

The Edible Editorial

January 2026

Welcome to the New Year!

We're excited to kick off 2026 with fresh opportunities to nourish children with healthy meals and positive mealtime experiences. This month brings winter-friendly menu ideas, reminders for menu documentation, and a few fun activity ideas to help children stay engaged during the colder months.

Meal Pattern Spotlight: Whole Grains

At least **one grain serving per day** must be **whole-grain rich**.

Quick ways to meet the requirement:

- Whole wheat tortillas at snack
- Brown rice with lunch entrées
- Oatmeal for breakfast with fruit

Whole-grain crackers or pita triangles

Tip: Check the ingredients list. The first ingredient should be a whole grain such as whole wheat, whole grain oats, or brown rice.

Seasonal Menu Inspiration

Winter produce is packed with nutrients and flavor. Try incorporating:

- Oranges and clementines
- Grapefruit
- Sweet potatoes
- Cauliflower

Brussels sprouts

Try This Easy Snack

Yogurt Parfait Bar

Plain yogurt + diced winter fruit + whole-grain granola

Kids can serve themselves to build independence!

Food Safety Reminder: Proper Handwashing

Handwashing is the simplest way to keep everyone healthy during cold and flu season.

Make sure children and staff:

1. Wet hands with warm water
2. Lather with soap for 20 seconds

Rinse and dry with disposable towels

Before: preparing food, serving food, eating

After: using the restroom, diapering, sneezing/coughing, playing outside

Kid-Friendly Activity: "Rainbow Winter Collage"

Encourage creativity and food learning:

1. Provide pictures of fruits/vegetables from magazines
2. Sort by color groups on a large poster

Talk about what parts of the body different colors help keep strong

This supports learning in nutrition, art, and fine motor skills.

Additional Winter Activity Ideas

Snowman Snack Sorting

Use pictures or toy food and have kids sort foods into "Go Foods" (everyday) and "Sometimes Foods" (treats). Build a paper snowman each time they pick a Go Food. Nutrition plus glue sticks equals success.

Warm & Wiggle Indoor Movement

Play song-based movement games like "Freeze Dance" or "Follow the Leader Winter Animals." Burn that endless kid energy while staying indoors and unfrozen.

Serving Family Style:

- Family style meals are when all components of the meal pattern are prepared and placed in serving dishes on the tables in front of the children.
- Children do not need their entire minimum portion on their individual plate for service.
- Children do not need to eat every component of the meal pattern. They can choose what they want to eat from the meal components in front of them on the table.
- In order for the meal/snack to be claimed all components need to be offered to the child. (Key words all components and offered.)
- Offered is a visual observation by the child of the food item. You cannot just ask the child if they would like apples, they have to see it prepared sitting in front of them on the table.
- If serving family style, the site would need to prepare enough of each component and have it available to the children visually.
- Keep in mind that the USDA Meal Pattern is the minimum portion for a claimable meal. Children may eat more than their individual portion due to the child's appetite and you should be prepared to accommodate all children.

If serving non-family style meals:

- If serving meals on each child's plate individually from cooking dishes, you need to place the minimum portion size on each child's plate for a claimable meal.
- The child then chooses which items from the meal components on their plate they would like to eat.

Cheesy Egg, Sausage, and Potato Casserole

Recipe for Homes

CACFP Crediting Information: 1 serving = 1/4 cup vegetable and 1 1/2 oz. equivalent meat/meat alternate. Makes 6 servings.

Ingredients:

Nonstick cooking spray

1 1/3 cups Potatoes, diced, frozen, thawed

3 Eggs, fresh, large, whole

2 Tbsp. Milk, low-fat (1%)

1/2 cup & 2 Tbsp. Cheddar cheese, shredded, reduced-fat

1 cup Red bell peppers, fresh, cored, and 1/4" diced (gently wash bell peppers under running water before cutting)

