

sample

Underground Rumble

Most root vegetables like beets, carrots, potatoes and onions prefer to grow in cooler weather and are perfect for warm, hearty dishes like soups, stews, or as a side of roasted vegetables. Root vegetables have important nutrients for children, so try adding sweet potato for vitamin A, turnips for calcium, and beets for iron.

Rooting for Root Vegetables

Carrots, peeled, chopped
Potatoes, chopped
Beets, peeled, chopped
Favorite seasoning blend
Vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 400°F. Place vegetables on a sheet pan and drizzle with oil. Sprinkle seasoning and gently toss vegetables until coated. Bake for 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Find Our Friends

Using the template from cacfp.org, print out one vegetable per child on card stock. Write one child's name on each vegetable and place them all into a bin, burying them in a material like packing peanuts. On "go," have each child take a turn finding a name in the sensory bin and then run to place the vegetable in a secondary bin at the finish line.

Yarn Garden Plates

Have children paint a paper plate half blue and half brown. Punch holes along the outside of the brown half using a hole puncher. Weave and crisscross brown yarn through the holes, creating garden dirt. Have the children decorate and then cut out the root vegetables on the template from cacfp.org. Place the vegetables on the plate, behind the yarn.

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INSTRUCTIONS: In the body of each newsletter, there is space for you to customize information you would like to convey to the parents. This is an opportunity to share with parents examples of the healthy food you provide, as well as the fun and educational activities their children are engaged in. To customize, open the PDF and click on the blank field to type your newsletter, like the example below. Then save the file and print your copies, or attach them in an email, to distribute them to parents.

Happy New Year Everyone!

We are excited to share the start of the new year with learning and adventures ahead. This month, we will be kicking off our year of the garden theme by learning about root vegetables. The kids will be making their own Yarn Garden Plates, which they'll be taking home with them to show off.

Please note, we will be open on Martin Luther King Day on January 19, 2026. Look for spring field trip and Valentine's Day Celebration information to be coming home soon!

As always, thank you for trusting us with the care of your children. We look forward to a wonderful 2026 together!

Sincerely,
Donna

Parent Provider Connection - January 2026



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Parent Provider Connection - February 2026



Leafy Legends

Many dark, leafy greens are fast-growing, cold-hardy vegetables such as spinach, kale and collard greens. They are rich in vitamins A, C, E, K, and iron. Braise collard greens to reduce the bitterness, sauté spinach for more flavor, and try other greens in stews, soups or wraps.

Fresh Garden Quesadilla

Flour tortillas, 6-inch each
Shredded cheese
Baby spinach, torn into pieces
Zucchini or yellow squash, diced

Place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup squash, 2 tablespoons spinach, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cheese onto one half of a tortilla. Fold tortilla in half, cook both sides on a large, non-stick skillet over medium heat until it is slightly golden brown, and cheese has melted. Cut and serve half a quesadilla to each child.

Garden Greens Tag

Divide the children into equal groups of garden greens: kale, romaine, bibb, arugula, etc. Assign one group to be "it." On go, the "it" group will try to freeze tag as many of the other greens as they can until all are frozen. Each garden group will have a chance to be "it."

Let-tuce Craft!

On watercolor paper, help the children squeeze random glue squiggly lines to create the illusion of lettuce leaf veins. After the glue dries, have the children paint over the glue with watercolors using shades of green and yellow. Once dried, they can freely cut leaf shapes or use the leaf template from cacfp.org.

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Parent Provider Connection - March 2026



Aromatic Bulbs

Explore different types of onions such as white, sweet, green, purple and shallots. Each provides variations of aromatic, savory and sweet flavors. Try caramelizing onions to add in an egg recipe, roast them, or include in a stir fry to incorporate a good source of vitamin C and dietary fiber.

Onion Bulbs and Silly Spuds Soup

1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 cup yellow onions, diced
2 ½ cups white potatoes, diced
4 cups vegetable broth or stock

Caramelize onions by cooking in a medium stock pot over medium-low heat with vegetable oil. Salt and pepper to taste. Then add potatoes and broth. Bring to a boil then lower to simmer. Cover and cook for 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender.

Too Hot!

As the music plays, have children pass around the object you have chosen as the Too Hot Potato! When the music stops, the one holding the potato is mashed and can't touch the Too Hot Potato. Play until you have only one person to become the head potato chef.

Cotton Ball Onion

Assist as needed while the children glue cotton balls forming a circle onto cardstock paper. For roots, glue thin string below the cotton balls. Add green tissue paper or construction paper to form your onion leaves.

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Parent Provider Connection - April 2026



Very Berry Crunch

Did you know that berries do not ripen once harvested? Choose dark, vibrant berries for sweeter fruit. Because berries are loaded with vitamin C, pair these fruits with iron-rich foods. The vitamin C will help absorb the iron more efficiently in the body. Serve strawberries with spinach or cooked green beans with dried cranberries.

