

CACFP

MONTHLY UPDATE

!!CACFP Annual Training!!

January Claim Submission

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Celebrate CACFP Week

ServSafe Class & Exam

Milk Match Tag System

Grain Label Organization

Healthy & Affordable Meals Tips

Trainings

Sponsors w/ Unlicensed Providers

Sponsors w/ DCH & Using School Tiering Data

Pizza Power Pack

Resources for Culinary Management

Harvest of the Month

Biological & Experiential Factors in Food Acceptance

Sponsor Highlight

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CACFP Contacts

CACFP

Annual Training

April 28, 2026

9:00am - 3:00pm

Registration begins at 8:15am

Jeff's Catering & Events Center, 15 Littlefield Road, Brewer

All non-school sponsors are required to have at least one person attend this mandatory training. It is highly encouraged to have at least one person with operation/food service responsibilities and one person with administrative responsibilities attend the training.

Important program announcements and pertinent training topics will be covered. The finalized agenda is forthcoming and registration closes at the end of the business day on April 10th.

Registration and light refreshments begin at 8:15 a.m.

Lunch will also be provided.

Use this [link](#) to register





January Claim

Submission

April 1, 2026 is the last day to submit
your **January 2026** claim

We strongly encourage you to submit claims as early as possible and not wait until the last minute. Planning ahead allows time to address any questions or issues that may arise, especially considering the two-step claim approval process.

CACFP Open Office Hours

Need Help with CACFP? We're Here for You!

Have questions about your CACFP budget, sponsor or provider agreements, provider sheets, or other program requirements? Join our monthly CACFP Office Hours from 2:00–3:00 p.m. on Microsoft Teams.

During this open session, CACFP staff will be available to answer your questions, provide technical assistance, and offer guidance to support your program's success.!


March 9, 2026

April 13, 2026

May 11, 2026

June 8, 2026

[Use this link to join the CACFP Open Office Hours](#)



Celebrate National CACFP Week

March 15-21, 2026

National CACFP Week is observed each year during the third week of March and is sponsored by the National CACFP Sponsors Association. This national education and awareness campaign highlights the important role the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) plays in fighting hunger and supporting healthy communities.

CACFP helps bring nutritious meals and snacks to children in child care centers, family child care homes, and afterschool programs, as well as to adults participating in adult day care programs—ensuring access to healthy food where it matters most.

The 2026 theme, “Stirring Up Goodness,” celebrates the positive impact of CACFP and the dedicated sponsors, providers, and staff who make it possible—one meal at a time.

Learn more and find ways to participate:

[https://info.cacfp.org/calendar/Details/national-cacfp-week-march-15-21-2026-1566770?
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Celebrate CACFP Week with Us! | March 15–21

Maine CACFP is excited to celebrate National CACFP Week with themed daily highlights recognizing the vital role nutritious meals play in supporting children, families, and communities across our state.

We invite sponsors to join us by participating in the following daily activities:

Monday – Fueling Maine’s Future

Share how CACFP supports your programs and highlight a balanced meal being served.

Tuesday – Color Your Plate Day

Encourage providers to serve a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables and share examples of “eating the rainbow.”

Wednesday – Literacy & Lunch

Promote pairing story time with mealtime and encourage programs to read a food- or health-themed book.

Thursday – Thank a Provider Day

Recognize your providers with a message of appreciation, a certificate, or a spotlight.

Friday – CACFP Success Stories

Share a favorite recipe, testimonial, or success story from your programs.

We look forward to celebrating the impact of CACFP across Maine and highlighting the important work happening in programs statewide.

Celebrate — NATIONAL — CACFP Week

MARCH 15 – 21

Join us all week long!



MONDAY
MARCH 15

FUELING
MAINE'S
FUTURE



Highlight
how CACFP
fuels growth
& learning!



TUESDAY
MARCH 16

COLOR
YOUR
PLATE DAY



Eat the
Rainbow!

WEDNESDAY
MARCH 17

LITERACY
&
LUNCH



Healthy Bodies,
Healthy Minds!



