

# Growing Healthy Families

## Celebrations Guidance Document

Creative ideas for celebrations and social events



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# Introduction

This document has been designed to support pre-schools, nurseries, and childminders in providing healthier food and activities for celebrations and community events.

Food is an incredible way to connect to culture and learn more about each other. However, it's no secret that food shared at celebrations are typically higher in fat, sugar and salt. This doesn't reflect the Growing Healthy Families (GHF) ethos or adhere to the EYFS Nutrition Guidance (2025). Children under 5 will often experience these indulgences at home, so we ask that as early years providers, you keep your establishment as a protected space for cultivating healthy practices. This includes considering nutrition, oral health and physical activity when planning celebrations.

This document provides ideas and inspiration for planning celebrations whilst providing balanced, tooth-friendly food and non-food activities.

## Developing a celebrations policy

With any change in practice the best way to ensure that everyone, including parents and other professionals, are aware of any changes is to write a policy. You may already have a healthy eating policy (or similar) but we encourage you to develop a specific celebrations policy.

By developing a policy for celebrations you can ensure that any actions are agreed upon by all parties involved, which ultimately ensures consistent practice across the whole setting. We encourage you to seek feedback and input from staff and parents in producing this policy and reviewing it annually.

The way you celebrate birthdays and cultural, religious and social events should be addressed as a part of this policy. This should include what foods are encouraged, which foods should be avoided, and how children will be made to feel special on their birthdays. It is also worth remembering that celebrations do not always have to be celebrated with food. Non-food based activities are just as fun and can teach children about different religious and cultural celebrations and festivals.

This could be included in an Early Years Health Policy that encompasses many aspects of children's health: nutrition, oral health, physical activity. For more detail on how to structure this and what to include, please find a template on the GHF webpage.

# Meeting the needs of all children

When organising events for children and families, it is important to consider everyone's needs. Here are some definitions adapted from the EYFS nutrition guidance (2025) to refer to when catering for early years.

## Definitions

**Food allergies:** Reactions to certain foods that can lead to life-threatening conditions or death.

The most common allergens are: **celery**, **cereals containing gluten** (such as wheat, barley and oats and some flours), **crustaceans** (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters), **eggs**, **fish**, **lupin** (such as bread made using lupin seeds), **milk**, **molluscs** (such as mussels and oysters), **mustard**, **peanuts**, **sesame**, **soybeans**, **sulphur dioxide and sulphites** (sometimes found in dried fruits and fruit juices), and **tree nuts** (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).

**Food intolerances:** Usually not life-threatening response to eating certain foods that can lead to pain and discomfort.

**Veganism or plant-based diet:** A person that avoids foods from animal products such as dairy, eggs, meat, fish and honey. This can be due to animal welfare, environmental, religious or health reasons.

**Vegetarianism:** A person that avoids meat and fish but can eat eggs and dairy. This can be due to animal welfare, environment, religious or health reasons.

**Pescetarianism:** A person that avoids meat but can eat fish/seafood, dairy and eggs. This can be due to environmental, religious, health or other reasons.

**Religious preferences:**

- Eating only halal foods
- Avoiding pork and beef
- Eating kosher
- Eating or avoiding specific foods on specific days

# Creating a balanced celebrations menu

Generally, we recommend foods offered at celebrations to be balanced and include a combination of starchy carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables, protein sources and dairy just as you would for a non-celebratory meal. See the Eatwell Guide below, as a way to visualise the different food groups.



Adapted from the Eatwell Guide (PHE, 2026)

## Limit:

- deep-fried foods (crisps, takeaway foods)
- heavily iced cakes
- sweets and chocolate
- juices and fizzy drinks (including 'no added sugar' drinks)
- high salt and/or fatty cuts of meat

## When planning food for parties or events...

Provide	Avoid

# Ideas for buffet foods

## Cold Finger Foods

### Fruit & Vegetables

- Create your own fruit platters, try cutting fresh fruit pieces such as pineapple, melon, berries, apples & pears and serve with a plain yoghurt dip or on their own.
- Fruit kebabs are fun to make with the kids, they also look great, and you can make mini sizes using kebab sticks adding 2- 3 fruit pieces.
- Create your own vegetable platters; try carrot, celery, cucumber, courgette, peppers or cherry tomatoes.



