



Vital Veggies for Kids

by Jane Easton, Food & Cookery Co-ordinator, Vegetarian & Vegan Foundation (VVF)

Despairing about your family's diet? Don't! While it seems that many older children are still being refuseniks when it comes to healthy school meal options, the same report suggests that younger children are starting to move towards healthier foods – proving that we can turn around eating patterns! Here are some tried and tested ideas.

Get the kids cooking. Most kids love it and are more likely to eat food they've helped to prepare – we know this from doing hundreds of school talks!

Serve vegetables

- blended in soups
- thinly cut and stir-fried or lightly steamed with a nice Chinese-style sauce
- raw veggie chunks eg carrot and red pepper strips dipped in mild salsa or hummus
- salads with a nice dressing. (Iceberg lettuce doesn't count!)

Some people have a genetic aversion to cruciferous vegetables like

broccoli, making the veg taste bitter to them – solve by adding a little salt or soya sauce, as in a stir-fry.

Serve more veg than fruit (minimum 3 veg plus but no more than 2 fruit per day, including fruit juice)* and ensure they eat a range of coloured veg – red, yellow, orange, green.

Include more pulses (beans, lentils and peas), because:

- they are full of protein, iron and other goodies
- one portion (only half a cup) makes up one of their Five a Day.

how?

Beans on toast, lentil dahl, mild beany chilli etc are simple ways of doing it – and if they really hate 'em, blend them in soup!

- Make a gradual switch to wholegrain versions of rice, flour, pasta etc. Even do half and half to start off with.
- Make sure children are hungry when they sit down to a meal. If they refuse a main meal, don't allow them to fill up with dessert or junk foods.

Junky snack foods dull kids' appetites and their high sugar and fat content distorts tastebuds so they are unlikely to go for healthier options. Keep such snacks as a very occasional treat.

Healthy snack ideas

- vegetable pate and crackers
- raw veggie sticks with dips
- dried and fresh fruit (but see note below*)
- nuts and seeds
- A simple sandwich on wholemeal or granary bread

Finally, veggie and vegan diets are one of the best things you can do for your children. Check out 'Veggie Health for Kids' in the May 2008 edition of Yoga & Health, pages 40-41.

Caution:

babies and young children shouldn't be fed too much fruit or high fibre foods as these fill them up and stop them from eating the more calorie/protein-dense foods needed for growth. See the VVF's Mother & Baby Guide for more details – free to download <http://www.vegetarian.org.uk/guides/mother.html> or £1.90 from VVF, 8 York Court, Wilder Street, Bristol BS2 8QH

For more detailed information on vegetarian and vegan nutrition, contact the VVF for evidence-based materials, free from www.vegetarian.org.uk. Just click on Resources. Or ring us: 0117 970 5190. The US-based Physicians for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) also has a well-balanced article plus recipes [HYPERLINK "http://www.kidsgethealthy.org/order/Nutrition_for_Kids.pdf"](http://www.kidsgethealthy.org/order/Nutrition_for_Kids.pdf) http://www.kidsgethealthy.org/order/Nutrition_for_Kids.pdf



Scrummy Stir-fry

Serves 2

Good served with a ready-made Chinese sauce or just add a little soya sauce, water and cornflour to the stir-fry and bring to the boil before serving.

Couscous or wholemeal noodles, cooked according to packet

1/2 tbsp olive oil

1 packet tofu, cut into chunks – plain or smoked

1 tsp ground ginger

1 tsp dried coriander

1/2 tsp dried mixed herbs

1/2 tsp dried cumin (optional)

1/2 stock cube dissolved in 1/2 cup of boiling water

Plus, choose a few from this list:

- Cashew nuts
- Carrots and celery, cut into matchsticks
- Broccoli florets
- Sugar snap peas
- Red pepper and mushrooms, sliced
- Cabbage, shredded
- Spinach
- Beansprouts
- Garlic, peeled and crushed

- 1 Put couscous/noodles on to cook first. Drain and keep warm.
- 2 Warm oil and add tofu.
- 3 Coat tofu with ginger, coriander, mixed herbs, cumin and stock.
- 4 Gently turning at intervals, fry until brown and crispy.
- 5 Add the cashew nuts and all the vegetables except the beansprouts and cook for 3-4 minutes.
- 6 Add the beansprouts and fry for a further 1 minute.
- 7 Add garlic to stir-fry and serve with couscous/rice/noodles.

Sausage Pasta Salad

Serves 2

Pasta (enough for two)

1/2 a veggie stock cube

4-5 veggie sausages, cooked and sliced

Celery, chopped

Beansprouts

Spinach leaves

Red pepper, chopped

Lettuce leaves, chopped

Cucumber, diced

Tomato, chopped

Onion rings

1 garlic clove, chopped

1 tbs chives, finely chopped

1 tbs parsley, finely chopped

1 tbs olive oil

1/2 tbs vinegar

1 tbs lemon juice

Lots of black pepper

Salt to taste

- 1 Cook the pasta according to the instructions on the packet but add the stock cube to the water whilst it cooks – you can cook the sausages at the same time too if you wish.
- 2 Let pasta cool in a big bowl.
- 3 Add sausages, salad ingredients and herbs.
- 4 In a separate bowl, mix the olive oil, vinegar, lemon juice, black pepper and salt.
- 5 Pour over the other ingredients and mix well.