THURSDAY
MARCH 18

THANK A
PROVIDER
DAY



Celebrate
Our Amazing
Providers!



FRIDAY
MARCH 19

CACFP
SUCCESS
STORIES



Share Your
Stories &
Recipes!



#CACFPWeek

ServSafe Class & Exam

April 21 & 22, 2026

Gorham High School

41 Morrill Avenue, Gorham

The class is for School Food Service and CACFP only

Books are ordered and mailed once registration has ended

Please note start times for each day

April 21st 9:00am - 3:00pm

April 22nd 8:00am - Approximately Noon for Exam

Bring photo id, pen or pencils with erasers

You must provide an email address as notification of results
are sent via email

Lunch is NOT provided. Bring your lunch, snacks, drinks

Charge for the class is \$102

Payable by credit card, at the time of registration

Registration deadline – Thursday, April 2, 2026

Milk Match Tag System

At our recent CACFP Administrative review, we were thrilled to see the creative efforts of Catherine Morrill Day Nursery in action! The center has developed an impressive “Milk Tag” system to simplify milk distribution. Each milk container is now equipped with a laminated tag on the handle that clearly lists the names of all children who require that specific type of milk, making it easy for staff to serve the correct type, especially in mixed-age classrooms.

This thoughtful solution not only enhances meal-service efficiency but also ensures that every child receives the milk they need. Kudos to the dedicated staff at Catherine Morrill Day Nursery for their innovative approach and commitment to supporting children’s nutritional needs!

Keep up the great work!

The image below was created using AI



Here's a template you can print for milk jugs:

Whole Milk	1% or Skim Milk	_____ Milk
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.
6.	6.	6.
7.	7.	7.
8.	8.	8.
9.	9.	9.
10.	10.	10.

Smart Grain Label Organization in Action

One of the requirements of CACFP is for Sponsors to maintain copies of grain product labels to document whole grain–rich and creditable grain items until at least the end of the business day.



During a recent site visit, Step by Step Childcare shared a simple yet effective solution for organizing these materials—and it caught our attention!

As shown in the recreated image above, the Sponsor uses a three-ring binder to store grain labels of all shapes and sizes, including cereal box cutouts, bread bags, and cracker packaging. By keeping everything in one centralized location, labels are easy to find, review, and reference during monitoring visits or staff training.

Tips for Sponsors:

- Use sheet protectors to accommodate labels of different sizes
- Organize by product type or brand for quick access
- Store the binder in a consistent, known location
- Update the binder as new products are purchased
- Include serving size amounts in oz. equivalents

This approach is a great example of how a little organization can go a long way in supporting CACFP compliance. Thanks to Step by Step for sharing this creative and practical idea!

Looking for ways to provide healthy and affordable meals?

Here are some tips to help you:



Plan Meals Before Shopping

Shop with intention and purpose to protect your budget. This approach helps reduce waste before you even start shopping.



Take Advantage of Sales

Always be on the lookout for sales and seasonal produce.



View Meal Patterns as a Structure

Instead of seeing them as restrictions, recognize that meal patterns provide a helpful framework that can save costs.



Use Measuring Cups and Spoons

Utilize these as serving utensils. practice helps children learn proper serving sizes and can prevent over-serving.



Utilize Leftovers

Batch cook meals and stretch leftovers across several days. For example, a large batch of cooked rice can be served as a side on Monday and then used in a *soup* on Tuesday.



Leverage AI for Creative Menu Ideas

- **Keep a List of Ingredients:** Maintain an updated list of ingredients and their amounts on hand.
- **Request Compliance with CACFP Guidelines:** Ask the AI to use the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Pattern guidelines for a spec.
- **Review Generated Recipes for Compliance:** Always review recipes and menus for compliance with meal patterns and be sure to credit recipes for CACFP use.





TRAININGS

National CACFP Week

National CACFP Week is observed each year during the third week of March and is sponsored by the National CACFP Sponsors Association. This national education and awareness campaign highlights the important role the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) plays in fighting hunger and supporting healthy communities.