Berry Bug Log

Bananas, peeled
Nut or seed butter
Your choice of berries (i.e. strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, salmonberries)

Cut each banana lengthwise. Spread one tablespoon of nut or seed butter along the flat side of every banana. Place one halved banana onto each plate with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup berries. Direct children to place their "berry" bugs on top of the banana log.

Berry, Berry, Fruit!

A twist on one of our favorite classics! One child will walk around the circle and say "berry" or "FRUIT." When they choose the FRUIT, that child will get up and try to make it back to their spot before the other child does. Have children take turns.

Dauber Fruit

Show children how to paint the strawberry on the template at cacfp.org with a red dauber. Allow to dry, cut out and glue onto construction paper for background. With green beads or sequins, show the children how to glue on the seeds for their strawberry.

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Parent Provider Connection - May 2026



Cool Beans

Beans are a powerhouse of fiber and protein, making them a great, cost-effective vegetable or meat alternate option when served in CACFP meals. Try preparing different types of beans like chickpeas, black beans, pinto beans or lima beans in veggie burgers, salads, dips and pasta dishes.

Garden Fresh Tostada

Home cooked or canned beans, warmed and mashed
Corn tostadas
Shredded cheese
Spinach, arugula, or lettuce, finely chopped
Garden vegetables (i.e. tomatoes, corn, onions, cucumbers), finely chopped

Spread $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of mashed beans on top of each tostada. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of leafy greens, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of garden vegetables, and 2 tablespoons of cheese.

Beans in a Basket

Set up a basket and have the children take turns tossing the bean bag into it from anywhere they choose. If they make it, everyone else will try to toss the bag inside the basket from that spot. Give each child a turn to choose where to toss from.

Special Garden Pot

With craft paint, help the children stamp their thumb prints onto a miniature clay pot. With black permanent markers, turn these thumbprints into bugs, flowers or butterflies. The children can plant a flower or seed for their special caretaker.

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Parent Provider Connection - June 2026



Sunshine Delights

Summer squashes love the sun! Choose squashes that feel firm and heavy for their size. They are a good source of vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin B6, folate and potassium. Incorporate squashes like zucchini, crookneck, pattypan and chayote in sautés, quick breads and rice dishes.

Squish Squash Salad

2 cups summer squash (zucchini, yellow squash)
1 cup cherry tomatoes, quartered
1 tbsp Italian seasoning
¼ cup vegetable oil
¼ cup apple cider vinegar

Cut squash into half-moon shapes. Steam zucchini and yellow squash for one minute and place in cold water. Drain and set squash and tomatoes in a large bowl. Add oil, vinegar, and seasoning into the bowl and toss until all produce is coated.

Squash Basics

Using old tennis or badminton rackets and a very soft foam ball, show the children how to hit the ball in the air and try to keep it there. Spread them far out from each other in a safe area to practice their hand-eye coordination!

You Rock!

Have each child create their own garden rock or paper weight by decorating a rock with craft paint and supplies. Let their imaginations go wild and have the children gift it to a special someone in their lives.

Parent Provider Connection - July 2026



Mountains of Melons

Sweet, juicy melons such as watermelon, honeydew and cantaloupe are fruits packed with nutrients and water! Serving these melons during the hot summer months will help hydrate the children in your care. Add melons to salads, pair them with cheese or blend them in a smoothie.

Mango Melon Mix-Up

1 ¼ cups cantaloupe, diced
1 cup mango, diced
1 large banana, peeled, frozen
1 cup plain yogurt

Place all ingredients into the blender and blend until smooth. Pour ¾ cup per child for a refreshing snack.

Move Over, Melon!

Using the movement cards from cacfp.org, have children take turns drawing a card. When the card is drawn, they will hop, skip or jump the designated number of times shown on the card connecting nutrition education and gross movement learning.

Squishy Sensory Melon

Create a watermelon squish bag for each child. Start by putting hair gel and red food coloring in a sandwich bag and adding beads or buttons for black seeds. Seal the bag and then double seal with green tape. The children can practice letter writing, shape drawing or imprint their hand with sensory play.

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Parent Provider Connection - August 2026



Rolling Fruit Stones

Stone fruits contain a pit or "stone" in the center of the fruit with a sweet, soft flesh surrounding the pit. Examples are cherries, plums, peaches, apricots and mangos. They are a good source of vitamin A, vitamin C and potassium. Serve them on top of waffles, oatmeal or yogurt, or bake them in muffins.

Stone Fruit Dirt Cup

2 cups vanilla yogurt
2 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
4 cups stone fruits (i.e. plums, peaches, cherries, nectarines), pitted and diced
1 cup graham cracker crumbs

In a medium bowl, combine yogurt and cocoa powder together. For each dirt cup, first add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit, then $\frac{1}{4}$ cup yogurt and 2 tablespoons of graham cracker crumbs on top.

Parachute Party

Use a flat sheet as a parachute and have the children hold the edges while standing. Give each child a different stone fruit name and then on "1, 2, 3 lift," have them lift it high and sit on the inside edge to create a mushroom. Call out a fruit name and that child gets to move into the center.

