



# Exploring Indigenous Flavors in Head Start Meals

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**Presenters:**

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# Meditation



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# Today's Presenters



**Shonika Kwarteng, MBA, RDN, LD**  
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Associate, NCHBHS



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Training and Technical Assistance  
Specialist, Subject Matter Expert,  
NCHBHS





# Learning Objectives

- Understand the cultural significance of adding indigenous ingredients into reimbursable Head Start meals
- Increase awareness of food sovereignty to foster appreciation for culturally responsive and nutritionally sound food practices for young children
- Create culturally rich, nutritious, and appealing Head Start meals



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# Poll



- Who's with us today?
- Describe your primary role
  - Food service staff
  - Nutrition managers or consultants
  - Health services manager
  - Program director
  - Teaching staff
  - Head Start families
  - Other



# What comes to mind when you see these images?



Ice Cream



French Fries



Broccoli



Fry Bread



**What does FOOD  
mean to you?**



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You are the  
**EXPERTS!**



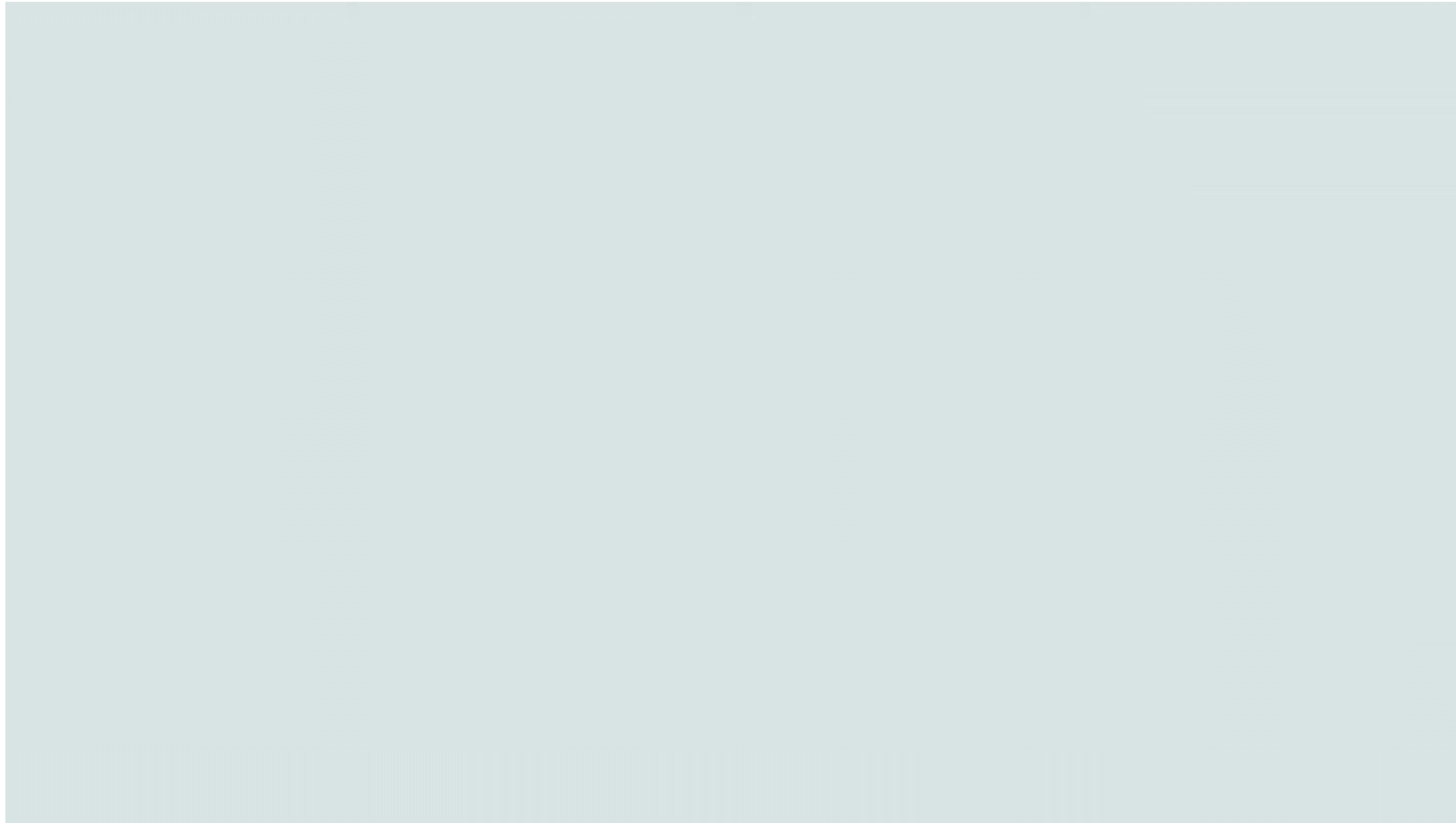
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# Food Sovereignty





