

Healthy Celebrations

There are many opportunities for celebration throughout the year, from birthdays to holidays to other special occasions that may occur. Food and beverages are often a part of celebrations, but they don't have to be the center of attention. With a few easy changes, the focus at parties can shift from unhealthy food to healthy fun!

There's nothing wrong with having treats on occasion. Everything can fit into a healthy diet when consumed in moderation. Keep in mind, though, that each child's birthday can mean multiple celebrations: one at home with family, a party with friends, and then another at school or child care. Food doesn't always have to be part of parties. Instead, find ways to celebrate a birthday & recognize a child on their special day.

- Make a sign, sash, crown, button, or badge for the birthday child.
- Let the birthday child be the teacher's assistant for the day. They can do special tasks like make deliveries to the office or be the line leader.
- Let the birthday child choose an activity or game.
- Play an indoor game of the student's choice.
- Let activities such as dancing, games, crafts, or singing be the focus rather than food.
- Talk to children about the reasons for the healthy makeover, and involve them in the party planning.
- Highlight healthy practices in the newsletter or website.
- Celebrate a child's cultural heritage with traditional crafts, games, and stories.
- Replace the "cupcake tradition" with something new—for instance, drawing a birthday mural, creating a birthday hat, or other special activity.
- Celebrate birthdays once a month or combine the month's birthdays with a national cultural celebration.

Ideas for Healthier Celebrations:

- Have a scavenger hunt for items or information related to the party theme.
- Provide "free choice" activity time at the end of the day.
- Provide extra recess or play time.
- Celebrate creatively by setting up craft stations and playing music in the background. Ask parents to provide the supplies such as clay, craft paper, pencils, markers, paints, and stickers.
- Plan special party games.
- Have a dance party.
- Pick a children's book related to the party theme. Ask a special guest or a parent to come in and read it.
- Allow children a trip to the treasure box (parents can help supply it with small toys, books, note pads, paints, pencils, bookmarks, stickers, etc.)
- Check with child nutrition staff to see if they are able to provide fresh items or other healthy snacks for a reasonable fee.

Ideas for Healthy Party Snacks:

- Fruit smoothies
- Trail mix
- Fruit kabobs
- Yogurt parfaits with non-fat or low-fat yogurt, granola, and fruit
- Angel food cake topped with fresh fruit
- Low-fat popcorn
- Low-fat pudding
- Applesauce or other fruit cups
- Raw veggies served with low-fat dip like salad dressing or hummus
- Berries with low-fat whipped topping
- Bananas or strawberries with a low-fat yogurt dip
- Graham crackers with jam or apple butter
- Fresh apple slices with caramel or yogurt dip
- Raisins or dried fruit such as bananas, apples, peaches, apricots, plums, etc.
- Whole grain tortilla chips with salsa and/or guacamole
- Whole grain crackers with reduced-fat cheese
- Frozen yogurt tubes

Additional Resources:

USDA Smart Snack in Schools:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smart-snacks-school>

USDA Smart Snack Calculator:

<https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/calculator/>

Arizona Department of Education Comprehensive School Wellness Program:

<https://www.azed.gov/wellness/csw>

CFSD Student Wellness Policy:

<https://policy.azsba.org/asba/browse/catalina/catalina/JL>