



FUNDAMENTALS

Early Learning Centres



Cook Book

Vol. 1

CONTENTS

Welcome Message	3
Healthy Eating & Mindset	4
Family Mealtimes	5
Hand Hygiene	6
Safety in the Kitchen	7
Building healthy habits for Children	8
Making the most of packaged foods	9
Keeping your family's food safe	10
Chinese fried rice	11
Italian Spaghetti bolognese	12
Japanese karaage chicken	13
Mexican cheesy corn quesadilla	14
Greek Pasta salad	15
Sri- Lankan Beef and potato curry	16
Maltese Soppa tal-Armla	17
Turkish Manti	18
French Sausage rolls	19



Let's Get Cooking!

Welcome to the Fundamentals Early Learning Centres Cookbook.

A Taste of the FUN Cooking Program!

Our carefully curated collection of child-friendly recipes is designed to make cooking an enjoyable and engaging experience for the whole family.

Whether you're confident in the kitchen or just starting out, these easy-to-follow recipes are sure to inspire smiles and create memorable moments in the kitchen and meaningful interactions around the table.

But there's more than just delicious meals! This cookbook also includes an educational section filled with practical tips on:

- Creating positive family mealtimes
- Building healthy habits for children
- Choosing nutritious packaged foods
- Ensuring food safety at home
- Hand Hygiene when cooking
- Safety when working in the kitchen

So, gather your ingredients, tie on your apron, and join us in creating delicious memories and healthy habits—all while learning and growing together & teaching your little one the fundamental cooking skills when in the Kitchen.



Healthy Eating & Mindset

At Fundamentals Early Learning Centres, we believe that a lifelong love of healthy eating begins in the early years. That's why we're proud to introduce this cookbook as part of our FUN Cooking Program, proudly endorsed by Kate Eason, Advanced Diploma in Nutrition Medicine, a dedicated mother – and the founder of Food Defined.

As grown-ups, it is our responsibility to promote, role model, and educate children about healthy food and beverage choices. By instilling a positive and healthy mindset from a young age, we can empower children to make nutritious choices that will benefit them for life. Through this program, we aim to create the tools and experiences that support children in developing healthy habits both at home and in early learning environments.

More than just recipes, this book reflects our shared philosophy: that cooking with children is an opportunity to educate, empower, and inspire. Together—parents, educators, and our wider community—we hold the key to shaping healthy habits and positive mindsets for our youngest learners. Through hands-on experiences in the kitchen, children not only discover how food fuels their bodies, but also develop essential life skills, sensory awareness, and joy in creating wholesome meals.

A whole-service approach is essential. This means integrating fundamental skills in promoting healthy eating and physical activity into every aspect of our service—across policies, procedures, and our educational program. We also offer parent information webinars on topics like fussy eating, and professional development training for educators, ensuring that our entire community is aligned in supporting children's health and wellbeing.

This cookbook is the first in a series, created to share some of the favourite meals our children love to eat—recipes that are packed with tasty goodness and high in nutritional value. It's designed to be practical, enjoyable, and aligned with our mission to nurture happy, healthy eaters.

We invite you to cook, play, and learn with us—one delicious recipe at a time.

FAMILY MEALTIMES

Family mealtimes play a key role in promoting healthy eating habits in young children. Try some of these tips to help create positive mealtimes with your little ones.

Eat together not seperately.

Family mealtimes can help children try different food types and textures especially when they see their family enjoying them.

Make mealtimes enjoyable
Keep calm and remember the division of responsibility; 'Parents provide the food; children decide how much and whether they eat it all'.

Encourage independent eating
Allow children to serve themselves and decide how much they will eat. This helps them to develop coordination, as well as pouring, serving, and passing skills.

Set the scene for a positive mealtime
Encourage children to sit down and eat at a table during meal and snack times. Letting children be "in charge" of details like how to set the table will help them feel invested in the mealtime.

Minimise distractions

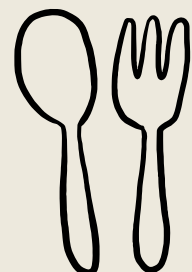
Turn off the TV and put devices, such as phones and tablets away. Mealtimes are an ideal opportunity for interacting with children and making conversation.

Talk to children about the variety of foods, discuss their colour, texture, and most importantly role model and demonstrate to children not only how to eat various different foods, but express your enjoyment of the taste and texture.

Expect a little mess!

Allow children's exploration of food and for them to engage all their senses.

Young children should be allowed to eat with their fingers, especially if they are still learning to use utensils.



HAND HYGIENE

Proper handwashing removes dirt and germs, stopping their spread to other people and objects. Where possible warm running water should be used and ensure to use paper towel to dry hands, not the tea towel.

