



Action Schools! BC

Eat Smart Celebrations

Celebrations and parties are a fun way to mark special events or holidays and students look forward to the change in school routine. Celebrations often include food and drinks that may not fit into Canada's Food Guide food groups. Celebrations give schools the chance to reinforce classroom food and nutrition lessons. With a few easy changes, most food and drinks can support the health and learning of students and expose them to a variety of new types of food and flavours. If food is used for celebrations, aim for at least 80% healthy choices.



"But It's Only Once in a While..."

Student and teacher birthdays, holidays, "100's Day", sports day, dances, and year end or graduation parties are some of the celebrations that often include food at school.



Why celebrating with healthy food is important

- ✓ Teaches students that healthy food can be "fun food".
- ✓ Eating habits are learned at a young age.
- ✓ Encourages students to taste new, healthy food through peer acceptance.
- ✓ Supports the health lessons being taught in the classroom.
- ✓ Helps to keep students' teeth healthy.
- ✓ Demonstrates that the school values the health of their students.
- ✓ Provides a healthy school environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice.



Did You Know?

- ✓ When healthy choices are offered in schools, children and teens are far more likely to meet the recommended number of servings of vegetables and fruit and teens are more likely to meet the recommended number of milk and alternatives servings.



Celebrate With Easy and Fun Ideas for Healthier Food and Drinks



Be aware of any food allergies in your classroom when planning food and drinks for celebrations.

- ✓ **Friendship Fruit Salad** – make a fruit salad with fruit contributed by every student.
- ✓ **Rainbow Salad** – ask students to bring a vegetable or fruit from a colour group. Layer the washed and chopped vegetables and fruit in a glass bowl to create a rainbow salad.
- ✓ **Make Your Own Pita or Wrap Party** – add hummus, chopped vegetables, roasted meat or poultry, and/or low fat cheese to whole wheat pita pockets or tortillas.
- ✓ **Make Your Own Trail Mix** – mix together unsalted pretzels, cereal that has 4 or more grams of fibre and 5 or less grams of sugar, dried fruit, and sesame and pumpkin seeds.
- ✓ **Make Your Own Pizza** – use whole wheat crusts, baked bannock, tortillas, pitas, naan, or English muffins as the pizza crust. Add low sodium tomato sauce or salsa, vegetables, and low fat cheese.
- ✓ **Make Your Own Yogurt Parfait** – use plain yogurt with cereal that has 4 or more grams of fibre and 5 or less grams of sugar. Add fresh or canned fruits (packed in juice or light syrup).
- ✓ **Fruit Kabobs with Yogurt Dip** – place cut up pieces of fruit on kabob sticks and dip in yogurt.
- ✓ **Fruit Smoothies** – blend together equal parts of 100% juice, yogurt or kefir and fresh or frozen fruit.

- ✓ **Themes:** Challenge the class to find or bring in food from Canada's Food Guide that:
 - is BC Grown
 - is from different countries or cultures they are studying
 - is seasonal
 - is in different shapes (e.g., triangle sandwiches, cubes of cheese, melon balls, etc.)
 - is holiday-themed e.g. pumpkin soup or pumpkin smoothie for Halloween (see Healthy Eating Action Resource for recipes)
 - is a traditional First Nations food

Celebrate Without Food

Children with food allergies may be put at risk or feel left out when celebrations include food. There are many other fun ways to celebrate special occasions.

- ✓ **Birthdays** – parents can donate a book to the school library in the child's name or make a donation to the child's favourite charity in the school's name; sing Happy Birthday to the child; post her or his photo on the class bulletin board.
- ✓ **Holiday Season** – collect food for local food banks; partner with a school in a low income neighbourhood and create a gift box of school supplies; make cards for children in another country, residents from a homeless shelter, or seniors in a care home.
- ✓ **Valentine's Day** – students put their name on a big, red paper heart and pass it around the classroom to have other students put positive comments on the heart.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

(refer to www.actionschoolsbc.ca for these and other resources)

- Action Schools! BC – Healthy Eating Resource s– K to 7 (F) and Healthy Eating Teacher Workshops – at www.actionschoolsbc.ca
- Bake Better Bites cookbook
- Brand Name Food List