### Starchy carbohydrates

- Pitta bread strips
- Homemade pitta crisps
- Toast fingers
- Toasted Turkish bread, focaccia or panini strips
- Breadsticks
- Rice cakes
- Crackers
- Oat cakes
- Naan breads
- Pretzels
- Cheese twists
- Homemade wedges
- Pumpkin scones
- Cheesy vegetable muffins
- Scones



### Proteins

- Sliced chicken breast, turkey, roast beef or ham
- Wafer thin slices of chicken, turkey or ham
- Frittata or quiche
- Boiled eggs
- Tofu - can be marinated or seasoned and roasted
- Hummus (or other bean-based dip)



### Dairy foods

- Cheese cubes, try cheddar, red Leicester, edam, mozzarella, feta cheese and create a cheese board!
- Cream cheese - can be used as a spread or dip
- Cottage cheese - can be used as a spread or a dip
- Plain/Greek-style yoghurt or soya alternative, use as a dip with fresh fruit



# Ideas for buffet foods

## Sandwiches

Freshly made sandwiches are a great way to provide healthy foods that are more filling than other finger foods. Choose a variety of white, wholemeal and seeded sliced breads as well as pitta, tortilla wraps and rotis.



## Try the following healthy fillings:

### Vegan

- Hummus, roasted red pepper
- Mashed avocado and cannellini bean spread
- Smoked tofu and cucumber
- Crumbled tofu 'egg' mayonnaise and cress
- Falafel, hummus and tomato

### Vegetarian

- Cheddar cheese & tomato
- Cottage cheese, cucumber & chives
- Egg, mayonnaise & lettuce or cress
- Cream cheese & cucumber
- Avocado, cream cheese, tomato & lettuce
- Mozzarella, tomato and basil

### Fish

- Tuna & sweetcorn
- Tinned salmon, spring onions & cucumber
- Smoked salmon, cream cheese & cucumber
- Sardine and avocado

### Meat

- Chicken & sweetcorn
- Chicken tikka & cucumber
- Roast beef, horseradish & salad
- Festive turkey and roast veg



# Ideas for buffet foods

## Dips

Pre-prepared dips can sometimes contain sugar, it's best to check the ingredients list. These dips could be enjoyed with pitta, crackers, flatbreads or vegetable sticks:

- Hummus – Middle Eastern chickpea-based dip with tahini, lemon and garlic.
- Tzatziki – Greek yoghurt-based dip containing cucumber and herbs.
- Guacamole – Avocado based dip with onion, coriander and tomatoes.
- Salsa – Tomato-based sauce or dip. Shop-bought salsas are often high in sugar – make your own by blending roasted tomatoes, onion, garlic, coriander and lime juice.
- Raita – South Asian yoghurt-based dip or sauce with vegetables and often served with biryani or other rice dishes.
- Butter bean spread – Thick dip, similar to hummus but using a different bean and seasonings.
- Cottage cheese dip – Add fresh or dried herbs and spices and/or garlic to add additional flavour.
- Baba ghanoush – Greek aubergine dip with garlic and tahini.



## Hot Finger Foods

These can also be served cold!

- Baked vegetable samosas
- Spinach & cheese parcels
- Mini quiches or tarts
- Potato skins or wedges
- Pizza slices
- Falafel balls
- Savoury meatballs or rissoles
- Chicken
- Vegetable frittatas
- Quorn sausages
- Vegetable dunkers
- Stuffed cheesy mushrooms
- Roasted tofu chunks
- Black bean quesadillas



## Ideas for buffet foods

### Hot main dishes

Not all foods have to be finger foods. Consider making dishes that can be served up and eaten with cutlery – these types of meals lend themselves to being naturally balanced and tasty.

- Tuna pasta bake
- Chicken curry
- Beef stew with dumplings
- Lentil shepherd's pie
- Macaroni and cheese
- Chicken, paneer or tofu biryani
- Channa masala
- Fish pie
- Chinese tomato egg stir-fry
- Potato and veggie gratin
- Quorn lasagna



### Remember, when cooking for children under 5...

- Use as little oil as possible
- Grill or bake instead of frying
- Limit ready made sauces, condiments, stocks, gravy etc.
- Do not add salt
- Ensure all food is cut to an appropriate size to avoid choking.