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The 2026 theme, “Stirring Up Goodness,” celebrates the positive impact of CACFP and the dedicated sponsors, providers, and staff who make it possible—one meal at a time.

Learn more and find ways to participate:

[National CACFP Week Resources](#)



Free Webinar

Discovering Goodness

Through Food Adventures

Monday, March 16
2:00 pm - 2:30 pm Eastern

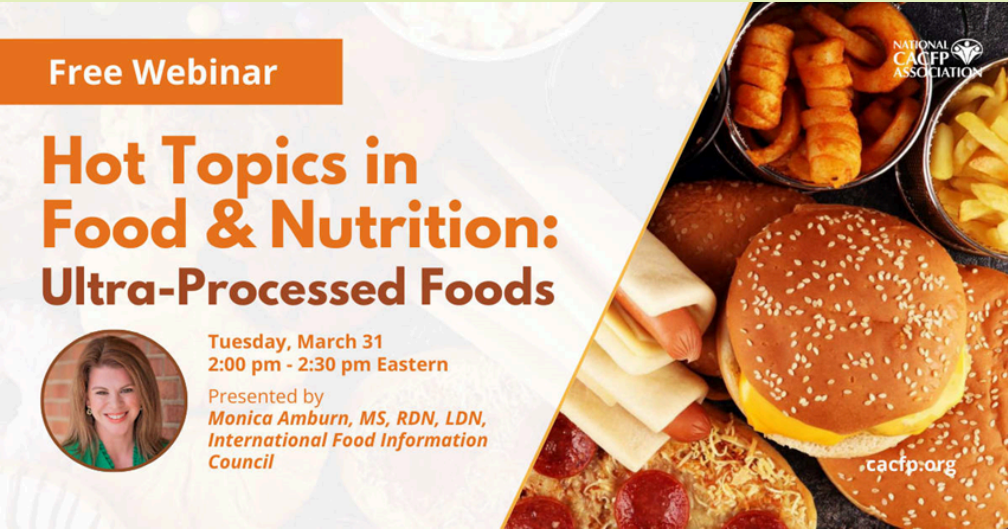
NATIONAL CACFP ASSOCIATION

cacfp.org

Discovering Goodness Registration

Hot Topics in Food & Nutrition: Ultra-Processed Foods **March 31, 2026**

Ultra-processed foods are dominating nutrition headlines and raising questions for CACFP operators. Join the International Food Information Council for a practical, research-based session informed by the latest consumer insights. We'll explore how ultra-processed foods fit into current nutrition discussions, what consumers really understand and how to address these concerns when they come up with families and staff. Leave feeling empowered to address ultra-processed food questions with confidence and credibility.



Free Webinar

Hot Topics in Food & Nutrition: Ultra-Processed Foods

Tuesday, March 31
2:00 pm - 2:30 pm Eastern

Presented by
Monica Amburn, MS, RDN, LDN,
International Food Information Council

NATIONAL CACFP ASSOCIATION

cacfp.org

Hot Topics Registration

2026 National Child Nutrition Conference

April 13 - April 17, 2026



Conference Registration and Calendar

If you want to connect with Kobi and Troy at the conference:
kobi.l.chase@maine.gov troy.fullmer@maine.gov

Important Update for DCH Sponsors with Unlicensed Providers

Due to a recent update to Maine childcare licensing regulations, the CACFP office has created a new Unlicensed Family Child Care Provider – Number of Children in Care Affidavit. This document ensures that unlicensed family childcare providers understand and acknowledge current state requirements regarding the number and ages of children in their care.



ACTION REQUIRED – DCH Sponsors

- ✓ At the next scheduled monitoring visit, DCH Sponsor monitors must:
 - Review the licensing regulation changes with each unlicensed provider
 - Obtain the provider's signature on the attestation form
- ✓ After all unlicensed providers have signed:
 - Upload copies of the completed forms to Checklist Tab #13 in CNPweb
- ✓ Ongoing requirement:

Continued on next page

Sponsors with Unlicensed Providers continued

- This form is one and done for current unlicensed providers
- If a new unlicensed provider begins participation in the future, the sponsor must:
 - Have the Provider sign the form and,
 - Submit a copy to our office so it can be retained on file

Where to Find the Form

- The affidavit is available as a PDF in CNPweb on Checklist Tab #13

Thank you for your continued partnership and for helping ensure compliance with updated state regulations while supporting unlicensed providers participating in CACFP.