1/2 tsp. Onion powder

1/2 tsp. Garlic powder

3/4 cup (3 1/2 oz.) Italian sausage, milk, no more than 35% fat



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Spray a loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray.
3. In a small bowl, combine eggs, milk, and cheese. Whisk to mix. Set aside.
4. In a small bowl, combine bell peppers, thawed potatoes, onion powder, and garlic powder. Mix and set aside.
5. Heat a medium skillet on medium-high heat. Add Italian sausage. Crumble with a spoon as it cooks. Cook until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Drain grease and discard.
6. Add bell pepper and potato mixture to skillet. Stir frequently. Cook for 3-5 minutes or until bell peppers begin to soften.
7. Transfer vegetable-sausage mixture to the loaf pan. Allow mixture to cool for about 5 minutes.
8. Add egg mixture. Stir to mix.
9. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes.
10. Cut into 6 even pieces.

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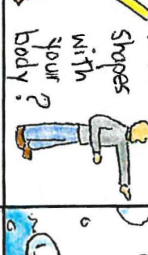











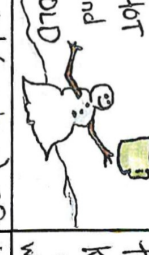



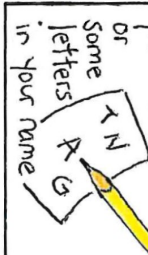





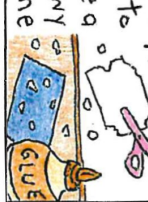
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Winter

ACTIVITY CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>can you play a rhyming game? 4</p>  <p>cat hat</p>	<p>create your own books, pictures and a story with 5</p>  <p>My Book</p>	<p>call or bounce a ball... try to catch it! 6</p> 	<p>visit a store, talk about fruits 7</p> 	<p>look for pictures of winter clothes 8</p> 	<p>can you make letter shapes with your body? 9</p> 	<p>play with soap bubbles 10</p> 
<p>imitate pet sounds 11</p>  <p>meow blub blub</p>	<p>visit the LIBRARY 12</p>  <p>I love books!</p>	<p>jump up HIGH ten times 13</p> 	<p>ENJOY a family sing-a-long 14</p> 	<p>make snowballs and count them 15</p>  <p>1...2...3...</p>	<p>GIVE a HUG 16</p> 	<p>try different cheeses with crackers for a snack 17</p> 
<p>READ a book about animals in WINTER 18</p>  <p>zzzz</p>	<p>I have a dream 19</p>  <p>MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. Day!</p>	<p>READ a book about WINTER 20</p> 	<p>talk about HOT and COLD 21</p> 	<p>name things that keep us warm 22</p> 	<p>pour fresh squeezed juice... which has more? 23</p> 	<p>Celebrate belly laugh day! 24</p>  <p>Ha Ha Hee Hee Hoo</p>
<p>practice writing your name or some letters in your name 25</p>  <p>Y N R G</p>	<p>match gloves or mittens 26</p> 	<p>pick up five cotton balls with a clothespin 27</p> 	<p>build a SNOWMAN with three buttons 28</p> 	<p>bring in some snow... see what happens 29</p> 	<p>help sort, count and put away silverware 30</p> 	<p>cut white snowflake snips, glue to make a snowy scene 31</p> 

