



Finicky Eaters: Strategies That Help

There are different elements that hold back a child from eating foods. They may be emotional or texturally driven to avoid certain foods. Below are some ways that have proven successful for the journey to healthy eating.

Some tips to get you started for success are:

- * Engage with zany unexpected funny stories and do not let kids realize that you are trying to make them eat certain foods.
- * Make rules such as-taste but no need to swallow to get full credit towards the reward
- * Only get rewards if they complete all the (tasting) elements of the game/task
- * Remember to use small steps to victory-patience and persistence is key because adults can choose the goal, but kids will choose the pace at which the goal will be achieved.
- * Do activities when kids are starting to be hungry, not right after a meal.
- * Matter-of-fact approach works best with bits of praise mixed in. Don't overdue the praise.

1. Games: Kids like them especially with the anticipation of winning. For example, Close Your Eyes and Open Your Mouth. Place a variety of foods on a table, then each person takes turns placing an item on the tongue of their opponent. They do not have to swallow it. A card game can also work well. This is where you make food cards having pictures of a variety of foods found in the kitchen and each time a card is turned up, they have to taste it. Be sure to mix enjoyable foods with a few more adventurous ones. You may spice it up by adding small commands such as, roll an olive up your arm.
2. Stories: Make eating fun by putting it into a story. For example, broccoli florets may be the trees in Winnie The Pooh's 100 Acre woods with each tree being a character home. Another more active way is to tell a story about trying to find Yukon the dog, so we must follow the trail that is left. Have several kids join in and place a trail of food on the table. Let the kids eat from the trail to discover clues about what the dog is up to. Then have them hunt around the room using the clues. (for example, if there were currents in the trail, it might mean that Yukon is near something sweet or dark). Let the kids describe what the eating clues are as if they are super smart dog detectives. Creativity is key.

3. Use a food passport. Have the kids place a stamp or sticker on each page that they have done. (A sample passport is included)
4. Playing with food can be effective. Make edible play dough, or paint with fruits or veggies after taking a taste.
5. Rewards work well. For example, if they try eating a green bean (you may let them choose what way to prepare it) they can choose their favorite dip for it (mayo and soy sauce, ranch dressing, frosting,...) and pass out desert or choose their favorite desert.
6. Vary the setting. Try eating games in different settings, not just in the kitchen. Settings can inspire or be related to stress.
7. Creativity. Remember that kids enjoy coming up with their own games. You can refine it and play it with them. One activity that we did at our sensory summer camps was taste and step. The kids got to step on all the foods that they tasted. We smashed grapes and watermelon and so much more!

_____ is Passport

Adventure begins: _____

I smelled a banana...

I licked an orange...

I put a green bean on my arm...

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I picked up a grape with my toes...

I sniffed the potato...

I nibbled a cracker with cream cheese on it's underside...

**I MIXED THE SALAD
AND TASTED A TOMATO...**