



# Mealtime Memo

## for Child Care

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## Creating and Maintaining a Safe Mealtime Environment

An important key to creating a safe and healthy mealtime environment is through employee training.

Appropriate training teaches methods for safely preparing and serving, and creating wholesome environments in child care settings.

Child care providers can confidently create a safe mealtime environment as a result of receiving training.

There are a variety of topics for

training, all of which are important. Topics can include, but are not limited to, training in food allergy

policies, healthy feeding practices, first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and safe food handling practices to prevent cross-contamination and food-borne illness. All are important for a safe and healthy mealtime for



children. It is essential for employees to stay up-to-date in these training areas.

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# Creating and Maintaining a Safe Mealtime Environment

Other important topics for training for a safe mealtime environment include:

- offering healthy, age appropriate meals and snacks,
- developing emergency preparedness plans,
- practicing appropriate hand washing procedures, and
- practicing appropriate food handling and sanitation procedures.

Where to search for training opportunities? Food safety, food allergy, and healthy menu trainings can be completed through outside agencies, such as your state agency, sponsoring organization, or local Resource and Referral Agency. CPR and other safety certifications can be accomplished through your local Red Cross or health department. Training and professional development are often offered through national and state conferences, state agencies, and local community colleges.

The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) offers online training, as well as face-to-face training, in many child care topics via the website [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org). In addition, NFSMI offers Simple Lesson Plans for administering short trainings in your child care facility. For more information on NFSMI's training resources, contact the NFSMI Help Desk at 800-321-3054.



## Nutrition Tip

Many times the terms whole wheat and whole-grain are used interchangeably, but they are not the same. According to the Whole Grain Council, whole wheat is a type of grain, just as apples are a type of fruit. However, not all whole-grain is wheat, just as not all fruits are apples. Whole-grain can be defined as 100% of the original kernel of the grain. Whole-grains or whole-grain products have the most naturally occurring nutrients and also have been proven to lower the risk of many chronic diseases. When selecting food products made from grains such as bread, cereals, and pasta, look for whole-grain in order to reap the health benefits of the entire grain.



## Vegetable of the Month Summer Squash

Related to the cucumber and various melons, summer squash has a variety of shapes and sizes including zucchini, yellow crooked-neck, yellow straight-neck, and scalloped squash. Summer squash are tender because they are harvested before the rind hardens and matures. They are a good source of manganese, high in vitamin C and A, and also a source of niacin, folate and potassium. Choose squash that are heavy for their size. They should also have shiny and unblemished rinds. The soft squash varieties are fragile and should be handled with care to avoid punctures that will lead to rapid decay.

## Nutrition Fact

According to the American Heart Association, tub margarine has about 1.5 grams per tablespoon of saturated fat, while butter contains about 7 grams per tablespoon. Tub margarine usually does not have cholesterol because it is made from plant sources. While margarine appears to be the better option, it is generally high in trans-fat. Eating too many foods high in trans-fat can increase the risk for developing heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. Both butter and margarine are rich in saturated fat. When choosing a fat, select one that is unsaturated or liquid at room temperature, such as olive oil.



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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the National Food Service Management Institute at The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

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