Please see the guidance from the [Food Standards Agency](#) for more information.



# Ideas for buffet foods

## Salads

- Green salad with tomatoes, carrots & cucumber
- Pasta salad with tomato & herbs
- Coleslaw
- Cous cous salad with roasted vegetables and tahini dressing.
- Potato salad with a tangy garlic and dill yoghurt dressing
- Shirazi salad with finely chopped tomato, cucumber onion and fresh herbs
- Grated carrot salad with ginger, garlic and sesame oil



## Barbeques

When offering BBQ-style food on a budget, try to offer healthier options. Shop-bought burgers tend to use fatty cuts of beef high in saturated fat, and hot dogs tend to be poor nutritional value. See below for some ideas.

- Seasoned chicken wings, drumsticks or thighs
- Corn on the cob
- Tofu and vegetable skewers
- Vegetable & meat kebabs
- Sausages (min 60% meat)
- Homemade burgers: lean beef mince or mashed black beans/green lentils with herbs and spices
- Barbequed jacket potatoes

## What about sweet foods?

If you are intending to hold your event at a mealtime and would like to include some sweet foods, try to offer foods with no added sugar (which includes avoiding added honey, syrups or other sweeteners) such as plain yoghurt and fruit.

You could offer fruit arranged on a platter, or as a salad, or even cut large fruits such as watermelon into a fruit "cake". Exotic fruits such as passion fruit, pomegranate, kiwi fruit, or lychees can make your fruit selection fun and interesting. For healthier milk-based or fruit/vegetable-based alternatives, contact us and we can work with you to develop suitable recipes. These could be foods such as:

- Apple flapjacks (fruit-based)
- Banana bread (fruit-based)
- Oat, carrot & raisin cookies (fruit and vegetable-based)
- Spiced rice pudding (milk-based)
- Oaty berry crumble and custard (fruit and milk-based)



# Healthy Swaps

Popular party food	Healthier alternative
Crisps and fried chips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitta crisps</li> <li>• Homemade chips or wedges</li> <li>• Breadsticks</li> </ul>
Hot dogs and burgers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roasted or barbequed chicken thighs and drumsticks</li> <li>• Vegetable skewers</li> <li>• Homemade meat/tofu kebabs</li> <li>• Sausages (min 60% meat)</li> <li>• Homemade burgers</li> </ul>
Cakes, pastries and other sweet treats	<p>We don't encourage sweet party food due to the risk of tooth decay when sweet foods are eaten between meals. Some healthier alternatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh fruit (try adding in some less common fruits to keep it exciting).</li> <li>• Fruit kebabs</li> <li>• Yoghurt with thawed frozen berries</li> </ul> <p>For guidance on other low sugar desserts, please contact the GHF team.</p>
Ice lollies	<p>Try freezing pieces of fruit such as mango or pineapple on a stick (making sure to cut fruit in a way to prevent choking). Make homemade ice lollies with plain/Greek yoghurt and fruit.</p>



# Smart shopping tips

## Top tips for buying food in supermarkets

- Look for a traffic light label on the front and choose products that have mostly green and amber colours.
- Choose savoury products low in sugar (particularly if serving food between meals); they should have no more than 5g of sugar per 100g of product.
- Steer clear of foods labelled as 'party foods' – they will be higher in fat, sugar & salt and will be more expensive.
- Look at the supermarket own brand products; they are often lower in fat, sugar and salt in comparison to their branded counterparts.
- Choose products that contain vegetables as these will naturally be lower in fat and will be more nutritious.

## Keeping in budget

Even when catering for large numbers, there are a few things you can do to help keep the costs down:

- Choose fruits, vegetables and meats when they are in season.
- Use value brands from supermarkets as often as possible.
- Ask local shops or businesses to sponsor your event by donating some money, food or gifts for the day.
- Ask parents to provide food or gifts for the event. Any food gifts should comply with GHF standards (such as a selection of savoury dips, a cheese selection with crackers).



## A word on food safety

All members of staff involved with food preparation should hold a valid food safety certificate.

