

Guidelines for Choosing Food for Community Programs

- Choose foods from the four food groups of *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* (attached).
- Avoid offering foods that are high in salt, sugar and fat.
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are familiar with safe food handling practices. Consider having a staff member become a certified food handler. (City of Winnipeg Public Health Inspections office provides courses/exams and certification.)
- Allow time and opportunity for children and adults to wash their hands before they eat. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers is an acceptable alternative if hand-washing facilities are not available.
- Create a pleasant eating environment & provide appropriate supervision for children at meal or snack time.
- Allow children to serve themselves, even though it can be messy. Giving children this independence will provide an opportunity to develop fine motor and social skills. It will also develop an adventurous spirit and confidence to try new foods.
- Choose low cost nutritious foods that are readily available so families will be able to make the same snacks at home.
- Offer water and/or milk as everyday beverages. 100% fruit juice may be served occasionally. (Many health guidelines recommend that children have no more than ¼ cup of juice/day.)
- Ensure staff and volunteers are aware of food allergies and food restrictions of their community group.
- Staff and volunteers should be aware of their influence as role models and should encourage parents to see themselves as role models for their children.
- Follow these tips to prevent choking when feeding preschoolers:
 - Children should sit while eating.
 - Serve small pieces of soft food.
 - Avoid popcorn, hot dogs, raisins and other dried fruit, peanuts and other nuts.
 - If using peanut butter or other sticky toppings, spread them thinly on bread or crackers.
 - Grate raw vegetables and fruits or cook them until they are soft.
 - Cut up grapes or cherry tomatoes and remove seeds and pits from fruit to make them safer for young children.