

Healthy Celebrations

Ideas and recipes
for early learning
services

 Heart Foundation™

Tohu Healthy
Manawa (❤️) Heart
Ora Award

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Photo: Vincent Ward



Introduction

Celebrations are valued by early learning services as an opportunity to bring together children, families and the wider community.

They are a chance to share each other's milestones, culture and support whakawhanaungatanga – building relationships with others.

Most importantly, celebrations can be fun and inclusive while also supporting your wider values as a service.

The purpose of this guide is to provide practical ideas and recipes to help make healthy eating and physical activity an integrated part of your celebrations, so celebrations reflect your ongoing commitment to children's health and wellbeing.

Some of the food ideas in this book will require the texture, size or shape of the food to be altered to ensure it does not pose a choking risk. Children can choke on food at any age but the risk is higher in children under 5 years. Refer to the Ministry of Health Guidelines to find out more. Search 'food and choking' at **health.govt.nz**

Consider the following when planning your celebrations

Consistent healthy messaging

Children learn from what they see and experience around them.

Celebrations can be consistent with the messages you teach children about healthy eating and physical activity. This includes how adults role model healthy eating.

Check that when your celebration involves food, there are healthy options available and foods are served in appropriate child-size portions.

Engaging families

Food has different social, cultural and emotional significance for everyone.

For many cultures, preparing and sharing food embraces hospitality (Manaakitanga) and shows respect and care for one another.

Invite families to help plan celebrations and share suggestions for suitable options to provide. Take into consideration different beliefs, dietary requirements and allergies.

Consider moving the focus away from food

Remember that there are many special days to celebrate throughout the year and each child may have multiple events outside of the centre for each celebration. 'Treats' and occasional foods lose their appeal if they are given all the time.



Consider other ways to recognise and commemorate special occasions with the child as the focus.

Dealing with challenges

Children's taste preferences, habits and attitudes towards healthy food are established early and lay the foundations for their future wellbeing. It's a good idea to have a written celebrations guideline or policy which can be discussed with parents at enrolment and in the lead-up to birthdays and special celebrations.

Communicate regularly with your community around your commitment to children's hauora and the reasons for your guidelines.

Te Whāriki

Holding celebrations supports the Belonging (Mana whenua) strand of Te Whāriki, specifically:

- Goal 1: Children and their families experience an environment where connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended.
- Goal 3: Children and their families experience an environment where they feel comfortable with the routines, customs and regular events.

Having healthy food available at your celebrations also supports the Wellbeing (Mana atua) strand of Te Whāriki, specifically:

- Goal 1: Children experience an environment where their health is promoted.

About us



The Tohu Manawa Ora | Healthy Heart Award is the Heart Foundation's free programme for early learning services, providing guidance and structure to promote healthy eating and physical activity. It can help you address food and physical activity issues that teachers are finding challenging, and participating early learning services will benefit from:

- one on one support from our on-the-ground team
- access to helpful resources and professional learning and development workshops
- promotion and marketing tools.

For more information
heartfoundation.org.nz



Sample celebrations guideline

This is an example of a celebrations guideline that could be adapted to suit your centre.

Rationale

Celebrations are a time for coming together and sharing our milestones, cultures and beliefs as a centre. Healthy eating and physical activity at an early age sets children up with positive habits for their current and future wellbeing.

Goal

Celebrations support healthy practices and children learn the difference between everyday foods and special occasion foods.

Strategies

- Healthy 'everyday' food and drink options will be available at celebrations and events. These include vegetables, fruit, grain foods, protein-based foods, milk products and water.
- Whānau will be supported with healthy food suggestions and recipes.
- Whānau will be involved in planning for celebrations wherever possible.
- Celebrations will acknowledge and affirm different cultures.
- Our celebrations guideline will be discussed with all new families on enrolment.
- Children's birthdays will be celebrated with a special song, cape and chair to make the birthday child feel special.
- If whānau wish to provide something to share, vegetables or fruit are welcomed.
- On a child's 5th birthday, a vege or fruit based, un-iced cake is welcome but not expected. Staff are happy to provide a suggested recipe.
- Physical activity will be a regular planned part of celebrations and staff will be encouraged to take part as positive role models.

Date: _____
Review Date: _____

Success Story

“Our centre decided to introduce a healthy birthday celebrations guideline after concern from parents and staff on the frequency of cakes and treats each week. We talked about other things we could do to move the focus away from treat foods. We now have a celebration board which children can decorate, a birthday cape and healthy platters with fruit and mini sandwiches cut into shapes. More creativity and healthier food options have been the outcomes so far.”