When involved in any kind of food preparation you should always carry out the following simple measures:

- Store raw meat separately from cooked meat.
- Regularly check sell-by dates on food and discard if out of date.
- Clearly label foods with their ingredients
- Store foods and items containing allergens separately from other foods
- Washing hands regularly
- Use colour-coded equipment and utensils, or practices such as labelling a child's cup with their name if they have a milk allergy
- Have separate preparation areas for foods that are allergens.
- Have rules about visitors bringing food into the setting

### **Tips for barbequing**

- If cooking for lots of people, try cooking meat in the oven and finish off on the barbecue.
- Keep salads, cheeses and dips in the fridge until the last minute.

### **Parties and Buffets**

- Wait until the last minute to take perishable foods, such as sandwiches and meat, out of the fridge.
- Do not leave food out for more than two hours.

For further resources on food safety please see the resources in the 'Safer eating' section on the 'Useful links and helpful information' page (page 32).

# Event and Campaigns Calendar

This table contains a non-exhaustive list of cultural and health events or campaigns that are relevant to young children and their families.

Month	Events and Campaigns
January	1 <sup>st</sup> : New Years Day (Gregorian calendar)
February	14 <sup>th</sup> : Valentines Day Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day) Lunar New Year (Chinese new year) Children's Mental Health Week
March	Holi Festival (Hindu festival of spring, love and new life) World Book Day British Science Week Mothers Day St Patricks Day (Patron Saint of Ireland) St Davids Day (Patron Saint of Wales) Eid al-Fitr (Islamic festival marking the end of Ramadan) International Womens Day Food Waste and Action Week
April	Easter Sunday (Christian holiday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus) St Georges Day (Patron Saint of England) World Health Day Passover (Jewish Festival commemorating the Exodus from Egypt)
May	May Day Eid al-Adha (Islamic festival of sacrifice) Wesak (Buddhist festival, first day of full moon in May) Shavuot: (Jewish festival of weeks) Walk to work week National smiles month
June	Shavuot: (Jewish festival of weeks) National Food Safety week

# Event and Campaigns Calendar

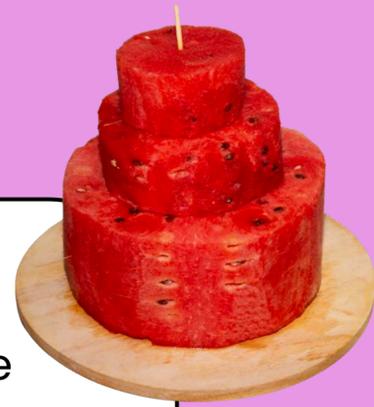
Month	Events and campaigns
July	Sports day
August	World Breastfeeding Week
September	Ethiopian New Year's Day Charity Coffee Morning (Macmillan) Snack-tember (British Nutrition Foundation)
October	Black History Month Harvest Festival (Christian celebration of annual harvest) Dussehra (Hindu festival celebrating the victory of good over evil) Yom Kippur (Jewish holiday, Day of Atonement) Sukkot – Jewish Festival Mid Autumn Festival / Moon Festival Diwali (Hindu Festival of lights) Halloween (Christian holiday marking the eve of All Saints' Day) Stoptober Cycle to School Week
November	Guy Fawkes Day World science day World diabetes day Children in Need
December	Hanukkah (Jewish Festival of Lights) Christmas (Christian holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus)



**Food and non-food activity ideas for celebrations**



# Birthdays



Birthdays are celebrated in most cultures. Some religions, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, don't actively celebrate birthdays, and some Muslims may not celebrate birthdays. Most religions celebrate the birth of particular noted people, such as Christians with the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day.

## Non food-based activity ideas:

- Classroom memory game: place school-related items on a desk and allow the children 30 seconds to look at them, then remove the items and see how many they can remember.
- Birthday hats and badges
- Pin the tail on the donkey
- Musical statues
- Make birthday certificates
- Ask parents to bring in plants or flowers to be displayed
- Make the child feel special by allowing them to pick a physical activity they enjoy (such as the parachute)

## Food-based activity ideas:

- Baking savoury muffins or scones
- Exotic fruit tasting: try pomegranate, mango, pineapple, lychee, sharon fruit, or kiwi
- Birthday child gets to choose a fruit to add to snack
- Create a watermelon "cake" - 2 watermelons cut and shaped into 2 tiers of a cake that can be sliced in a similar way.
- Create snack art - make faces or patterns with fruit and other healthy foods



# Bonfire night

## What is Bonfire Night?

Bonfire Night, also known as Guy Fawkes Night is the evening of November 5th is when models of men, called "guys," are burned on large fires, often accompanied by firework displays. This is in memory of the failed attempt by Guy Fawkes to destroy the Houses of Parliament in London in 1605 with explosives.

