Nutrition Plus, Inc.

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**May is:**

American Cheese Month

National Barbeque Month

National Egg Month

National Salsa Month

National Strawberry Month

**Important Dates:**

May 5th – Claims Due

May 27th – Checks/Direct Deposits go out

**How to save time with your CACFP Menus**

Using cycle menus in childcare is a great way to save time during the menu planning process. **A cycle menu** is your standard set of menus planned, served, and repeated (4 weeks of menus are most commonly used by home daycares). In the CACFP, a minimum of 2 weeks of menus are required to be considered a cycle menu.

* By planning a set of menus once and repeating them, you save menu planning time, repeat foods to help children accept new foods, and streamline your meal preparation.
* Buying food is easier since you know what foods and amounts are needed ahead of time.
* Food preparation is faster because the more you make a recipe, the more familiar it is to you. An example may look like this:

 Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4

   

 May 2022



* Cycle menus are easy to change once they are planned. You can substitute foods that are not available with other foods from the same food component. Just remember to document the substitution on the menu.

**Menu Planning and Meal Prep Tips:**

Young children often decide what to eat based on their first impression of the food. Always focus on preparing and serving visually appealing meals and snacks to young children.

* Serving a variety of foods is important because no one food or group of foods provide the necessary nutrients for healthy growth and development. Variety also makes menus interesting and appealing to young children.
* Strive for contrasts in texture, flavor, and methods of preparation.
* Meal prep ahead of time. When preparing dinner for your family, fix extra so you can use it for the next day’s daycare meals. Examples of easily reheated meals are: spaghetti, chili, casseroles, cooked vegetable dishes, homemade macaroni & cheese. Reheat all leftovers to a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F as measured by a food thermometer and held for 15 seconds. Making extra food components the night before is also helpful. This can be useful if you are planning a chicken dish for a daycare lunch and preparing a chicken dish for your family dinner. Make enough chicken all at once and refrigerate the daycare portion to use later. This saves you cooking the same foods twice!
* Preparing fresh veggies/fruits can be done all at once also. If slicing, dicing or cutting veggie/fruits for breakfast, and are serving others later in the day, prepare them all at once. It is also helpful to cut these up the night before and refrigerate them. This saves you having to wash the equipment and starting over later. If you really want a gold star in preparation, set aside some time on the weekend to meal prep and prepare some meal components early. This is a huge time saver for your week!

 Rainy Day Activities



**Tray game**

Put your kiddo’s memories to work with the tray game! The challenge is simple, put a collection of random items on a tray, give the players 30 seconds to look at it, then cover the tray with a tea towel and have everyone list as many items as they can remember. For your preschoolers, use just a handful of items. For your school-agers, put more of a selection on the tray! This is a great way to activate their critical thinking skills!

**What’s in the box?**

Everyone loves guessing what’s in the presents under the tree, but we have a different surprise in mind for a rainy day game.

Cut a hole in one side of a cardboard box and hide objects inside. (Shoe boxes and multiple sized Amazon boxes work great and most of us have those laying around!) Secure the top with tape. Without looking, each player has to put their hand in the box and feel the object to work out what it is. For preschoolers, put one secret object inside to help them learn tactile recognition. For school-agers, feel free to put more than one object inside for them to investigate!

**Indoor keepy uppy**

For a game of keepy uppy that won’t end in broken vases or spilt milk, replace balls with balloons and challenge your little ones to keep it off the floor for as long as possible, while sharing of course!

**Homemade Mac & Cheese**



***Ingredients***

2 cups Water

2 ½ oz Fresh cauliflower florets

3 cups Water

1 ¼ cups or 6 oz Whole-grain elbow macaroni

2 tsp Canola oil

2 tsp Whole-wheat flour

1½ cup or 12 oz Low-fat (1%) milk

2 cups or 7 ¼ oz Low-fat cheddar cheese,

shredded

¼ cup or 2 oz Egg whites

½ cup or 4 oz Low-fat sour cream

¼ cup or 1 oz Fresh diced onion

⅛ tsp Ground black or white pepper

½ tsp Garlic powder

1 ½ tsp Dried onion flakes

⅛ tsp Salt

½ tsp Lemon pepper

***Directions***

1. Preheat oven: Conventional oven: 350 °F.

Convection oven: 325 °F.

2. Boil two cups water in a medium saucepan.

3. Add cauliflower. Cook uncovered for 4 minutes until very soft. Remove, drain, and place in a bowl. Mash cauliflower until smooth. Set aside for step 7.

4. Boil 3 cups water in a medium saucepan.

5. Slowly add macaroni. Stir constantly until water boils again. Cook about 8-10 minutes or until al dente. Stir occasionally. DO NOT OVERCOOK. Drain well. Set aside for step 7.

6. Heat oil in skillet. Add flour to make a roux. Stir briskly with whisk. Slowly add about half of the milk and stir until creamy and smooth. Reduce heat to low.

7. Combine cauliflower mash, macaroni, remaining milk, cheese, egg whites, sour cream, onion, pepper, garlic powder, onion flakes, salt, and lemon pepper in a large bowl. Add warm roux and stir well.

8. Lightly coat a baking dish (8” x 8” x 2”) with non-stick spray.

9. Pour macaroni and cheese mixture into the baking dish.

10. Bake: Conventional oven: 350 °F for 30-35 minutes.

Convection oven: 325 °F for 25-30 minutes.

Heat to 165 °F or higher for at least

15 seconds.

11. Cut each pan into 6 pieces (2” x 3 ¾”). *One 2” x 3 ¾” piece provides 1 oz equivalent meat alternate and 1 oz equivalent grains.*

*You are all doing great work! Keep making us proud!*