

Wallingford Childcare Center Community,

Healthy, well balanced meals are crucial in providing positive childhood development. Here at Wallingford Childcare Center (WCCC) we participate with the “Child and Adult Care Food Program” or CACFP. CACFP is a federal assistance program provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in which we abide by health regulations in order to receive subsidized food for our school. CACFP provides free, reduced rates, or paid rates for 3 eligible meals per day, per kid, targeting those most in need. These regulations limit our sugar and white breads intake while encouraging whole grains and well balanced meals. The requirements are regulated online and in yearly in-person visits. The kitchen and administrative staff are also provided with continuing education every year to be sure they understand these regulations. For more information about CACFP and the regulations our food follows, please follow the link I’ve provided at the bottom of this document.

CACFP provides a great basis for a healthy menu, but at WCCC we like to go even further. My goal as Head Chef is not only to provide your children with healthy, happy tummies, but to also provide a sense of wellness, appreciation for the earth and food, and a loving sense of community. Meals at WCCC are an educational experience that spark a love of learning through hands on activities and exploration of the world through food.

When comparing my menu to other preschools the first thing you may notice is the length and diversity in each month. While keeping around some of our favorites does bring up some repetition, our menu is ever changing and adapting to new ideas and sparks of imagination from both students and staff. Providing a certain amount of consistency is desirable, as it allows children to feel safe and secure enough to venture out and try new things occasionally. When creating the menu I take into account a variety of aspects that will influence children’s readiness to explore new foods. This includes: variety, color, texture, aroma, arrangement, choice, and independence. Annually in the Spring we get kids involved in growing food in our garden spaces and each classroom regularly participates in various cooking and baking related projects year round. We also love to have guest teacher chef’s come work in the kitchen and teach us about their favorite foods from their childhoods. What a wonderful way to explore the world and culture through taste!

Planning, cooking, and eating together all help encourage healthy habits. Children see adults as role models, so we serve family style meals. This means we eat the same foods, teach children to serve themselves, and talk about the healthy food we are eating at each meal. Children can get involved by planning meals at home that they’ve tried at school, wash vegetables, toss salads, set tables, pour and mix ingredients, and even select new produce for the family to try at your local grocer or farmer’s market.

CACFP and our kitchen’s goals are just one of the building blocks we provide at WCCC for good nutrition and quality childcare. Together, we share an important role providing our children with the healthy nutritional and physical activity habits that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Meghan Maynard
WCCC Head Chef
wccc.kitchen@gmail.com

Additional Resources:

<http://www.earlycareandlearning.org/cacfp-resources2.html>

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