Please contact our office if you have any questions.

DCH Sponsors

Tiering Using School Data

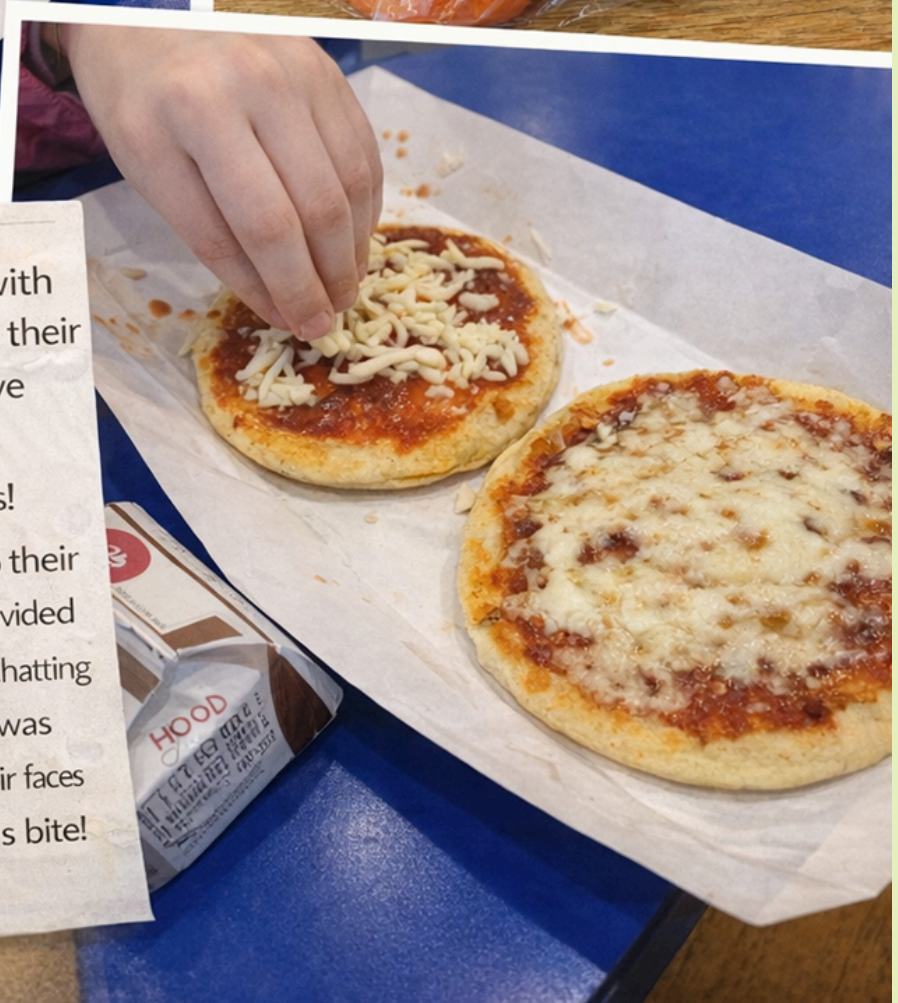
Per the CACFP Family Childcare Sponsor Handbook, Tiering Section- School Data, “A provider who lives in the area of a school in which 50% or more of the enrolled students qualify for Free or Reduced-price lunch qualifies for the tier 1 rate of reimbursement using school data and receives 5 years of eligibility as a tier 1 by school provider.” Some school districts may have a school with 50% or more Free and Reduced-price qualifying students, but if the qualifying school does not serve the area where the provider lives, the school cannot be used to qualify the Provider for tier 1.