PROPER HAND WASHING



SAFETY IN THE KITCHEN

It is important for children to be taught the key fundamentals of safety when working in the Kitchen & with food and equipment.

Wash
your
hands

Wipe
up
spills

**SAFETY
FIRST**

Wipe
down
benches

Put
rubbish
in the
bin

BUILDING HEALTHY HABITS FOR CHILDREN

Children need many joyful experiences with food to become great eaters. Parents and carers can help establish healthy eating habits for their children in many ways.

Encourage eating opportunities

- Children's appetites change dramatically from day to day, they have the inherent ability to know when they are hungry or full. Allow them to stop eating when they feel full.
- A healthy child will not starve themselves - if they are not overly hungry at one meal, they will generally eat more at the next.

Don't make a fuss

- Encourage children to taste all foods that are offered.
- Let children what and how much from what is available to them
- Allow children to serve themselves at mealtimes. Use Tablecloths, placements or other fun decorations to make mealtimes more exciting for your child.

Be a good role model

- Set a good example by eating and enjoying a range of healthy foods in front of children.
- Sit with children during meal and snack times.
- Eat the same food as the children,
- Avoid talking to children about your own personal dislikes when it comes to food preferences.

"Research shows that children who share family meals 3 or more times per week are more likely to be in a normal weight range and have healthier eating patterns than those who share fewer than 3 family meals together."

Hammons A.J, Pediatrics 2011

MAKING THE MOST OF PACKAGED FOODS

Packaged foods are convenient and can make healthy eating more affordable. The packaged foods below are some of our staples and can be turned into quick, tasty and nutritious meals.

Canned tuna or salmon

Canned fish has a long shelf life and is an easy addition to many recipes. Choose varieties canned in spring water or olive oil.

Frozen vegetables

Just as nutritious as fresh produce, snap frozen vegetables are an easy addition to stir fries, curries and soups.

Canned beans and legumes

Canned beans are inexpensive and a very good source of protein and fibre. Add canned lentils to spaghetti bolognese, chickpeas to curry or 4-bean mix to salads.

Yoghurt

Enjoy as a snack or add some to your muesli or fruit salad.

Canned fruit

Canned fruit is an easy option when fresh varieties are out of season. Try to purchase varieties canned in juice rather than syrup.

Canned tomatoes

Canned tomatoes can form the base for many easy recipes. Choose salt reduced varieties.

Pre-cooked rice

A convenient alternative to cooking rice on the stovetop when you're short on time. Look for plain varieties without added flavours.

Long-life milk

Never run out of milk again! Long-life milk is a great alternative to keep in the cupboard for when you run out of fresh milk. For a dairy-free alternative, use coconut or nut milks instead which can be kept in the pantry too.

Evaporated milk

Evaporated milk is a great alternative to cream and coconut milk and works well in pasta, risotto and curries.

Baked beans

Enjoy them on toast or add to a baked potato dish to create an easy meal. Look for salt reduced varieties.

Rolled oats

Add to smoothies and muffins or enjoy as porridge for breakfast. Choose traditional over quick or instant.

KEEPING YOUR FAMILY'S FOOD SAFE

Once you buy the food, it's important to store it safely! There are times when food can become unsafe to eat if not transported or stored properly.

Safe food shopping

- Buy your hot and cold foods last and keep them separate.
- Keep raw meats separate from other foods as they may leak.
- Check use-by dates.
- Check for damaged food packaging such as:
 - Swelling and/or leakage
 - Broken tamper seals
 - Dented or damaged containers
 - Damaged seams, abrasions, blisters or wrinkles (if the food is in sealed pouches).
- At the check-out, make sure the sales assistant keeps the cold foods away from the hot foods when packing the bags.

Safe food transportation

It is important that you get your food home and safely stored as soon as possible. When transporting food to your home:

- Make sure the cold foods are kept out of direct sunlight.
- Take an ice box or insulated bag to store cold foods. This is important if you are travelling more than 30 minutes to and from the shops, or on hot days.
- Place chilled or frozen foods in the fridge or freezer as soon as you arrive home.



Olivia Parker - 4 Years Old

CHINESE FRIED RICE



Try adding pre-cooked chicken or beef for a protein boost

Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 spring onions (brown onion can also be used)
- 1 carrot
- 1 red capsicum
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 2 eggs
- Olive oil
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup corn kernels
- 2 cups pre-cooked basmati rice
- 1 ½ tablespoons salt reduced soy sauce



FUNDAMENTAL tip!
Save yourself some money by buying frozen veggies. They offer the same nutritional value as fresh and will last longer in the freezer.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Finely slice spring onions. Dice carrot and capsicum. Crush garlic cloves.
2. Crack eggs into a small dish and whisk well.
3. Heat pan and lightly spray with oil. Add egg and cook for 1 minute until fully cooked.
4. Remove egg from pan and slice into thin strips.
5. Spray more oil on the pan. Add onion and garlic. Stir-fry for 2 minutes until onion has softened.
6. Add remaining vegetables and stir-fry for a further 5 minutes.
7. Add rice and soy sauce to the vegetables. Continue to cook until the rice is fully heated through. Stir through the sliced egg. Serve immediately.