Recipes from *Snappy Veggie Cooking with the Mollster*, written by kids for kids. Download it free from <http://www.viva.org.uk/guides/snappy-veggie-guide.pdf> or order a hard copy for just £1 plus p&p from Viva! 8 York Court, Wilder Street, Bristol BS2 8QH 0117 944 1000 Mon-Fri 9-6. Viva!'s website also offers some fun ways in – check out www.viva.org.uk/recipes/youth.html



vegetarian
cuisine the great big veg challenge

by Charlotte Hume



Dandelion Tart

I made this dandelion tart baked in a heart-shaped tin as a welcome home dish for Alex.

Serves 6

500 g (1 lb) ready-made shortcrust pastry

For the filling

A large knob of butter

1 medium onion, finely chopped

Smoked paprika

4 handfuls of small dandelion leaves, chopped

3 eggs, beaten

1 egg yolk

150 ml (0.25 pint) crème fraîche

150 g (5 oz) Cheshire cheese, grated, or other white crumbly cheese

Salt and freshly ground pepper

23 cm (9 in.) flan dish (or heart-shaped tin), lightly greased

Baking beans

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F) Gas 6.

2 Roll out the pastry on a floured surface to a depth of 5 mm

(0.25 in.) and line the prepared flan dish and chill for 10 minutes.

- 3 Bake the pastry blind by placing a large circle of baking parchment on top of the pastry weighed down with baking beans. Bake for 10 minutes then remove the paper and beans. Return to the oven for 5 minutes until lightly browned.
- 4 Remove and let it cool. Reduce the oven temperature to 180°C (350°F) Gas 4.
- 5 Sauté the onion on a gentle heat until it is soft. Add a couple of pinches of smoked paprika.
- 6 In a small pan, melt a knob of butter and when it has just melted add your dandelion leaves, stirring until they wilt. Don't cook for longer than 30 seconds.
- 7 Layer the pastry case evenly with the onion and season. Scatter the dandelion leaves evenly over the case, reserving a few.
- 8 In a bowl, mix together the eggs, crème fraîche and cheese and season. Pour over the onion and dandelions and scatter the few remaining dandelion leaves on the top.
- 9 Bake in the oven for 30-35 minutes until slightly brown and set. Serve warm or cold with salad.



Rhubarb and Oat Crumble

Eating pudding in a vegetable challenge is not an everyday occurrence and I was more than happy to oblige with the willing rhubarb.

Serves 6

75 g (3 oz) caster sugar

Finely grated zest and juice of 1 large orange

1 kg (2 lb) rhubarb stalks, cut into 3-cm (1.25-in) pieces

For the topping

175 g (6 oz) butter

1 tsp ground cinnamon

175 g (6 oz) brown sugar

25 g (7.5 oz) whole porridge oats

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F) Gas 4.

- 2 Place the caster sugar, orange juice and zest with the rhubarb pieces in a pan over a medium heat, stirring for 3-4 minutes. Pour into an ovenproof dish.
- 3 To make the topping, melt the butter in a large pan. Remove from the heat and stir in the cinnamon and brown sugar. Then add the

porridge oats and stir so they are well-coated.

- 4 Evenly spread the oat topping over the rhubarb and bake in the oven for 35-40 minutes.

The topping should be golden brown and the rhubarb bubbling. Serve with a dollop of ice cream, cream or yoghurt.

Freddie's Favourite 10/10

Oven-baked Swede Fries

Disguised as French fries, the children devoured these swede nibbles in minutes.

Serves 4 as a side dish

2 swedes or rutabaga

2-3 tbsp olive oil

1 tsp sea salt

A handful of fresh thyme sprigs, chopped

- 1 Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F) Gas 6.
- 2 Peel the swedes and cut in half. Slice each half into even slices, 1.5 cm (0.75in) thick. Then slice those into sticks, like French fries.
- 3 Place them on a baking tray and add the olive oil. Mix around with your hands so that the swede sticks are well-coated. Sprinkle the sea salt over evenly with the thyme. Place in the oven and bake for approximately 20 minutes. Halfway through cooking, turn the sticks so that both sides cook. Take care to make sure the fries become crispy but do not burn. Serve hot with some ketchup for dipping.



Reproduced with kind permission from THE GREAT BIG VEG CHALLENGE by Charlotte Hume, published by Vermilion, £16.99 and available on SPECIAL READER OFFER for £14.99 (inc free p&p UK only) by Tel: 01206 255 800 and quoting Ref: Yoga & Health.

An informative and fun book, packed full of practical tips, suggestions and recipes which aim to get even the most veggie resistant youngster eagerly