"Remember, Remember, the 5th November, gunpowder, treason, and plot."

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Design and paint a colourful firework
- Make your own 'guy' for the bonfire
- Create a fireworks display using different coloured tissue paper, wrapping paper, glitter glue, glitter pens, and sequins
- Make Catherine wheels or star shapes from play dough

## Food-based activity ideas

- Make a warming soup, stew or curry.
- Have a bonfire BBQ (see the BBQ ideas in the ideas for buffet foods section)
- Make Catherine wheel sandwiches
- Cut sandwiches into star shapes
- Make 'bonfire' inspired food that uses yellow, orange and red ingredients fillings such as cheese, red and orange peppers, and tomatoes.



# Chinese New Year



## The story behind Chinese New Year

Buddha (Jade Emperor) invited all the animals to join him for a New Year's celebration, but only 12 animals turned up. To reward them, the Buddha named each year after these animals. These include Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig.

## What is Chinese New Year?

Chinese New Year is the most important holiday in the Chinese calendar. It is a time of giving, feasting, and celebrating. The celebration marks change—out with the old and in with the new! It is a 15-day holiday starting on the first day of a new moon and ending with the full moon on the day of the Lantern Festival.

The date of Chinese New Year changes every year (usually in January or early February). The calendar follows a 12-year cycle, with each year named after a different animal. Traditionally, Chinese people wear red or bright colours, as it was once believed that red could scare away evil spirits and bad fortune.

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Become the Chinese Dragon! Get the children to help decorate a large dragon mask and attach it to an old blanket using staples or tape. Children can take turns being the head of the dragon while others go underneath the blanket to make the body and tail. Attach more blankets to make an even longer dragon!
- Create a mask for the animal that represents the year you were born.
- Make money wallets from old wrapping paper and tape; get the children to paint them red.
- Ask the children to dress in red, orange, or gold. Alternatively, provide dressing-up clothes in these colours. Children can also add decorations to their outfits using coloured paper.



## Food-based activity ideas

- Make crispy baked spring rolls
- Steamed vegetable dumplings (these can be purchased ready-made from any Chinese supermarket)
- Cook Chinese-style noodles
- Chinese fruit tasting: mandarins, kiwi fruit, star fruit, or lychees



# Christmas



## What is Christmas?

Christmas is a Christian festival where countries all around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on the 25th of December. It was not until Victorian times that ideas such as Father Christmas, Christmas cards, and crackers were added to the celebration.

Today, families celebrate Christmas by putting up Christmas trees or decorations, eating a Christmas dinner, and opening presents.

## Non food-based activity ideas

Make:

- Homemade Christmas cards
- Christmas mobiles
- Christmas crackers
- A handprint snowflake painting or hand and feet reindeer
- A winter collage
- A paper plate snowman
- A pine cone Christmas tree or decoration
- A wooden spoon angel, reindeer, or Santa
- Christmas paper chains
  
- Decorate Christmas baubles
- Sing Christmas carols



## Food-based activity ideas

- Use lots of Christmas fruit like cherries, clementines, or mandarins to make a fruit wreath.
- Make a Christmas dip by layering guacamole, sour cream, and salsa in a glass bowl
- Make Christmas vegetable skewers using courgette or green pepper and tomato. After grilling, add a cube of white cheese such as feta, halloumi, or mozzarella
- Make Christmas pizza breads with half a baguette or an English muffin as a base, topped with green and red vegetables and white cheese
- Try roasting vegetables with a little vegetable oil and Christmas spices such as cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg
- Make healthy options for a Christmas party:
  - Turkey/tofu and roast veg sandwiches
  - Christmas lunch buffet with roast turkey (or herby tofu for vegans and vegetarians), roast potatoes (made with minimal oil), assorted veg and low salt gravy.



# Diwali



## What is Diwali?

Diwali is often referred to as the Festival of Lights. It is one of the most well-known festivals in the Hindu calendar. Diwali is a five-day festival that honours Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Lamps are lit in all public and private places to help Lakshmi find her way into people's homes.