– Lollipops Educare, Blighs Road



Birthdays

Birthdays are about making a child feel special. Birthdays are celebrated in numerous cultures, often with a gift, party, or rite of passage.

If cakes are provided for all birthdays they can lose their meaning as a 'special occasion food' and become an 'everyday' food for children.

Some families also feel they are expected to provide a cake which can cause pressure and competition with others.

Ideas to celebrate

- Playdough or wooden cake
- Making a hat
- Special chair, cape or crown
- Birthday child picks a song/book/dance/game
- Learn to sing happy birthday in different languages
- Scavenger hunt or musical games
- Stickers, balloons and bubbles
- Family donates a fruit tree or seedlings for the centre garden
- Family donates a book to the centre
- Make your own pizzas
- Veggie or fruit based, un-iced birthday cakes, supply a basic recipe
- Cake made out of entirely fresh fruit and vegetables
- Plant for the birthday child to take home

Other recipe ideas: fruit kebabs, veggie and fruit platter with yoghurt dip, mini pizza* and cookie cutter sandwiches.

* Visit heartfoundation.org.nz for these recipes.

Success Story



“Our centre loves celebrating children’s birthdays; as such we wanted these celebrations to reflect our philosophy of growing healthy children. We trialled making birthday cakes almost entirely from fresh fruit and vegetables. If whānau wanted to contribute by providing fruit towards the cake, this was greatly appreciated. Our staff then design a creation matched to each child’s personality. After seeing the excitement of the children, parents have been very supportive of this new practice.”

– Kakano Early Childhood Centre

Success Story



“To celebrate children’s 5th birthdays, we choose a special song and also sing happy birthday in English and Te Reo. The birthday child decorates their own hat. This is drawn on by friends and goes into their special folder to share when starting school. There is no expectation to bring food but if parents want to bring something we suggest \$10 Mitre 10 vouchers to buy plants or a \$10 book token.”

– Leamington Kindergarten

Birthdays

RECIPES

Oven baked vegetable chips

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Root vegetables (for example potato, kūmara, carrot or parsnips)	1 kg	2.5 kg	5 kg
Oil	1 Tbsp	45 ml	90 ml

Method

1. Pre-heat oven to 225°C.
2. Wash and cut the root vegetables into chips that are approximately 1cm thick.
3. Place in a large bowl and toss with the oil.
4. Spread out evenly on a large roasting tray.
5. Place in oven and roast for approximately 45 minutes or until golden brown.



Banana bread

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Ripe banana, peeled	2	625 g	1.25 kg
Eggs	1	3	6
Oil	2 Tbsp	75 ml	150 ml
Milk	2 Tbsp	75 ml	150 ml
Wholemeal flour	½ cup	215 g	430 g
White flour	½ cup	215 g	430 g
Baking powder	1 tsp	15 g	30 g

Method

1. Pre-heat oven to 180°C.
2. Grease a loaf tin with oil and lightly dust with flour.
3. In a mixing bowl mash the ripe bananas until smooth.
4. Add the egg, oil and milk and mix together.
5. Sift in flour and baking powder and fold gently into wet ingredients.
6. Pour mixture into the loaf tin and bake for approximately 1 hour, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
7. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 15 minutes before removing from the tin.



Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year is an important Chinese festival that is centuries old and gains significance because of several myths and traditions. Today the festival is about bringing family together, celebrating a year of hard work and to wish for a lucky and prosperous coming year.

When is it celebrated?

The date of Chinese New Year is based on the Chinese lunar calendar, but always falls somewhere in the period from January 21 to February 20.

Ideas to celebrate

- Make lanterns
- Watch a video clip of a lion/dragon dance and get children to re-enact it
- Invite a parent or whānau of a child who celebrates Chinese New Year at home to share skills to make traditional decorations
- Hold a potluck reunion dinner with your parents and whānau
- Learn greetings in Mandarin/Cantonese
- Create art relevant to the Chinese animal of the year
- Paint a picture of a dragon – use feathers too
- Have your own Chinese New Year parade
- Make dumplings or steamed buns, invite a parent along who can help
- Dress in red or decorate your centre in red
- Greet your parents with New Year sayings – wishing good health and prosperity
- Rename dishes with a festive name





Success Story



“During Chinese New Year we are fortunate to have parents come in and teach the children how to make dumplings. This is a great activity to learn healthy food skills together and share a traditional food.”