NOTE: for egg allergies, you can use an egg replacer product

ITALIAN SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE



Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 small brown onion
- Olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 medium carrot
- 1 small zucchini
- 500g of beef or pork mince
- 400g canned diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 250g spaghetti pasta
- 1 teaspoon of dried oregano
- Grated cheese to serve



FUNDAMENTAL tip!
Cook double the amount of sauce. Use half for your meal and freeze the other half for later on in the week.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Finely chop onion and crush the garlic.
2. Finely grate the carrot and zucchini. Squeeze out excess moisture.
3. Add oil to a fry pan. Add onion and garlic and cook until softened & add the zucchini and carrot and cook for 5 minutes.
4. Add mince to the pan and cook until browned.
5. Add tomatoes, tomato paste and dried oregano to the mince mixture. Mix through and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Cook pasta in boiling water, following the recommended cook time on the pack.
7. Serve over pasta with grated cheese on top.

JAPANESE KARRAGE CHICKEN BITES

Try using beef or turkey mince next time!

Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 small brown onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 medium carrot
- 1 small zucchini
- 500g chicken mince
- ½cup breadcrumbs + extra for rolling
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

FUNDAMENTAL tip!

Kids, make sure that an adult is present when you are cooking with hot oil!

This Chicken dish is delicious when served with rice and a slaw salad with sesame dressing.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Finely chop onion and crush the garlic.
2. Finely grate the carrot and zucchini. Squeeze out excess moisture.
3. Place prepared vegetables into a large bowl with chicken mince, breadcrumbs and herbs. Mix together until well combined.
4. Using clean hands, roll the chicken mixture into small balls.
5. Add remaining breadcrumbs to a separate bowl and coat each of the chicken balls with breadcrumbs.
6. Heat oil in a fry pan on medium to high heat. Place chicken balls into the pan and flatten with a spatula. Cook evenly on both sides until browned and cooked through.

MEXICAN CHEESY CORN QUESADILLA



Try adding pre-cooked chicken or beef for a protein boost

Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 35 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup plain flour
- ½ cup water
- 1 spring onion
- ½ cup corn kernels (frozen or canned)
- 20g feta cheese
- ½ cup grated tasty cheese
- Olive oil • 1 lime

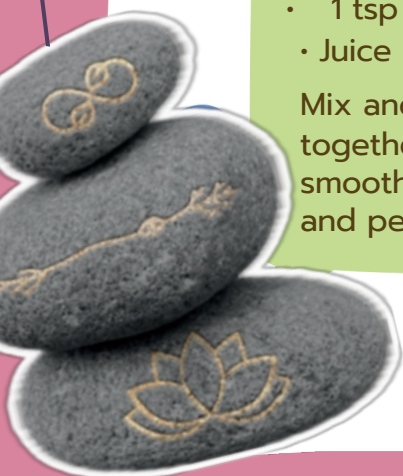
Why not add guacamole?

- 1 avocado
- ½ tomato (diced)
- 1 tsp olive oil
- Juice of 1 lime

Mix and mash this all together in a bowl until smooth. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place flour in a bowl. Make a well in the centre and add water.
 2. Mix the water and flour until a sticky dough forms.
 3. Place the dough on a floured surface and knead until smooth. Set aside.
 4. Finely chop the spring onion.
 5. Place dough on a floured surface and roll out to form a circle.
 6. Evenly sprinkle spring onion, corn and grated cheese on one side of the dough. Crumble feta over the top.
 7. Fold the dough over to fully cover the filling.
 8. Place on an oiled fry pan and cook for 5 minutes on each side until evenly browned.
- Cut into 4 pieces.
Serve with lime wedges and guacamole.



GREEK PASTA SALAD



Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups uncooked pasta
- Olive oil
- 5 cherry tomatoes
- 5 baby bocconcini
- ½ avocado
- 1 small red capsicum
- 1 small cucumber
- 185g tin of corn
- 1 tablespoon of basil & oregano
- 1 tablespoon of mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon crumbled feta

FUNDAMENTAL tip!

