

Family Style Meals

- Family style meals are a good way to learn more about your children. Use this time to sit with them and discuss their day. Use meals to spend some quality time getting to know your children.
- Some of the benefits for children of family style meals are that they help to create independence, enhance social competence, develop fine motor skills, language skills, promote self esteem and peer acceptance of foods, teach children about foods and promotes good table manners.
- Giving each child a special job to do during meal times will help you and keep them busy so they are not using attention seeking behavior. For example today Tommy is hand washing leader, Jan is table setter, and Joe is in charge of clean up and so on.
- Remember that not all foods have to be served family style. If you have something hot that you do not feel comfortable passing around the table, like a hot cooked vegetable, you dish that out while the children pass around a plate of apple slices or slices of bread and butter.
- If you have a younger child that you aren't sure will be able to do family style have an older child sit next to them to be their helper.
- Use utensils that children can easily use to dish their food. For example large spoons, or even measuring cups. You can also use a small child size pitcher for drinks.
- Remember that they will occasionally spill, but we all learn by mistakes and they have to have the chance to be independent enough to make that mistake.
- Encourage your children to help with final clean up. Have them scrape their plates in the garbage and help you fill the dishwasher. Remember that children are much faster at learning than we give them credit for. This can really be a helpful routine to start. Parents will notice this at home also and be impressed.
- If you have one child in particular that is always in trouble have that child do a special job every day. Keeping that one troubled child busy can save you a lot of trouble and help build his self esteem as well.
- If you do not have room on your table for passing the food, try using a buffet line instead. Have one table at child's level with stacked plates, utensils, and bowls with food and dishing spoons. Have them walk through the line and dish their own food. Children will love this.
- Since it is summer time, if you are nervous to start this for fear of accidents in your house try it outside at the picnic table a couple of times to get them used to helping.