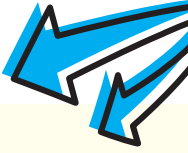


Taste Development



Taste and the meaning of senses

De-ve-lop-ment. It's a long word that illustrates how long it can take to develop taste. Children need to see, touch and smell foods to discover them at their own pace before they gain the courage or the will to taste them. They use all their senses to become familiar with foods. Children like what they know. Familiarity is key.

Figures

- 1**: The number of exposures it can take for a child to like a chocolate cookie.
- 10**: The number of exposures it can take for a child to like quinoa.
- 100**: The number of exposures it can take for a child to like Brussels sprouts.

Children are born with a natural liking for sugar. But sometimes they need a little more time to get used to the bitterness of vegetables.



Change your tune!

"You can't know whether or not you like it if you don't try it!" This is a common response, but unfortunately it's counterproductive because pressuring children often makes them even more resistant. It also makes meals less enjoyable. Children may end up associating the food with a negative emotion. It is better to encourage them without forcing them. For example, you can tell them why you like the food. You can also praise them for tasting things. In short, focus on the positive!

Familiarization 101

There are several ways to familiarize children with foods:

- ▶ Talk about foods and have other children talk about food during meals.
- ▶ Suggest that children help plan and prepare their meals, lunches or snacks.
- ▶ If possible, during afternoon school daycare, organize small food tasting sessions with children or other activities to get them talking about food.



One word: neophobia

Food neophobia is the fear of new foods. Between the ages of 2 to 10, three out of four children experience one or more episodes of neophobia. It is a normal part of their development.

Understanding why a child seems picky

Considering that neophobia can occur or last up to age 10, it is possible that a child we think is picky is actually just neophobic. But there are other possible reasons why children might reject certain foods:

- ▶ They are forced to eat certain foods. They think of certain foods as an obligation, so they do not enjoy or show any interest in them.
- ▶ The portion sizes are too big for them, which discourages them from eating.
- ▶ They are used to always eating the same foods. They like those foods so that's what we give them. The food is served so often that the children stop enjoying them. This turns into a vicious cycle if we only serve the child a limited number of foods! It is difficult to introduce new foods into their repertory.
- ▶ Children are not concentrating on food; they'd rather go play.
- ▶ Hunger and appetite vary (see the sheets "Hunger" and "Appetite").

Having the same lunch every day is reassuring, but...

You likely have a child in your group who brings the same lunch every day, or who always gets the same school lunch. This may be because the parents want to make sure their child will eat. While this can be reassuring for both the child and the parents, it really limits range of foods the child eats. Depending on the needs that parents express, you may want to share this sheet with them.