# Terms

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**Food Sovereignty** – the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food

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**Food security** – that all people have availability and access to nutritious food, and they have enough nutritious food to eat each day

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**Food insecurity** – the inability to obtain enough nutritious food to sustain an active, healthy lifestyle

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**Food desert** – communities have limited or no access to healthy, affordable food, mostly in low-income communities

---

**Food swamp** – an area that has more access to non-nutritious foods than healthy alternatives, such as corner stores and fast-food restaurants



# Cultural Significance

- Traditional foods are a critical part of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) populations.
- Raising and re-claiming traditional foods restores connections to plants, animals, water, sun, rain, and the land.
- The cultural knowledge needed to hunt, gather, and fish for traditional foods is not being handed down to younger generations in many communities.
- In Indigenous ways of knowing, food sovereignty is not an individual concept. It is a family and community process that supports a historical and traditional relationship to food and well-being.



# Nutrition in the Early Years



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# Importance of Early Childhood Nutrition

- Essential for growth
- Foundation of the brain, body, immune system, and development
- Up to 75% of each meal goes to building children's brains
- Long-term health and well-being





# Young Children and Eating

- Naturally active
- Need regular meals and snacks throughout the day
- Amount of food they eat may change from day to day and meal to meal
- Can regulate their own appetites



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# Effects of a Poor Diet

Malnutrition

Constipation

Delayed  
growth and  
development

Weakened  
immune  
system

Behavior  
concerns

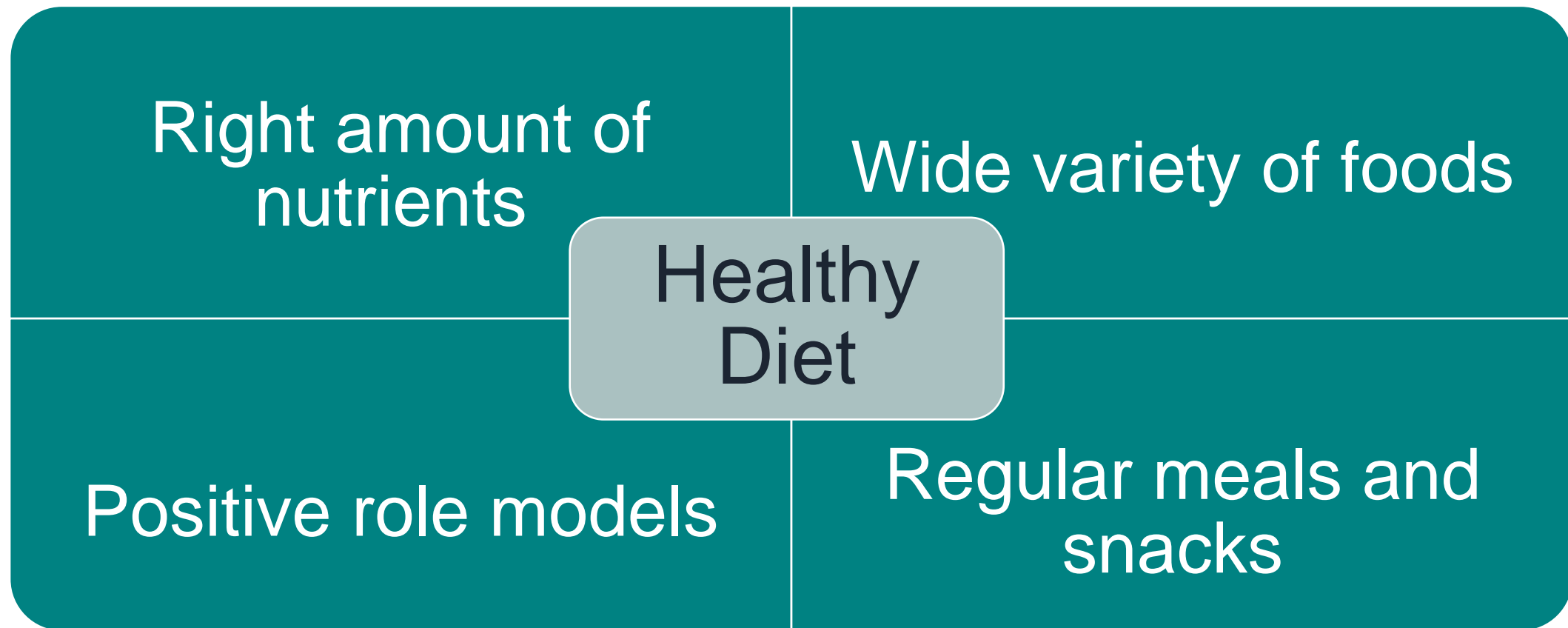
Fatigue

Tooth decay

Chronic  
diseases



# What supports a healthy diet for young children?







# What are social determinants of health (SDOH)?

- SDOH are defined as the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age.
- Affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks
- Research estimates that SDOH drive more than 80% of health outcomes.

## Social Determinants of Health





# Health Disparities

- Many health disparities in AIAN communities are a result of colonization.
- Tribal communities were forced off their lands and away from traditional food sources. They had to rely on non-traditional, government issued, processed foods.
- Many non-traditional foods that were and are consumed today are high in sugar, fat, and sodium.