The festival celebrates the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. It is also a time to celebrate one of the Diwali legends, where after fourteen years of exile, Rama and Sita return to Rama's kingdom.

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Create hanging lanterns
- Act out the story of Rama and Sita using masks
- Use coloured powder to make a traditional Diwali decoration called a rangoli (a rangoli is an Indian art form that creates beautiful patterns on the ground out of different coloured sand, flour and minerals or flowers)
- Make lanterns with clay or playdough
- Print out rangoli colouring sheets
- Make a fruit platter arranged in the style of a rangoli.

## Food-based activity ideas:

- Bake shop-bought naan, chapati, or paratha bread
- Make baked vegetable samosas. Contact us for some recipe recommendations.
- Make kheer, a spiced rice pudding (served with a meal, as dessert) with no added sugar, sweetened with raisins.



# Easter



## What is Easter?

Easter is the most important festival in the Christian calendar. It is a time to celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead, three days after he was put to death.

## What is Holy Week?

This is the week leading up to Easter Sunday. It includes Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Passover meal on Maundy Thursday where Jesus broke the bread and drank the wine, and Good Friday when the church mourns the execution of Jesus by crucifixion. Easter is a sign of new life, which is where the egg symbol originated – the oval shape is similar to a raindrop or seed, both very important life-giving elements.

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Action-packed Easter egg hunt
- Make a papier-mâché egg using a blown-up balloon, old newspaper strips, and glue. Use coloured paint and glitter to decorate.
- Make an Easter crown instead of an Easter bonnet!
- Make Easter cards
- Hard-boiled egg decorating

## Food-based activity ideas

Do a cooking activity using eggs and eat at snack time:

- Eggy bread
- Spinach and cheese parcels
- Quiche or frittata with veggies
- Boiled or scrambled eggs
- Scrambled tofu for vegan children or those with an egg allergy.



# Eid

## What is Eid?

There are two Eid celebrations within the Islamic calendar year:

- Eid-ul-Fitr is the three-day holiday that marks the end of Ramadan. Ramadan is a holy month for Muslims that involves fasting from dawn to sunset. Ramadan is considered one of the five pillars of Islam and is a time for Muslims to grow closer to God (Allah). During this time, Muslims focus on prayer, reflection, charity, and community while abstaining from food, water, and other physical needs.
- Eid-ul-Adha is the festival of sacrifice, held to commemorate the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ishmael as an act of obedience to Allah. However, just as Ibrahim was about to kill his son, Allah stopped him and gave him a ram to sacrifice instead.

Eid begins with Muslims going to the mosque to pray and be thankful for what they have received. It is a time for being with family and friends, as well as for sacrifice and thanksgiving. It is obligatory to give a set amount of money to charity during this time.

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Trace the outline of a hand and draw different henna designs, using glitter and glue to make it sparkle.
- Decorate a charity collection jar using glass paints, beads, and glitter.
- Draw crescent moon shapes and decorate them with aluminium foil and glitter.
- Make Eid bunting or Eid cards with the phrase "Eid Mubarak".
- Read Eid stories to teach children about the celebration.

## Food-based activity ideas

- Make vegetable samosas
- Make kebabs
- Serve naan, chapati, or paratha bread with raita (yoghurt dip) at snack time. Alternatively, stuff the breads with cheese, cooked potato & garlic, or herbs (za'atar).



# Fundraising/Macmillan Coffee Mornings

Fundraising is an important part of early years, and it's an great opportunity to teach young children about compassion for others.

Many settings like to take part in fundraising events such as a Macmillan coffee morning, bake sales, and other events that traditionally focus on less healthy, high sugar and high fat foods.

To ensure that messaging around healthy eating is consistent across you setting, we challenge you to change the narrative and give events like this a healthier twist!