This is a great dish for lunch to prepare for the week ahead. Add shredded chicken, canned tuna or chickpeas for a protein boost.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Bring a medium pot of water to the boil. Cook pasta according to packet instructions.
2. Drain pasta. Then drizzle olive oil over pasta and shake to coat.
3. Dice cherry tomatoes, avocado, bocconcini, capsicum, and cucumber. Drain corn.
4. Mix basil and mayonnaise together to make a dressing.
5. Add pasta, cheese, vegetables to a mixing bowl. Stir to combine.
6. Pour dressing over the top and stir through.
7. Sprinkle with oregano on top.

"My little one really loves this recipe, especially on warmer days. Refreshing and fresh ingredients easy to put together for a nice & healthy lunch. Yummy for both toddler & parents"
Jamie Adamopoulos - 2025



SRI LANKAN BEEF & POTATO CURRY



You can also
make this
recipe with
chicken

Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 40 - 60 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 brown onion
- 2 medium white potatoes
- 2 medium carrots
- 2 tablespoons curry powder, turmeric & cumin
- 500g diced beef
- 250ml beef stock
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 cup frozen peas
- Quick cook microwave rice

FUNDAMENTAL tip!

If using casserole beef, allow to simmer for up to 1 hour to soften. Cook a bigger batch and prepare for the busy week ahead.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Finely dice the onion.
2. Chop the potatoes into bite sized cubes and slice the carrots.
3. Heat olive oil in a large fry pan and sauté the onion until soft. Then add the curry powder and mix through.
4. Add the diced beef to the pan and cook until browned.
5. Pour in the beef stock and stir through the tomato paste.
6. Add the potatoes and carrot. Turn down the heat and simmer for 20 minutes.
7. Add the frozen peas and allow to simmer for a further 5 minutes.
8. Serve with rice.



MALTESE

Soppa tal-Armla



Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 50 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large brown onion
- 1 large white potato
- 1 large carrot
- 1cup dried red lentils (washed and then drained)
- 1 chicken stock cube
- 2 tablespoons Turkish sweet capsicum (tomato paste can be used)
- 6 cups boiled hot water
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 lemons
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried mint
- 250g Maltese Sausage (optional)

FUNDAMENTAL tip!

Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the fridge and be eaten within 3 days or freeze for up to 3 months.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Dice the brown onion. Finely dice the potato and carrot.
2. In a medium to large sized pot, sauté onions in the olive oil for a few minutes. Then add carrots, Sausage and potatoes and cook for a few more minutes.
3. Add the chicken stock cubes and capsicum paste and mix.
4. Then add the washed lentils along with the 6 cups of hot water and stir well.
5. Bring to the boil then reduce heat and let it simmer for approximately 20 to 30 minutes or until the carrots and potatoes are soft.
6. With a hand-held blender, puree the soup. Add salt and pepper to taste.
7. For the garnish: in a small pan, melt the butter with the paprika and mint. Let it sizzle then add it to the soup.
8. Add lemon juice to taste Serve with Turkish bread.



TURKISH MANTI



Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 packet of shell pasta
- 500g lamb or beef mince
- 500g plain yoghurt
- 2-3 cloves garlic
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon dried mint

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a large pot, cook the pasta until al dente or as directed on the packaging. Drain and set aside.
2. Crush garlic cloves into the yoghurt and mix well.
3. Cook the minced meat and add salt according to taste.
4. Place the pasta in a large shallow bowl, followed by the minced meat, then cover with yoghurt.
5. In a small pan, add the oil and tomato paste and cook for a few minutes. Stir continuously to stop the paste from burning. Add dried mint and stir for another 1-2 minutes. Then drizzle over the yoghurt and pasta.
6. To garnish sprinkle extra mint on each serving.

FUNDAMENTAL tip!
Sneak in finely chopped veggies into the mince mixture for extra nutrition.



FRENCH SAUSAGE ROLLS



Serves: 4 people | Cook time: 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1kg lamb mince
- 2 white potatoes
- 1 brown onion
- 2 carrots
- 6 puff pastry sheets
- 2 tablespoons milk
- salt and pepper

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place baking paper on a large oven-safe tray. Preheat oven to 180 degrees celsius.
2. Grate the potatoes, carrots and onion into the raw minced meat. Add salt and pepper to season. Knead all ingredients until combined.
3. Cut all the puff pastry pieces in half, having a total of twelve pieces.
4. Evenly spread 3-4 tablespoons of meat mixture across one strip of pastry and then roll from one end to the other. Cut into bite-sized pieces and then place on the oven-safe tray. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until you have used all filling and pastry. Brush each one with milk.
5. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes or until golden brown.
6. Serve with your favourite dipping sauce.

FUNDAMENTAL tip!

You can swap out the lamb for a different type of meat or replace it with feta cheese for a vegetarian option.



THANKS FOR COOKING WITH US!



FUNDAMENTALS
Early Learning Centres

"Learn to love healthy eating, it will nourish your soul give
you the energy and focus you need for everyday life"

 *Kristy Pereira*