

Growing Minds' Approach to Nutrition Education

How many times must we see kids' eyes glass over during another dry and boring lecture on what they should eat, the food pyramid, and lots of big words that really don't have much meaning to kids (carbohydrates, proteins, antioxidants...I mean, come on!).

Instead, we focus on hands-on experiences where the children are given the opportunity to taste, smell, stir, sift, toss and get messy! In this age of convenience food and busy families, it's not only children who don't know how to cook – it's adults too! It's no wonder that our children not only lack the knowledge of where food comes from or how it's grown, but what in the world do we do with it?

We also want to dispel the myth that children won't eat healthy food. Children are no different from adults in that they appreciate food that is well prepared and is presented in a pleasant manner. More to the truth, it's adults that have acquired the taste for lots of fat, salt and sugar and who don't know how to cook. Children, if given a chance to have some type of relationship to food, either from growing it themselves, visiting the place and meeting the farmer who grew it, or having a hand in its preparation, are most willing to not only try the food but enjoy it and ask for more. And when you are working with fresh, whole foods, that's your nutrition education!



Hands-on means that children don't just talk about food, they get to prepare it and then eat it. We, of course, provide recipes for seasonal foods that can be obtained locally. You don't see us making a strawberry dish in February, whether it's Valentine's Day or not. We want to teach children about the seasons and how to savor what's growing right now. We want to show them that they have some control over this wacky food system that we have contrived (why it's easier to get Washington State apples when we have the 14th largest apple producing county in the country). It's also an economics lesson – using our food dollars on local food keeps that money in our local communities. It also helps to reduce pollution (less packaging and less travel) while retaining the beautiful landscape and our small family farms.

Children get it...maybe we should be doing this with more adults?