

# “Eat Well, Stay Well”

The following notes relate to “**Fantastic Food**”. One of Four programmes that can be watched on the Koan Arts website ([www.ko-an.org.uk](http://www.ko-an.org.uk)) under the “Eat Well, Stay Well” section.

Notes to the following films can also be downloaded from the Ko-an Arts Website.

- 1) “**The Healthy Plate**” - an introduction to three of the key constituents of food (Fats, Sugars & Salts) that can have an impact on your health together with some tips on how to create healthy menus.
- 2) “**What am I eating?**” - a guide to food labels and what to look for when you are buying food for the family. Primarily looks at the traffic light option but provides an overview to all labels in use at the moment.
- 3) “**The Sensible Shopper**” - a brief guide to not only getting the best value when you are shopping but also ideas on purchasing the healthiest foods.

Project funded via Suffolk Community Foundation with a grant from the “Transforming Suffolk Fund” provided by Suffolk County Council.



**SUFFOLK**  
Community  
Foundation



**Suffolk**  
County Council

# “Fantastic Food”

On these pages we show a range of practical activities that will help guide parents/carers and other organizations that work with the very young to explore issues of food. As has been well documented in the UK and in most of the developed world, there are issues of increasing childhood obesity. If this continues people will have significant problems in their adulthood. One way to tackle this is to help children develop healthy eating patterns. Many good choices leading to future healthy lives can be 'seeded' and 'planted' now while they are young.

Through this film you will be able to see how the staff at Highfield's Nursery School and Children's Centre work with the under five year olds. The approach is not about complicated diet planning. It is interactive and multisensory, with lots of opportunities for discussion. Questions are 'open ended' and not simply about teaching facts. The children are involved in planting and cooking the food they have grown, and explore healthy food in a multisensory way. The activities in the film and listed below give some examples of how young children can experience and enjoy the tastes, textures, smells and colours of healthy food. This approach gives plenty of opportunity for their young minds to process and reflect. You will see that there are many ways of reiterating similar information through using a range of different activities. It is through this layering of information that the children will learn to make informed choices about what to eat and drink.

The earlier you can start to do activities together around the theme of food the better. It is a great investment in their future health. There is such great food and drink out there - enjoy it!

How do the vegetables and fruit we eat grow? What is necessary for our fresh food to grow? Do they grow underground like potatoes, carrots and parsnips or do they grow above ground like courgettes, runner beans and tomatoes?

Let us start by looking at seeds.

# Working with Seeds

There are many activities that you can do with the very young around this theme. In the film on a number of occasions you will see the children scooping, picking and selecting different types of seeds.

**Pumpkin Seeds:** The children pick out and collect pumpkin seeds. They use a mixture of spoons and their hands. It is great to get them to handle the large fresh seeds so that they will be able to feel how moist they are. All kinds of conversations can be held about the texture, colour, smell and how the seed will become another pumpkin. There are a terrific range of coloured and textured pumpkins to choose from when they are in season. This activity also gives you the opportunity to carry out further work such as using the pumpkin seeds in decorative art or to eat the pumpkin flesh in soup. In the film, the children plant the various seeds in compost to take them home and watch them grow.

Gourds provide another good source for large seeds and for developing cutting skills. They have interesting textures for the children to handle.

Later in the film you see the children using a range of sizes of tweezers to pick various vegetable and fruit seeds. This is a great way of developing their hand-eye co-ordination. They can also compare the size of the seeds to the vegetables they become.

Cress is a good seed to work with as it grows so quickly and has an interesting taste. Shredded paper, cotton pads and plastic cups are prepared. In the film the children discover the importance of water to make their food grow.

You will see in the film that there is always plenty of supplementary material to support each activity. Using children's picture books that explore the natural world helps. Many can be found in your local library and in bookshops.

## **What can we grow in our garden?**

In the film the children create a visual chart to put on the wall of what they could grow in their garden. Plenty of printed reference material (such as seed catalogues) has been prepared for the children to cut and paste. At the same time the adult records comments from the children about what they would like to grow. This gives the opportunity to discuss what can and cannot be grown in our climate.

## **Potting Up**

Set up trays up with compost, pots and trowels. The children are encouraged to fill a pot, put their seed in, cover it up and water. Each pot is labeled with their name, so the children can follow the process of the plant growing. It is important for them to handle the earth and to be encouraged to be responsible for the care of their plant.

