Food Ideas: Finger Foods

Finger foods can be offered in a variety of different shapes, lengths, colors, and textures. These choices give your child the opportunity to practice hand and finger skills as well as chewing skills.

Crackers, toast, and cereals are wonderful finger foods. Some favorite snack ideas include strips of wheat toast, O-shaped cereals (these are really good for hand/mouth coordination), oat cakes, puffed rice cakes, whole-wheat crispbreads, pasta, tortillas, rice, breadsticks, corn bread, and teething biscuits. You can make your own teething toast by cutting bread into finger-sized pieces and baking for 15 to 20 minutes at 175°.

Cheese strips are well liked by many children and provide a nice change of taste. Varieties to try include cheddar, jack, mozzarella, Swiss, and string cheese.

Hard-boiled egg yolks are great for children under 1 year of age (the egg white might cause food allergies). For 1 year and up, offer hard-boiled egg slices.

Meat slices provide children with a sense of feeding independence, as well as a good source of protein. This is a great use for meat leftovers from your family meals. Meatballs made of ground beef or turkey are a fun shape for finger foods. Or you can make meat cakes using ground meat shaped into small patties. Lamb or veal are meats that are usually well tolerated by young children.

Other good protein finger foods include fish sticks and chicken nuggets. Peanut butter or mashed beans spread on wheat crackers or strips of whole-wheat tortillas also make a nutritious finger food snack. Be adventurous and try plain or breaded/fried cubes of firm tofu as a snack. Tofu by itself doesn’t have much flavor, but it easily takes on flavors that you add to it.

Finger Food Favorites

Ripe fruits can be cut into a variety of shapes and provide many delicious tastes. Make sure fruits are washed, peeled, and free of seeds and pits. Try chunks of banana and pineapple, slices of peaches and mango, and pieces of cantaloupe and honeydew. Dried fruits such as apricots are another option, after they’ve been soaked until they are of a soft texture and can be safely chewed. Go ahead and include some of your favorites, but wait until your child is 1 year of age before giving citrus fruits. This will help avoid food allergies.

Vegetable strips are nutritious and provide a lot of variety. Make sure they are washed and peeled. For very young children or beginning eaters, steam vegetables to soften the textures. Some veggies to try include asparagus tips, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, beets, avocado, string beans, potatoes, and yams. Be sure to offer a variety of both green and yellow vegetables.

Other Options

These combinations of food are popular among children of all ages! Make sure your child has the feeding skills to eat these foods safely.

- grilled cheese sandwiches
- pizza—try mini pizzas for fun
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- silver dollar pancakes—the size makes them easy for little ones to eat. Try spreading jams or peanut butter on these pancakes and save the sticky syrup for another time.
- bagels topped with mozzarella cheese and tomatoes and cut into small pieces
- fruit leathers

Special Instructions