New Year's Eve

E	L	X	B	W	X	N	R	Y	U	M	R	G	R	Y	O	R	C	N	B	R	Y	W	X	L	G	E
E	A	O	V	A	A	W	B	J	P	O	D	H	T	L	O	R	C	B	L	L	A	W	J	G	W	E
D	O	E	B	W	L	A	R	J	O	R	R	R	Q	Q	D	P	L	N	L	E	A	I	A	A	D	
R	O	E	Y	A	L	W	E	L	E	B	A	A	A	N	E	E	N	N	L	E	I	N	M	A	E	
M	A	E	N	W	L	A	R	J	E	H	E	A	Y	A	S	E	H	H	E	G	Y	N	R	W		
N	O	D	C	I	C	Y	E	Q	N	S	E	Y	A	N	P	I	O	O	N	G	I	C	M	A		
O	F	G	H	Q	S	J	R	T	L	Z	R	S	X	P	T	V	A	E	C	H	J	G	F	E		
F	M	B	E	S	N	D	U	K	O	G	B	N	B	O	T	U	P	E	L	V	Q	Z	T	A		
P	W	R	S	L	O	S	P	I	Y	G	H	O	L	D	K	B	M	G	A	K	I	J	E	R		
N	C	R	E	Z	L	S	D	O	F	P	H	L	A	T	P	A	I	S	C	P	U	R	A	E		
C	E	J	F	L	O	Z	U	F	T	P	K	L	O	N	A	S	H	Y	K	I	W	I	B	E		
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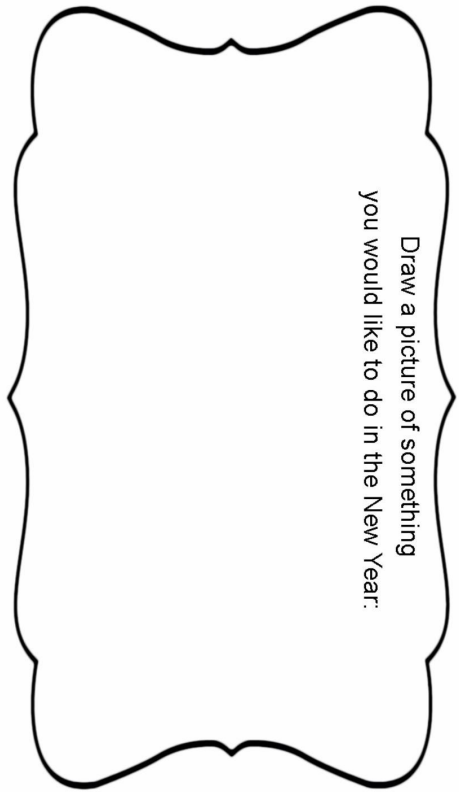
- BALDROP
- BALLOONS
- CHEERS
- CLOCK
- COUNTDOWN
- CELEBRATE
- HAPPY
- MIDNIGHT
- NEWYEAR
- NOISEMAKER
- PARTY
- RESOLUTION

Best of This Year

Song: _____

Book: _____

Memory: _____



Small Hands Crafting

On construction paper, have your children trace and cut out the outline of their hand print. You'll need to do this step for your youngest.

Tell your kids about the custom of making New Year's Resolutions and then ask each child to write, or have you help them write, their New Year's Resolution on their paper hand.

Attach a magnet to the back. Place their magnet on the fridge to help them remember their resolution all year.



New Year's Day

Did you know your child is learning healthy eating habits through the CACFP?

One of the most important lessons a child will learn is healthy eating habits. The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides resources to help children grow and develop to their fullest potential. Together, with caregivers and parents, we can work to establish and encourage healthy eating habits. Receiving nutritious meals early in life, as well as being physically active, is critical to the establishment of positive lifelong habits.

As we enter this new year, we renew our commitment to provide your child with nutritious foods and nutrition education that will last a lifetime!



Balloon FUN!

Movement on New Year's Day

What is a celebration without balloons? There are several ways to incorporate balloons into indoor or outdoor physical activities. Have a balloon relay race where each child runs down to the end of the line with their balloon where they need to pick up a balloon in the next color of the rainbow. When they get back to the start, the next child will run to the end and do the same. Learn colors, talk about rainbows, and get some physical activity in your day! Another alternative? Teach the kids how to play balloon ping pong using paper plates for paddles. Caution: playtime with balloons must be carefully supervised because of choking hazards.



Black-Eyed Peas

- 3/4 cup water
- 1 onion (chopped)
- 2 celery stalks
- 2 cloves garlic (chopped)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 cups black-eyed peas, dry
- 4 cups rice (cooked)
- 1 bell pepper (chopped)
- 1/2 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Bring the water, onion, celery, garlic, and pepper to a boil, stirring often. Add the black-eyed peas and return to a boil, stirring often. Reduce heat to low, cover, and continue cooking until most of the water is gone, about 20 minutes. Add rice, pepper, and pepper sauce. Stirring often, cook until heated through, about 5 minutes.

Recipe from USDA Mixing Bowl

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