- AIAN populations have higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and diet-related diseases than the dominant population due to the consumption of non-traditional foods.







# Head Start Nutrition Services



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# Head Start Nutrition Services Play an Important Role Towards Achieving Health Equity

- Nutrition has been a core component of Head Start requirements since its beginning.
- Head Start Program Performance Standards are comprehensive requirements guiding what and how children are fed.
- Staff and families work together to ensure each child's dietary needs and cultural preferences are met.
- Staff support families with accessing and preparing affordable, healthy foods.





# Benefits of Head Start Nutrition Services

- Reduce food insecurity and poverty
- Model and support good nutrition
- Improve health outcomes
- Increase school readiness



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# Child Nutrition Program Requirements

Child Nutrition, 45 CFR §1302.44



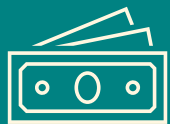
Culturally and developmentally appropriate meals



Meals and snacks that are high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt



Individualized feeding for infants and toddlers  
Promotion and support for breastfeeding



Funds from USDA child nutrition programs as the primary source of payment



# Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

- USDA funded nutrition assistance program
- Supports nutritious meals in Head Start programs
- Meal patterns promote wellness and healthy growth
- Administered through grants to states



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# CACFP Meal Patterns



## What is in a Breakfast?

Milk (6 fl. oz. or  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup)  
Vegetables, Fruits, or Both ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)  
Grains ( $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. eq.)

**Optional:** Meats/meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component up to 3 times per week at breakfast.

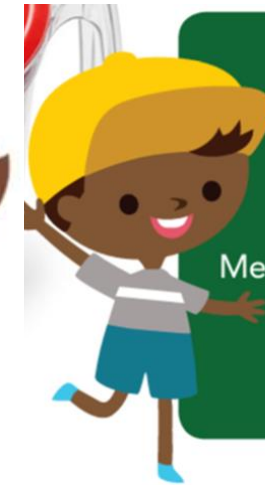
## What is in a Lunch or Supper?

Milk (6 fl. oz. or  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup)  
Meats/Meat Alternates ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  oz. eq.)  
Vegetables ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup)  
Fruits ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup)  
Grains ( $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. eq.)



## What is in a Snack?

**Pick 2:**  
Milk (4 fl. oz. or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)  
Meats/Meat Alternates ( $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. eq.)  
Vegetables ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)  
Fruits ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)  
Grains ( $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. eq.)