## **Now it's time to grow our food**

You do not need a great deal of space to grow some of your own food. At Highfields, plants are grown in pots, old tyres, grow bags and garden plots. Everything is labeled with a picture of what the seedling will grow into.

The staff member describes how a potato grows under the ground and how the eyes on the potato will become roots. Discuss different ways the plants will be used. At home how do the children eat their potatoes: mashed, roasted, boiled, fried or as crisps?

It is good to have outdoor activity, fresh air and exercise in weeding, digging, planting, watering and caring for the food you will eat.

## **Painting, Printing and Drawing**

Most of the activities shown in the film can be supplemented by variations of drawing or painting. Having easels is great, but not essential. Use paint in different ways - fingerpainting, using a brush, or painting cut sections of fruit or vegetables and printing with them. Encourage the children to observe fruit or vegetables in front of them, to record the colours and shapes carefully.

## **Games**

There are many commercial games with food themes that can be bought to educate children about food types, such as 'Food bingo'. In the film they are playing Pelmanism, memory game with fruit cards.

## **Faces and Bodies**

Here is a fun activity to stimulate the imagination and involve handling food. The children use vegetable peelings or seeds to create a face or a body. Show them paintings of artist Archimboldo, who made up portraits of seasonal faces using fruit and vegetables!

## **Grocer's Shop**

Create the shapes of vegetables to be displayed in a basket with crunched up newspaper covered with coloured tissue paper and cellotape. Each child creates a vegetable to discuss later when all the children gather together at group time.

## **Peter Rabbit**

There are many different Beatrix Potter books available that can generate activities around the theme of food. In the film, staff discuss what vegetables Peter Rabbit ate and encourage the children to handle and taste the food as well. They create a collage of printed images of vegetables related to the story. Throughout all these activities the staff are discussing with the children the benefits of fresh vegetables.

### **Music**

Developing a sound track with the children to depict the growth cycle can be fun. What instrument best describes rain, sun and a plant growing up out of the soil?

### **Group Discussion Time**

Throughout each session's activities many 'one to one' discussions take place. At group time the children gather for a short time when the staff reflect in detail the activity they have just finished. In one example in the film you see a group of children enacting the growth cycle of a seed. Later in the film there is a group discussion about why our bodies need vegetables and fruit?

### **Surveys**

You can make a survey of what the children's favourite fruit or vegetables are and at the end add them up and see which is the most popular. In the film they are using pictures of popular fruit and vegetables.

## **Seed Packets**

Each child makes and decorates their own stapled envelope to contain seeds. Using a range of bought seed packets the children choose which seeds they want to pack into their envelope to later plant out.

## **Explore and Examine Food**

It is good to have a close look at fresh food. The children examine the parsley using magnifying glasses and explain what they have seen. They can then record what they have seen in artwork.

## **Snack Times**

Snack times are good opportunities to try new tastes and textures. Once again this activity provides an opportunity for the children to share their thoughts about the food.

## **Making Plate Pictures of Food**

The children stick pictures of their favourite fruit and vegetables onto a paper plate. Once again this is an opportunity to talk about healthy food options.

Create personal snack mats - cut out a plate shape onto which the children draw a range of fruit or vegetables. These are then laminated.

Prepare collages on paper plates with pictures of unhealthy meals and healthy meals. Discuss with the children the differences between them.

## **A Rainbow of Food**

Fruit and vegetables have a fantastic range of colours. The children cut and paste images of vegetables and fruit onto the bands of a rainbow.

As well as teaching the names of colours, this is another way to encourage children to eat a variety of fruit and vegetables.

## **What's on a Label?**

The children are shown the writing on the side of a cereal packet. They look at how sugar and salt and other ingredients are displayed. There is a simple discussion about how these ingredients can affect their health. Put a display on the wall showing popular drinks alongside polythene bags with the amount of sugar each contains.

You can see a more detailed explanation of label information on one of our accompanying films in the series 'What Am I Eating?'

## **Cooking**

Children enjoy cooking. At Highfields, the children are often involved in making soups and snacks with plenty of fresh ingredients. In the film you see them making spring rolls and pizza. They make choices about what to put in the roll or on the pizza and talk about what they have chosen.

The children learn many skills through this activity and create a visual feast and tasty result.

## **Conclusion**

Food is central to our lives. Making decisions about the right kind of food today will benefit you and your children in the future. We hope that these four films and accompanying materials will support you in this.

You will find our contact details on our website [www.ko-an.org](http://www.ko-an.org)