



Healthy Eating - March 2007

Sick of preparing meals that end up as dessert for your ever grateful pet? Take heart, most family dogs of young children are well fed and mothers frustrated. It can be disheartening to spend time and effort preparing a healthy family meal to only have your children pick at it and push a lot of the food around and around the plate without actually eating too much of it. So much for that you say to yourself, why bother? We bother because we know how important it is for children to have a healthy diet. Which is exactly why it is so frustrating to have children with a basic diet of rissoles, sausages, rice, pasta and noodles!

So what can you do? The trick here is to have healthy foods served most days, with no follow up options. Say fruit and yoghurt, if it's served most days it becomes the norm. If your child chooses not to eat it, then they need to wait until the next meal to eat again. (you need them hungry!)

All too often it becomes the game; if I don't like option A, complain, don't eat, whine then option B will present itself (usually because we are worried about the point that they need to eat) The fact here to keep ever mindful is that children eat every 2-3 hrs so missing a meal is no big deal, they eat 5-6 times a day. It is actually beneficial to you in setting the stage for the next meal. That is they come to it hungry!

Let's go back to the fruit and yoghurt, if it's left uneaten, before topping up your dog's diet, recycle it for dessert that evening, however try to present it differently. Like in some fancy dessert glasses, as kebabs, or as fruit salad with a dollop of ice-cream. Kids love presentation.

Get them involved in making the meal, like cutting up the potato, they will definitely eat more if they have been part of it, and it can be something small like just cutting pumpkin or setting the table.

A word of warning, meal time can easily become a daily battle ground with you trying to convince your child to "eat one more mouthful before dessert", your child very quickly learns how to stretch out meal time for a huge length of time because mummy is giving me her undivided attention, so set a limit, and be very careful not to fall into the trap of trying to 'convince' them to eat their dinner. Praise eating well, and reward a meal that is 'mostly' eaten with dessert. Never offer dessert if the meal has not been mostly eaten.

I have also found when kids say they 'don't likesomething' it's best to rephrase that to them as 'you mean you haven't got the taste for that yet'.....as this leaves the option open for developing the taste for that food later. Around the age of 5 they start to broaden their palates.



Now for treats, and with xmas upon us they will be more of these than usual this month, a great tip is to limit treats to one day a week, say Sunday, no treats others days. This limits the amount of treats you can eat in one day without feeling ill, and makes it clear for everyone when they ask and it isn't Sunday that the answer is no, and it also sets boundaries and teaches children that treats are okay occasionally and are not an everyday food. A smart rule for xmas is too limit the xmasy food to say 2 or 3 days, so your not giving them rum balls, plum pudding and gingerbread for 2 weeks straight. This is definitely a tip and a great benefit for mums and dads too!

Keep in mind that children eat when they are hungry and some days they are hungrier than others, children never starve themselves. So make sure that when they decide they are hungry enough to eat, what goes in is healthy.