*All grains served must be whole grain-rich or enriched.  
Breakfast cereals may also be fortified.  
At least one grain served each day must be whole grain-rich.*



# How does YOUR work matter?





# YOUR work matters!

- **YOUR** meals provide one half to two thirds of children's daily nutrition needs.
- **YOU** help establish healthy eating patterns early.
- **YOU** help children grow and develop.
- **YOU** help create positive interactions around food.
- **YOU** fill nutrition gaps.
- **YOU** provide opportunities to connect children to their culture.





# Defining Traditional and Local Food

There is no single definition for the word “local” or “traditional”.

Every community is unique.

Identify the values, needs, and wants of your community, and you can define what local means for you.



# Resurgence of Traditional Foods

Several Tribes and communities are recognizing and implementing programs that bring back and support the cultivation of traditional foods.





# Choctaw Growing Hope

“Food is a keystone of culture. The type of food we eat, our way of preparing and sharing food – these daily rituals connect us to place and time and each other.”

Emily Soreghan, Choctaw





# Karuk Agroecosystem Resilience Initiative



Karuk Meat Preparation  
The  
Traditional  
Way





# Osage Nation's Mobile Market

- Goal is to reach the most rural and remote Tribal members
- Food produced on the Tribal farm
- Produce distributed to:
  - Elders
  - Head Start programs
  - Schools



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## MOBILE FARMER'S MARKET

**COMING TO A COMMUNITY NEAR YOU!**



**WEDNESDAY AUGUST 30, 2023**

09:00 AM – 4:00 PM

**BUTCHER HOUSE MEATS**

Fresh meat will be available inside Butcher House Meats!

**ITEMS AVAILABLE:**  
Fresh Produce,  
Fresh Eggs,  
Homemade Canned Goods,  
Freeze Dried Items







# Denakkanaaga Athabascan, Alaska



# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

- **Traditional berries:** huckleberries, salmonberries, squashberries
  - Credit as fruits
  - Low in calories and high in fiber, vitamin C, and antioxidants
  - Used as toppings for baked goods; in rice pilaf; served with Bannock



**Salmonberries**  
(Thimbleberries, Alaskan Berries)



# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

- **Root vegetables:** Bitterroot, camas bulbs, prairie turnips, fern leaf biscuit root
  - Credit as vegetables
  - Source of vitamin C, magnesium, selenium
  - Used in root vegetable stews; mashed; or in a bowl



**Prairie Turnips**  
(Timpsila, Thínpsinla)



# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

## ■ Prickly pear cactus

- Credits as a fruit
- High in vitamin C, calcium, fiber; low in sugar
- Made into a salsa; added to guacamole or rice pilaf





# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

## ■ Bison

- Credits as a meat
- Low in fat, high in protein
- Substituted for ground beef or turkey in meat sauces, soups, or chili



**Bison**  
(Similar to Buffalo)



# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

- **Birds:** grouse, ducks, geese
  - Credit as meat
  - Source of fat, protein, and iron
  - Can be used for tacos or wraps or made into a hash



Pictured: ruffed grouse

# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

- **Fish:** lake trout, bull trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout
  - Credit as meat
  - Rich in omega 3, vitamins D and B2
  - Can be baked, broiled, or roasted; in fish stew, fish wraps, or tacos



# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

- **Beans:** black, tepary, white, anasazi
  - Credit as a meat alternative
  - Source of protein and fiber
  - Can be used for plant-based meals; traditional stews or soups, Indian tacos, or bean-based breakfast dishes



**Tepary Beans**  
(Similar to Navy Beans or Peas)



# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

- **Nuts and seeds:** sunflower, pumpkin, beaked hazel nuts
  - Credit as a meat/meat alternative
  - Source of heart healthy fats, plant-based protein, and fiber
  - Can be sprinkled on cereal or yogurt; mixed in oatmeal; topping for soups and salads; or added to baked goods



**Beaked  
Hazelnuts**

# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

## ■ Wild rice

- Credits as a whole grain
- Source of dietary fiber and antioxidants
- Can be used as a substitute for white or brown rice, or made into porridge