– Miropiko Kindergarten



Chinese New Year

RECIPES

Steamed pork buns

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Dough			
Sugar	1 tsp	10 g	20 g
Warm water	½ cup	315 ml	630 ml
Dry yeast	½ tsp	10 g	20 g
Salt	pinch	5 g	10 g
White flour	1 ½ cups	560 g	1.12 kg
Baking powder	½ tsp	5 g	10 g
Filling			
Cabbage, finely shredded	1 cup	200 g	400 g
Mushrooms, finely chopped	1 cup	50 g	100 g
Lean pork mince	½ cup	325 g	650 g
Spring onions, thinly sliced	1	50 g	100 g
Eggs	1	2	4
Ginger, finely chopped	1 tsp	10 g	20 g
Reduced-salt soy sauce	2 tsp	15 ml	30 ml
Corn flour	1 tsp	5 g	10 g
Sesame oil	1 tsp	10 ml	20 ml



Method

Bun dough

1. In a large bowl mix sugar, water and yeast and let it sit for 10 minutes or until bubbles appear.
2. Add salt and flour and knead to a smooth dough.
3. Place in a greased bowl, cover and let rise in a warm draft-free place for about three hours or until doubled in size.
4. Punch down dough and turn out onto lightly floured surface. Flatten slightly and sprinkle with baking powder. Knead thoroughly incorporating baking powder completely. Cover and let rest for 10 minutes.



Filling

1. Place cabbage, mushrooms pork mince, green onions, egg, ginger, soy sauce, corn flour and oil in a large bowl and mix thoroughly.

Wrapping

1. Divide dough into 35g balls.
2. Roll balls to approximately 10cm circles.
3. Place approximately 2 Tbsp (35g) filling onto the middle of each dough circle.
4. Fold the dough up and over the filling and squeeze together and twist at the top to seal.
5. Cut 10cm squares of baking paper for each bun. Place each bun, sealed side up on the squares of paper.
6. Arrange in steamer trays about 5cm apart. Cover and let rise for 45 minutes.
7. Bring water to boil in steamer or wok. Cover and steam for 10 minutes.

Big Heart Day

Big Heart Day is part of the Heart Foundation Big Heart Appeal, held in February each year. Early learning services can pick any day in February to hold their celebration and help raise awareness of how to look after our hearts. Big Heart Day is a great way to bring together children, families and staff while supporting the Heart Foundation's life-saving work.

Ideas to celebrate

- Dress up in red
- Hold a picnic in the park with games
- Make a song with actions about healthy food
- Organise a sports day with families
- Make red-themed healthy food - red fruit and vegetables, dips and pasta sauce
- Make a giant heart-shaped collage of healthy, red food
- Plant seedlings for everyone to take home
- Learn about the heart and what it does in our body
- Play music and get your heart pumping, can you feel it beating?
- Visit a local community garden

Photo: Courtesy
of Parnell Early
Childhood Centre



RECIPES

Salmon and potato cakes

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Potatoes	2 large	1.3 kg	2.6 kg
Canned salmon	200 g	500 g	1 kg
Egg	1	2	4
Dry breadcrumbs	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	75 g	150 g
Spring onion	1	85 g	170 g
Gherkins, chopped	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup	125 g	250 g
Lemon zest	1 tsp	5 g	10 g
Mustard	1 tsp	10 g	20 g
Fresh herbs, chopped	2 Tbsp	10 g	20 g
Oil	1 Tbsp	45 ml	90 ml

Method

1. Peel and boil potatoes until a fork comes out easily when inserted.
2. Mash potatoes and allow to cool.
3. Add remaining ingredients except oil.
4. Form into round patties.
5. Heat a large frying pan with oil and brown patties on each side.

Serve warm or refrigerate for later use.



Big Heart Day

Beetroot dip

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Canned beetroot, drained	1x 450 g can	750 g	1.5 kg
Greek style yoghurt	½ cup	300 g	600 g
Lemon juice	1 Tbsp	30 ml	60 ml
Ground cumin	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp

Method

1. Combine all ingredients thoroughly in a food processor.

Serve with thinly sliced or cooked vegetable sticks.

* This dish is appropriate for tamariki aged 4-6 years but the texture of the vegetable sticks may need to be modified for tamariki aged 1-3 years.





Past winners of the annual Big Heart Day competition, Potiki Early Childhood Centre, involved their whole centre community in fun, healthy activities.



Children visited their local supermarket to purchase fruit and vegetables and together made healthy snacks to share with their families. Children learnt about healthy food from reading books, painting, pretend-play and making collages, they also took part in a range of active games.

Easter

Easter, also called Resurrection Sunday, is a festival and holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Additional customs that are associated with Easter include egg decoration, egg hunting and the Easter bunny.

When is it celebrated?

Easter falls between 22 March and 25 April inclusive. Easter Sunday is the first Sunday after the Paschal full moon. (The Paschal full moon is the first full moon observed after the autumn equinox).