Cherry Pom Poms

Get your pair of cherries template at cacfp.org and copy onto cardstock paper. Have the children paint the stem and leaves green. Once dried, practice fine motor skills by gluing red pom poms onto the body of the cherries.

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Parent Provider Connection - September 2026



Apple Harvest

A crisp fall breeze means it's apple picking season! From sweet Honeycrisp to tart Granny Smiths, there is an apple out there for everyone. Apples are a good source of fiber and vitamin C. Serve apples cooked with cinnamon, paired with yogurt or as fruit salsa.

Cheesy Apple Melt

Apples (red, green, yellow), thinly sliced
Whole wheat bread slices
Swiss or provolone cheese

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease sheet pan with cooking spray. Assemble each sandwich by layering $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sliced apples over one slice of bread. Then put one cheese slice on top. Bake for 5-7 minutes or until cheese has melted.

Honeycrisp Picking

Hide paper apples you've made from cardstock using the apple template at cacfp.org around a safe play area. Turn on music and a timer to see how long it takes the children to find all the apples. Have the children take turns hiding them from one another for some orchard fun.

Delicious Mosaic

Tear red, green and black construction paper into pieces. Help children glue the red pieces around the edges of a white paper plate. In the middle, where a core would be, use small black pieces for apple seeds. Have the children finish by adding green pieces at the top to form a stem and leaves.

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Gourd-geous Vegetables

Winter squashes have hard skins and a long shelf life. Squashes such as delicata, acorn, butternut, spaghetti and pumpkin must be cooked prior to serving. Adding winter squashes to pasta dishes, soups, casseroles or roasted vegetables provides vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin B6, fiber, potassium and magnesium.

Pumpkin Rice

1 cup enriched white rice, uncooked
1 ½ cups water or vegetable broth
¼ cup 100% pumpkin puree
½ tsp ground cinnamon
1 tbsp vegetable oil

Add and mix all ingredients in a medium saucepan. Bring water to a boil and then lower to simmer for 20 minutes or until rice is tender. Fluff rice with a fork before serving.

Kick the Gourd

Divide the children into pairs. With an orange ball, have the children practice kicking the ball to one another. See if they can learn to stop the ball with their hands, and then with their feet. Simple skills help develop gross motor coordination.

Garden Scarecrow

Get the scarecrow shapes template at cacfp.org and have the children paint them. Help them cut the shapes out once dry. Next, have the children glue the pieces onto construction paper to craft their own scarecrow and finish by adding googly eyes and craft supplies.

Parent Provider Connection - November 2026



The Cruciferous Collective

Known for their unique smell and bitter taste, cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale and Brussels sprouts are rich in antioxidants, which protect your cells from free radicals that can cause health problems. Try roasting and pairing them with children's favorite foods.

Sprouting Bites

1 lb Brussels sprouts, trimmed and quartered
4 strips turkey bacon

Cook the turkey bacon until crispy in a large skillet. Remove turkey bacon and break into smaller pieces, set aside. Then on medium-low heat using the same skillet, cook Brussels sprouts for 5-7 minutes. Add turkey bacon back in and cook until Brussels sprouts are cooked to desired tenderness.

Veggies Up or Down

Get an assortment of play vegetables or pictures of vegetables. Have children sit in a circle and explain to them that when you show them a vegetable that grows above the ground, they stand up, and when you show them a vegetable that grows below the ground, they sit down.

Fall Garden Crowns

Craft crowns using the templates at cacfp.org. Print out and help children cut and glue vegetables from the template onto the paper crowns and decorate with craft supplies. Complete the crown by helping the children attach a construction paper band to fit the crown to their heads.

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Parent Provider Connection - December 2026



Sprigs of Flavor

Herbs are a way to add flavor and reduce sodium in foods served in the CACFP. Try herbs such as basil, mint, cilantro, oregano, dill or thyme. Brighten up recipes by adding herbs to pastas, baked fish, grilled chicken, roasted vegetables, or make your own pesto sauce.

Lemon-Dill Orzo Pasta with Chicken

2 cups cooked orzo pasta, chilled
4 oz shredded rotisserie chicken, chilled
1 tbsp fresh dill, minced
2 tbsp lemon juice
4 tbsp olive oil

Mix all ingredients in a large bowl until well combined. Salt and pepper to taste. Chill in the refrigerator for at least one hour before serving.

Do the Herb Hustle

The Hustle consists of steps back, turns and arm motions. Teach the children some of these moves and let them dance to their own beat in thyme to the music. For more fun, teach them how to recognize and clap out the syllables of herbs you call out as they dance.

Herbal Carton Garden

Have the children place soil and plant herb seeds in each cup of an egg carton. Create garden flags with the template at cacfp.org to identify what's been planted. Show the children how to gently water their plants using a spray bottle. In a few weeks, there will be herbs to cook with!

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