This is about looking at school data, not school district data- the provider must live in the attendance area of a school in which 50% or more of the enrolled students qualify for Free or Reduced-price. So, if the provider lives in an attendance area served by a school (elementary, middle, or high) with 50% or more of its enrolled students qualifying for F/R meals, the provider qualifies for tier I reimbursement. Sponsors will only consider schools that serve the area where the provider lives. Another thing to keep in mind when looking at school data and service areas is, “If a family can choose the school that their child will attend, the school data for such schools cannot be used to make tiering determinations because those schools do not necessarily represent the economic status of the area in which the provider lives.” (see the CACFP Family Childcare Sponsor Handbook, Tiering Section- School Data).



PIZZA Power Pack

RSU 24 does a wonderful job making meals creative and fun as part of the CACFP At-Risk Supper Program!

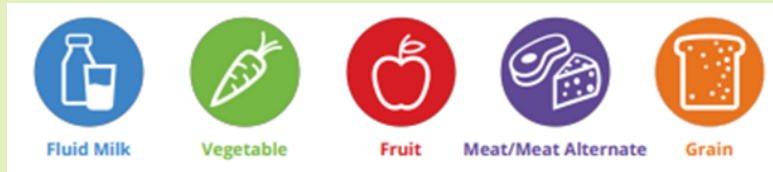


All the kids were bursting with excitement as they grabbed their "Pizza Power Pack" and dove into the fun of crafting their very own pizza masterpieces!

They eagerly lined up to pop their creations in the microwave provided by the afterschool program, chatting and laughing all the while. It was amazing to see the joy on their faces as they savored every delicious bite!

Resources for Culinary Management

A comprehensive quick guide list for CACFP operations



Resources:

[CACFP Resources | Department of Education](#)

[Culinary Classroom | Department of Education](#)

[Recipes and Videos from the Culinary Classroom | Department of Education](#)

[CACFP Recipes for Child Care Homes and Adult Day Care | Food and Nutrition Service](#)

[Child Nutrition Recipe Box – USDA Standardized Recipes](#)

Reference Tools for Recipe Development:

*[USDA Food Buying Guide: FBG](#)

*[Exhibit A for Grains: USDA Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)

*[Crediting Handbook for CACFP](#)

Manufacturer Documentation:

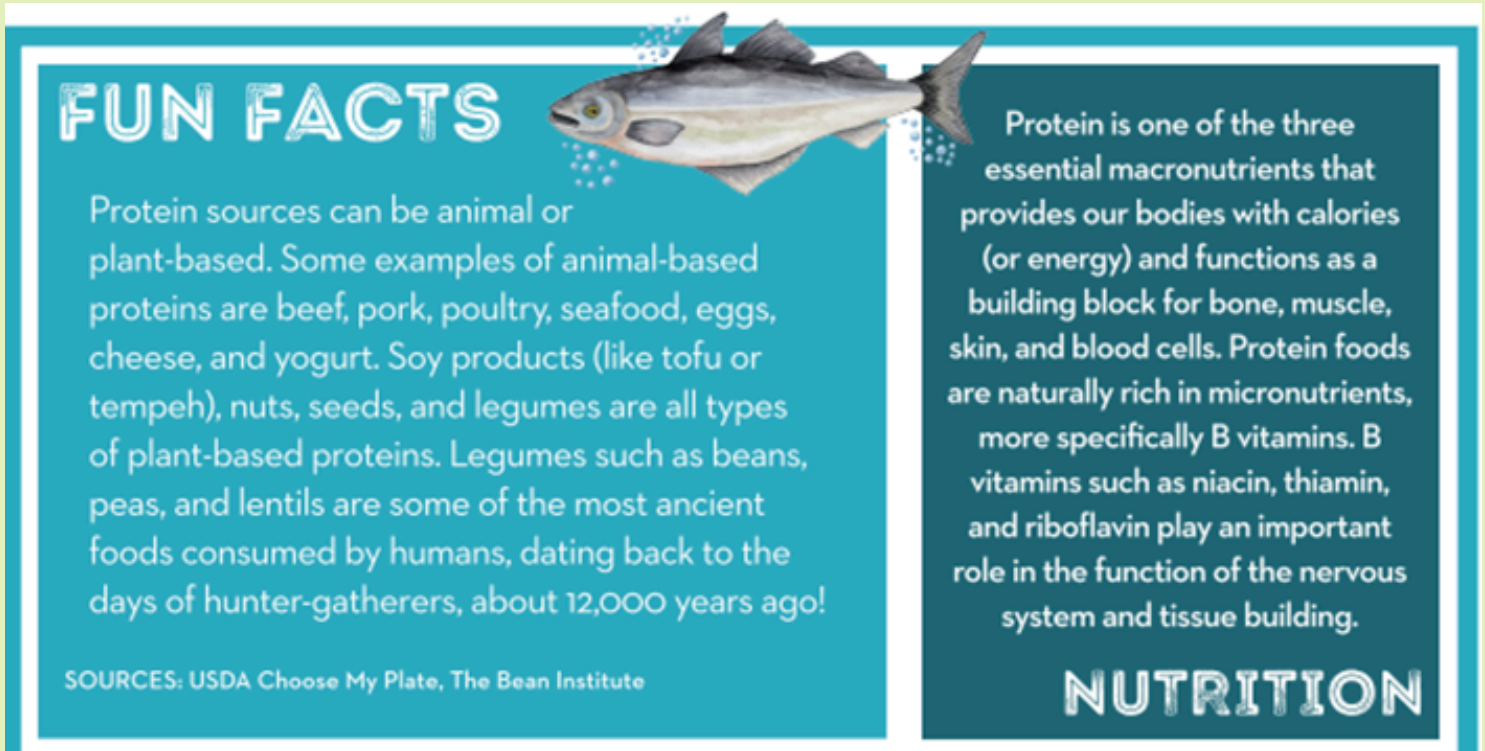
[Manufacturer Documentation: Child Nutrition Labels and Product Formulation Statements | Food and Nutrition Service](#)

[Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement | Food and Nutrition Service](#)

[CN Labeling Program | Food and Nutrition Service](#)

Maine Harvest of the Month!

March Harvest of the Month: Proteins



FUN FACTS

Protein sources can be animal or plant-based. Some examples of animal-based proteins are beef, pork, poultry, seafood, eggs, cheese, and yogurt. Soy products (like tofu or tempeh), nuts, seeds, and legumes are all types of plant-based proteins. Legumes such as beans, peas, and lentils are some of the most ancient foods consumed by humans, dating back to the days of hunter-gatherers, about 12,000 years ago!

SOURCES: USDA Choose My Plate, The Bean Institute

Protein is one of the three essential macronutrients that provides our bodies with calories (or energy) and functions as a building block for bone, muscle, skin, and blood cells. Protein foods are naturally rich in micronutrients, more specifically B vitamins. B vitamins such as niacin, thiamin, and riboflavin play an important role in the function of the nervous system and tissue building.

NUTRITION

The infographic features a central illustration of a fish, likely a salmon, swimming to the right. The background is a light blue gradient with a white border. The text is arranged in two columns, with 'FUN FACTS' on the left and 'NUTRITION' on the right. The fish is positioned between the two columns, with small white bubbles around it.

Join the Maine Harvest of the Month (HOM) Program! Take the pledge and join dozens of schools and childcare sites in bringing more healthy, local food to Maine children while supporting Maine farmers and producers!