Ideas to celebrate

- Obstacle course with hopping, jumping, throwing and catching plastic eggs
- Decorate your own eggs (chicken eggs)
- Walk to your local church
- Make paper-mache eggs
- Play egg or rabbit-themed games and songs – rob the nest, chicken dance, egg and spoon race, bunny hops
- Learn and perform an Easter song
- Easter-themed colouring in
- Learn about the cycle of the chicken from egg to hatching
- Chalk colouring outside



RECIPES

Hummus

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed	1x 400 g can	625 g	1.25 kg
Garlic, crushed	1 clove	10 g	20 g
Tahini	¼ cup	160 g	320 g
Lemon juice	3 Tbsp	110 ml	220 ml
Ground cumin	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp
Ground pepper	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp
Olive oil	2 Tbsp	75 ml	150 ml
Water	1 Tbsp	35 ml	70 ml

Method

1. Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender and blend until smooth.

Serve with thinly sliced or cooked vegetable sticks.

* This dish is appropriate for tamariki aged 4-6 years but the texture of the vegetable sticks may need to be modified for tamariki aged 1-3 years.



Banana pikelets with berry compote

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Banana pikelets			
Banana, mashed	3	1 kg	2 kg
Eggs	3	8	17
Oil	2 Tbsp	90 ml	185 ml
Berry compote			
Fresh or frozen berries	3 cups	1 kg	2 kg
Water	3 Tbsp	45 ml	45 ml

Method

Banana Pikelets

1. Mix together the mashed banana with the egg.
2. Heat a large non-stick or well seasoned cast iron frying pan and add oil.
3. Cook pikelets in tablespoon amounts until browned on each side.

Berry Compote

1. Place frozen or fresh berries into a saucepan with water and cover with a lid.
2. Heat slowly over a low heat until berries are cooked and most of the liquid has evaporated.



Mother's Day and Father's Day

These celebrations are a special time to recognise the important role mums and dads play and to show them appreciation for everything they do. Mother's Day is typically celebrated on the second Sunday in May and Father's Day on the first Sunday in September.

Ideas to celebrate

- Hold a healthy-breakfast morning
- Make a gift from the garden and decorate the pot
- Go for a walk in your community together
- Put on a special show or performance
- Create a preschool café using produce from the garden
- Make and decorate a photo frame
- Make scented bath salts
- Cut out heart shapes and write messages on the back
- Create heart paintings using hand prints, together with mum and dad
- Hold a wheels' day or fun rugby game

RECIPES

Bircher muesli

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Rolled oats	2 cups	600 g	1.2 kg
Milk	2 cups	1.25 L	2.5 L
Apple, grated	2 cups	875 g	1.75 kg

Method

1. Mix the oats and milk and refrigerate covered overnight.
2. The following day mix through the grated apple just before serving.



Pacific Island Language Weeks

Pacific Island language weeks are spread throughout the year and provide a chance for Pacific language and culture to be promoted and maintained through song, dance, cultural displays, storytelling and more. There are seven Pacific language weeks celebrated in New Zealand: Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan, Tuvaluan, Fijian, Niuean, and Tokelauan.

Ideas to celebrate

- Dress up in traditional attire
- Learn fruit and vegetable names in each language
- Create an activity for children to touch, describe, guess and taste fruit and vegetables native to the Pacific Islands
- Learn a traditional song, dance or rhythmic drumming
- Make flower leis or garland
- Invite a family member along to speak to, or read to, the children
- Put on a special interactive performance with your community to teach songs, dances and stories.
- Hold a sports day, using different languages for instructions
- Make special cards for grandparents
- Learn about different gods and legends
- Create a game for children to match images of fruit and vegetables to images of the plants they are grown on

“At our centre we celebrate all the Pacific Island Language Weeks that are held throughout the year. We value this time to celebrate the richness and diversity of each Pacific Island culture, language and values through activities such as music, dance and naming healthy foods in each language.”



– KiNZ East Tamaki



“For our celebrations this year, each child dressed up in the tradition of the culture they wish to identify with. We held a cultural fashion show and performance for parents and the Board of Trustees members. All the children sang and danced to a song they had been practising – we got parents and visitors involved in some of the dances too. We finished with a shared lunch – each family brought a healthy dish to share – there was sliced mango and tropical fruits, fried rice, taro, chop suey, fresh leafy salad, homemade burgers cut into quarters and vegetable sticks.”