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Sponsored physical activity (hike, walk, swim or obstacle course, or another physical activity)
- Dress-up days : World Book Day, Halloween
- Do a sponsored scavenger hunt
- Play 'Guess the name' - this could be a stuffed toy or staff baby photos

## Food-based activity ideas

- Instead of a typical coffee morning, try hosting a breakfast buffet - depending on kitchen facilities this could be scrambled egg, toast, and baked beans or overnight oat pots, granola and yoghurt parfaits, or crumpets, fruit and tea/coffee.
- Instead of a sweet bake sale, sell more savoury foods, baked samosas, spanakopita, focaccia, homemade pizza slices.
- Sell fruit cups with seasonal, less common fruits for example, for autumn: persimmon, pear and blackberries.
- If you want to serve a baked goods, contact us to help you develop a low sugar, fruit-based treat, healthier fruit buns (or hot cross buns in Easter) and banana scones.



# Halloween

## What is Halloween?

Halloween is celebrated on the 31st of October. The celebration of Halloween is thought to relate to the eve of a Celtic festival of the dead called Samhain. The word Halloween comes from "All-Hallows-Even," the night before All Hallows Day.

Halloween is associated with many traditional symbols, such as the carving of jack-o'-lanterns. Traditionally, turnips were used in Ireland and Scotland, but American immigrants began carving pumpkins, which is now a common tradition.

Trick-or-treating is the customary celebration at Halloween, where children go from house to house asking for treats. It is also thought that ghosts and spirits are most active on Halloween!

## Activity ideas

- Make a pumpkin seed necklace
- Handprint and foot ghosts
- Make a paper plate spider or pumpkin
- Make a wooden spoon cat, witch, or monster puppet using felt, eyes, and wool to create your own Halloween characters
- Make a witch's hat
- Make nature potions with berries, spices and flower petals.
- Dress up!

## Food and cooking ideas

- Make sandwiches with savoury spreads cut into popular Halloween shapes
- Make spooky coleslaw with orange carrots, red cabbage, and green cabbage or beans
- Spice up your usual dips such as hummus and tzatziki by putting them in a small hollowed-out pumpkin and painting a scary face on the front
- Make pumpkin scones
- Get creative with snack and meal presentation, see examples below



# Hanukkah



## What is Hanukkah?

Hanukkah, or Chanukah is the Jewish Festival of Lights. It starts on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Kislev (the 9<sup>th</sup> month in the Hebrew calendar) The Hebrew calendar follows the lunar cycle, the holiday begins on a different date each year on our calendar but usually starts in November or December. The festival commemorates Jewish people's struggle for religious freedom and the miracle of 1 days' worth of oil used to light the everlasting light which actually lasted for 8 days after the destruction of Jewish temple.

Each night, Jews will light the Menorah, adding an extra candle each day, reciting special prayers from the Siddur (Jewish prayer book). Other customs include eating fried food (latkes and donuts) which symbolise the long-lasting lamp oil as well as playing a spin top game called dreidel.

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Handprint Menorah: Trace a handprint onto paper and turn the fingers into the candlesticks of the Menorah.
- Make your own mobile based on the Star of David.
- Design a dreidel and have a go at spinning it.
- Decorate your own blank dreidel.

## Food-based activity ideas

- Make potato latkes.
- Hanukkah potato printing: cut a potato into a star shape for stamping.
- Make star-shaped sandwiches.
- Make pizzas with a Hanukka menorah pattern made with veggie slices.



# Mother's day and Father's day

On Mother's day we celebrate and show appreciation for all the things that mothers (and other maternal figures, such as grandmothers and aunts) have done for us and takes place on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent. This celebration has Christian origins in the Middle Ages, originally known as Mothering Sunday, where Christians would visit the church where they were baptised, known as their 'mother church'. Constance Adelaide Smith is credited with popularising the celebration in the early 1900s.

Father's Day is celebrated by honouring fathers and (and other father figures such as uncles and granddads) on the third Sunday of June. Sonora Smart Dodd likely founded the holiday in the early 1900s in the USA, but the day has been more commonly celebrated after the Second World War in the UK.

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Make mother's/father's day cards
- Do activities focused around seasonal flowers (spring flowers for mother's day, summer flowers for father's day).
- Invite a choir leader/singing teacher to host a mothers/fathers singalong session.
- Invite a fitness/dance instructor to run a fun fitness session for either mothers (and other maternal figures) or fathers (and other paternal figures).

## Food-based activity ideas

- Invite mothers/fathers into the setting for a healthy breakfast/coffee morning (See page 25 for ideas of what to serve)
- Host a cooking session (either with mothers/fathers helping or, invite them to relax whilst the children provide them with a tasty cooked meal or platter, made by the children).



