month: Brussels sprouts

Brussels sprouts are winter season crops that belong to the cabbage family. They are low in fat, sodium, and calories and are cholesterol and saturated fat free. They are a good source of dietary fiber and folate, and Brussels sprouts are high in vitamin C. Choose firm, compact, bright green Brussels sprouts. Buy on the stalk when possible, as they will keep longer. They can be refrigerated in a plastic bag for up to one week. An easy recipe to introduce Brussels sprouts in your child care program is to halve Brussels sprouts and steam until soft, then top with grated low fat cheddar cheese. Brussels sprouts also make an easy addition to a vegetable pot pie recipe. For an additional recipe, check out *Washington State Department of Agriculture's* website at <http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/> for a honey glazed Brussels sprouts recipe.

## Nutrition Tip

The winter season usually involves festive celebrations with traditional holiday foods. Healthy holiday substitutions can help you boost recipes nutritionally while decreasing the fat, sodium, and calories. Here are some ideas:

- Substitute whole wheat flour for half of the all-purpose flour in recipes to increase dietary fiber, B vitamins, and minerals.
- Top off holiday pies with low-fat yogurt instead of whipped cream to increase potassium, vitamin D, and protein.
- Substitute garlic salt with garlic powder or fresh garlic to reduce sodium.
- Substitute onion salt with onion flakes or freshly chopped onion.
- Use dried fruits instead of chocolate chips or candies in recipes.



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