By participating in the Maine Harvest of the Month program, CACFP Sponsors are pledging for the school year to:

- Serve the local HOM product at least 2x per month (local = Maine grown or caught)
- Display HOM materials provided by the Department of Education's Child Nutrition team



In return, the DOE Maine Harvest of the Month team pledges to provide participating Sponsors with:

- Printed marketing materials (ie: posters, recipe cards, stickers)
- Program training and ongoing technical support, as needed
- A monthly newsletter
- Recognition for participating in Harvest of the Month

A Focus Summary on “Biological and Experiential Factors that Impact the Acceptance of Complementary Foods”

Learning to enjoy nutritious foods early sets the stage for lifelong healthy eating habits

Author

Julie A. Mennella

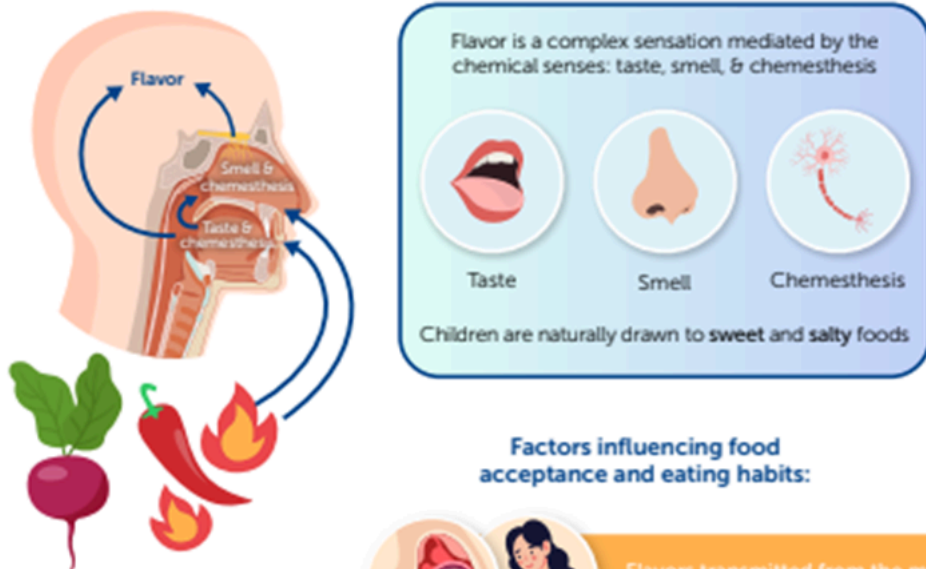
Affiliation

Monell Chemical Senses Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

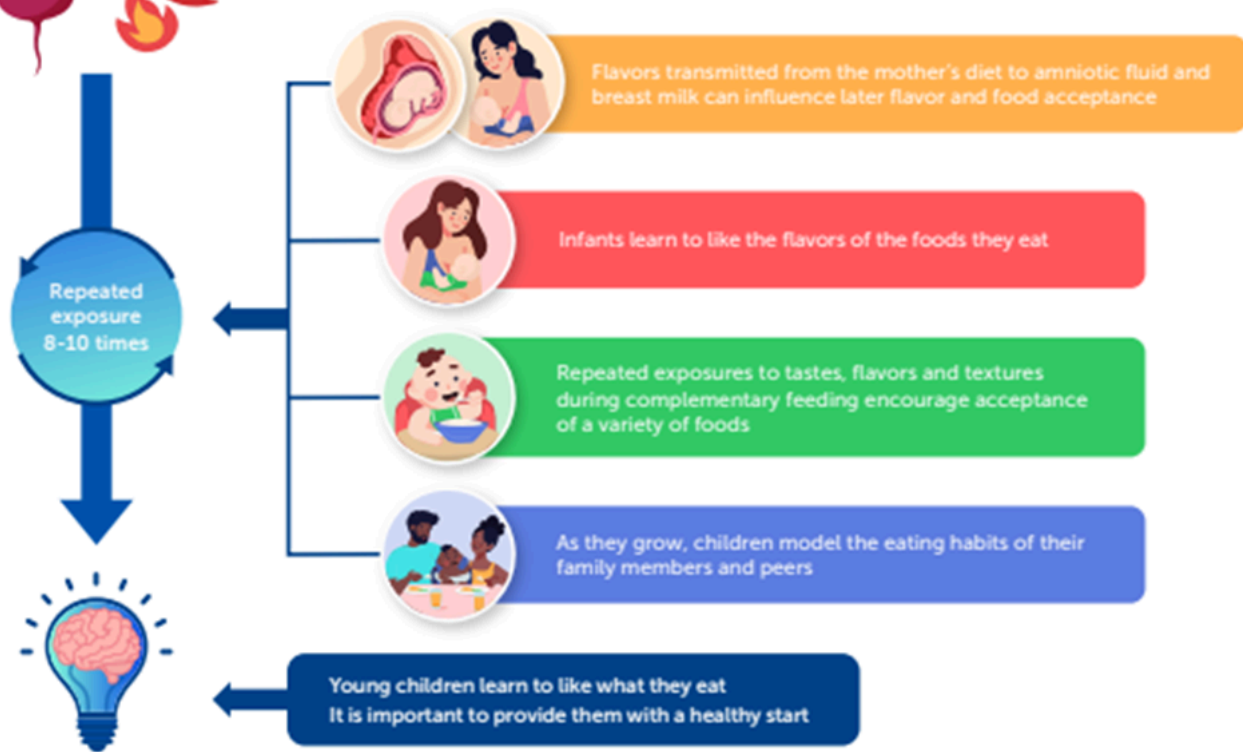
In brief

Food preferences in infants can shape diet and health in adulthood. The transition from an all-milk diet to one that contains complementary food is influenced by biological and experiential factors. Children are also influenced by the social context of feeding, including family members modeling eating foods. While some factors are defined before birth, plasticity within the brain allows for modulation of acceptance during the introduction of complementary foods.

Flavor is a primary driver of food acceptance:



Factors influencing food acceptance and eating habits:



Highlights

- Flavor preferences are learned, beginning prenatally through exposure to flavors in maternal amniotic fluid, as well as innate chemosensory responses.
- The emergence of teeth and the maturation of the oral cavity – including the development of muscles, bones, and the tongue – enable the processing of a wider variety of food textures.
- Beginning early in life, there are many opportunities and ways to introduce healthy foods to children's diet so that they grow to like and enjoy the flavors of these foods. Flavor acceptance can be modified through early and repeated exposure (8–10 exposures or more) or by modeling behaviors of family members.
- Food choices significantly impact health and life expectancy, therefore there is a window of opportunity during complementary feeding to shape future dietary patterns.