# Pancake day



## What is Pancake Day?

Pancake Day is also referred to as Shrove Tuesday. Shrove Tuesday is the last day before Lent in the Christian calendar. It always falls 47 days before Easter.

In the Middle Ages, many people used to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness before the beginning of Lent. Shrove Tuesday is the last day to indulge and use up any foods that are not allowed during Lent. Pancakes are eaten because they contain butter and eggs, which are not allowed during Lent!

## Non food-based activity ideas

- Pancake race 1: Cut out pancakes using plain cardboard and decorate them. Have one for each child. Each child has to race across the room or outside with their pancake on their head. If it falls, they have to return to the start!
- Pancake race 2: Give each child a pan and a cardboard pancake. They must go from one point to another and flip the pancake three times. (Suitable for children aged 3 and up).

## Food-based activity ideas

- Make pancakes with healthy fillings such as fruits, yoghurt, seed butters, ground seeds or try a savoury filling with cheese, spinach and mushrooms.
- Make savoury Korean pancakes with a variety of vegetables. Follow any simple recipe online, being mindful not to add salt or soy sauce and use a modest amount of oil.



# Valentine's day



## What is Valentine's Day?

Valentine's Day is celebrated on the 14th of February each year. It is a day when people show their affection for one another.

The story behind the day is about a priest called Valentine who didn't agree with marriages being illegal thousands of years ago. He was jailed and fell in love with the jailer's blind daughter. While in jail, Valentine cured her blindness. On the 14th of February, before he was taken to be killed, he left her a letter—the first Valentine's card—which read, "Love your Valentine." Unfortunately, historians don't believe this to be true, but it makes a nice story!

## Non food-based activity ideas:

- Good deed pledge: Children are given a piece of paper with the date and 'signed' at the bottom. Then they think of a good deed to compete for a friend or loved one. They either draw a picture to represent the deed or write it down, then sign it as a promise to show this act of kindness.
- Cupid Says: Just like the game Simon Says, but replace "Simon" with "Cupid."
- Make Valentine's card for loved ones.
- Teach children about the heart and run a physical activity where you discuss how the activity affects the heart.

## Food-based activity ideas:

Make heart-shaped....

- Pizza
- Egg toast
- Sandwiches: Make sandwiches with your favourite filling and cut them using a heart-shaped cutter. This would be a nice tea-time activity.



# Useful links and helpful information

## Nutrition Guidance

### Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early\\_years\\_foundation\\_stage\\_nutrition\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early_years_foundation_stage_nutrition_guidance.pdf)

### Eatwell Guide Poster

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bbb790de5274a22415d7fee/Eatwell\\_guide\\_colour\\_edition.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bbb790de5274a22415d7fee/Eatwell_guide_colour_edition.pdf)

## Safer eating

### Guidance for avoiding choking

<https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2021/09/food-safety-advice-on-choking-hazards-in-settings/>

### 14 Most Common Allergens Poster

[https://assets.ctfassets.net/dvmeh832nmjc/1UcJVonGkBHy9IHHNt9GmL/90b081db600d8cad30b870f458a60ed6/Common\\_allergens.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/dvmeh832nmjc/1UcJVonGkBHy9IHHNt9GmL/90b081db600d8cad30b870f458a60ed6/Common_allergens.pdf)

### Free Allergy Awareness Course from the Food Standards Agency

<https://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/>

### Guidance of Food Safety from the Department for Education

<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/food-safety>

### The Safer Food Group

<https://www.thesaferfoodgroup.com/knowledge/do-early-years-settings-need-to-register-as-a-food-business/>

## More activity ideas and resources

### Free resources for lots of different celebratory occasions

<https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/>

### Free resources for many topics, including celebrations

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/home-early-years/early-years-topics/early-years-festivals-and-cultural-celebrations>

## Growing Healthy Families contact details

Website: <https://bedslutonchildrenshealth.nhs.uk/growing-healthy-families/>

Instagram: @growinghealthyfamiliesluton

Facebook: @growinghealthyfamiliesluton

Email address: [ccs.growinghealthyfamilies@nhs.net](mailto:ccs.growinghealthyfamilies@nhs.net)