**Wild Rice**  
(Sprouted, Puffed, Flour)



# Nutrition of Traditional Indigenous Foods

- Whole blue kernel corn
  - Source of fiber and anthocyanins
  - Whole kernel
    - Credits as a vegetable
    - Can be served as a side dish or added to chili or three sisters soup
  - Ground corn meal
    - Credits as a grain
    - Can be made into pancakes, tortillas, or a crispy coating for fish or chicken



**Native Whole Blue Corn Kernel**  
(Not Ground)



**Native Whole Blue Corn Kernel**  
(Ground into Flour)

# Making Non-Creditable Food Items Work

- Enhance meal appeal
- Promote acceptance
- Satisfy appetites



Strawberry and Waffle Kebabs with Maple-Yogurt Dip



# Share Your Thoughts!

- What menu items do you currently serve?
- Are there any traditional foods that you could substitute in place of other menu items?
- What are some new menu items that you could introduce?
- How could you use other traditional food items that cannot be counted toward the meal pattern?





# Other Ways to Use Indigenous Foods

- Taste tests
- Nutrition education activities
- Menu substitute strategies
- Recipe swaps
- Procurement of traditional and local foods



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# Fajita Chicken, Squash, and Corn

**2ND PLACE WINNER**  
Dark Green and  
Orange Vegetables

This main dish creatively combines southwest spices with an Asian cooking style, blending the flavors of locally grown produce with fajita chicken strips, all stir-fried to perfection.



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<https://theicn.org/cnr/recipes-for-schools-main-dishes/stir-fry-fajita-chicken-squash-and-corn-usda-recipe-for-schools-2nd-place-winner>

# Blue Cornbread Muffins





# Three Sisters Soup





# Creamy Wild Rice





# “Make My Own” S-oam Bavi Protein Bowl



# Chokeberries (Wild Cherries, Bitter Berries)



Chokecherry Sloppy Joes!

Recipe courtesy of and used with permission from Indigikitchen



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Chokecherry Sloppy Joes!

Recipe courtesy of and used with permission from Indigikitchen



# You Are the EXPERT: Culturally Relevant Meal Ideas

Activity  
Time

## Break Out

Plan a culturally relevant breakfast, lunch, or snack and share using the Padlet.





# Procuring Traditional and Local Foods

- Everyone wins!
  - Kids eat nutritious, local, traditional foods
  - Producers get an economic boost
  - Tribal communities enjoy food sovereignty.
- Follow USDA, federal, tribal, state, and local regulations





# Meal Planning for Head Start Programs

Balance

Variety

Contrast

Color

Eye Appeal







# Serving Reimbursable Meals With Indigenous Foods

- Food and Nutrition Service Regional office
- USDA Resources:
  - Food Buying Guide
  - Crediting Handbook for the CACFP
- Food safety regulation
- Input from elders, families, and community



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# Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs



# Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

- A tool that tells you how much edible food a product produces
- Ensures that the meal pattern requirements are met for each part of a reimbursable meal.
- Includes different foods commonly used in Child Nutrition Programs.
- It is continually being updated with more foods and features.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>



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CREDITING HANDBOOK FOR THE  
Child and Adult Care  
Food Program



# Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-handbook-child-and-adult-care-food-program>



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# Resources for Credited Recipes

- Food Hero: <https://foodhero.org/quantity-recipes>
- Child Nutrition Recipe Box: <https://theicn.org/cnr/>
- USDA Multicultural Child Care Recipes: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/recipes-cacfp>
- Cook's Corner: Recipes for Healthy Snacks | ECLKC ([hhs.gov](https://www.hhs.gov))



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# Take Aways

- How you use local and indigenous foods into your menu is unique.
- Decide what using traditional ingredients means to your community.
- The goal is the same:
  - Learn about people, place, tradition, and culture through food
  - Reduce health disparities
  - Fill nutrition gaps
- There is a place for culturally relevant ingredients and meals in your program that teaches about food and connects us to our culture and history.

# Questions?



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# Thank You!

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# Office of Head Start

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## Join Us

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Social Network for Early Childhood Professionals  
<https://bit.ly/mypeers-eclkc>



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<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/health>

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