Sponsor Highlight



When our staff visited Step by Step Childcare in Milbridge last month, we met someone truly extraordinary.

If you walk into the toddler room, you'll likely find her in her rocking chair, gently soothing a baby or reading a story to a group of eager little listeners. Ask any of the children who she is, and they'll proudly tell you: "That's Nana!"

Evelyn Perry — lovingly known as Nana — will celebrate her 94th birthday next month. Her granddaughter, Cissy Jellison, owner of Step by Step Childcare, is grateful to have her by her side each day. Since the beginning of 2014, Nana has faithfully come to the daycare Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Over the years, she hasn't missed many days.

Her dedication is remarkable. Nana rocks and feeds babies, changes diapers, reads stories to anyone who asks, lays out mats for nap time, and helps little ones wash their hands before meals. While she has a rocking chair in the toddler room, she is always willing to step into another classroom when an extra set of hands is needed. But Nana's presence is about more than helping hands — it's about heart.

Her consistent involvement strengthens the nurturing environment that enables high-quality childcare. By supporting daily routines — especially during mealtimes and handwashing — Nana plays an important role in helping Step by Step Childcare successfully implement the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

CACFP is about more than reimbursable meals; it's about creating structured, supportive environments where children can learn healthy habits, feel safe, and grow. Nana's steady presence helps ensure children are seated, supported, and ready to enjoy nutritious meals and snacks that meet CACFP guidelines.

At 94 years young, Evelyn reminds us that supporting children's nutrition and care is truly a community effort — and that dedication has no age limit. Thank you, Nana, for your incredible example of service, love, and commitment. You are an inspiration to us all!

Sponsor Spotlight Call-Out

Do you have staff members, volunteers, or community champions who are doing wonderful things to support your CACFP program? We would love to highlight them in an upcoming Sponsor Spotlight! Please share your stories and photos with us so we can celebrate the amazing work happening across our CACFP community.