– Wymondley Early Learning Centre

Photo: Courtesy of Kakano Taonga Early Childhood Centre



Pacific Island Language Weeks

RECIPES

Sua fa'i – Samoan banana and sago pudding

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Ripe bananas, peeled	4	1.3 kg	2.6 kg
Water	2 cups	1.25 L	2.5 kg
Sago	3 Tbsp	90 g	180 g
Coconut cream	$\frac{1}{3}$ cup	200 ml	400 ml
Lemon or lime juice (optional)	2 Tbsp	75 ml	150 ml

Method

1. Mash the bananas using a fork, leaving some lumpy bits.
2. Add enough cold water to cover the bananas.
3. Add sago and stir through.
4. Place banana mixture in a medium pot and bring to a boil over medium heat.
5. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes stirring occasionally until sago turns transparent.
6. Stir in coconut cream just before serving.
7. Serve warm with a squeeze of lime or lemon juice.

Tips

- For a runnier soup, add a little more water.
- To serve cold, pour into individual bowls and refrigerate.



Fish curry

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Oil	2 Tbsp	75 ml	150 ml
Onion, finely diced	1	375 g	750 g
Ginger, chopped	1 Tbsp	25 g	50 g
Garlic, crushed	3 cloves	25 g	50 g
Curry powder	2 Tbsp	30 g	60 g
Water	1 ½ cups	900 ml	1.8 L
Coconut cream	½ cup	325 ml	750 ml
Fish fillets	600 g	1.5 kg	3 kg
Bok choy, chopped	1 cup	500 g	1 kg
Tomatoes, diced	1	375 g	750 g
Lemon juice	1 Tbsp	35 ml	70 ml
Cornflour	2 Tbsp	35 g	70 g
Water	¼ cup	150 ml	300 ml
Fresh coriander, chopped	¼ cup	25 g	50 g

Method

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat.
 2. Add onion and cook until soft.
 3. Add ginger, garlic and curry powder and continue to cook for another minute.
 4. Add water and coconut cream and cook gently for 10 minutes.
 5. Add fish, bok choy, tomato and lemon juice and cook over a medium heat for approximately 10 minutes or until the fish is cooked through.
 6. Wet cornflour with second measure of water.
 7. Slowly mix into curry as it simmers and stir until it thickens.
 8. Garnish with coriander before serving.
- Serve with kūmara, potatoes or rice.

Matariki

Matariki is the Māori name for the group of stars also known as the Pleiades star cluster. Traditionally for Māori, when it appeared in the skies in late May or early June, it signalled the start of the Māori New Year. Matariki was connected to the seasons for harvesting and planting, and in the couple of months before its rising, Māori would harvest and preserve food for the Matariki feast and sustenance over the winter months.

When is it celebrated?

Following the rising of Matariki, the New Year is marked at the sighting of the next new moon which occurs in June.

Ideas to celebrate

- Hold a harvest day, plant new seedlings or fruit trees
- Have a shared feast or hangi with food from your garden
- Make a korowai (cloak) – each child makes a feather
- Go for a bush walk, learning about native trees
- What's in your kete? Pull out fruit and vegetables – name them in Te Reo Māori
- Read stories of legends and perform them for whānau
- Paint pictures of stars or make stars out of twigs
- Learn a haka, or traditional Māori games
- Make a friendship soup, everyone brings a vegetable
- Flax weaving
- Visit your local library or local Matariki event
- Make poi and perform a dance
- Sing twinkle twinkle in Te Reo
- Have a star disco with glow-in-the-dark stars

Success Story



“To celebrate Matariki, we enjoyed a shared kai at our weekly Au Pair Link playgroup. Our au pairs and tamariki (children) all contributed by bringing kai that was cultivated from Papatuanuku. This was mostly fruit or vegetable based, and we saw some very creative ideas.

It was the perfect way to wrap up our Matariki celebrations, spending time together discussing the delicious kai and what was involved in making it.”

– Au Pair Link Waikato



RECIPES

Pumpkin fritters

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Pumpkin, grated	625 g	1.5 kg	3 kg
Eggs	5	12	24
Flour	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup	285 g	570 g
Baking powder	1 tsp	15 g	30 g
Fresh herbs, chopped	65 g	160 g	320 g
Garlic, crushed	10 g	25 g	50 g
Oil	45 ml	110 ml	220 ml

Method

1. Place pumpkin, parsley and garlic in a large mixing bowl and mix.
2. Add egg and mix through well.
3. Add flour and baking powder and mix until just combined.
4. Heat oil 1 tablespoon at a time and batch cook fritters. Cook fritters on both sides until golden brown and cooked through.



Friendship soup

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Oil	2 Tbsp	75 ml	150 ml
Vegetables, finely chopped (onion, carrot, celery, kūmara, pumpkin, beans)	6 cups	2.1 kg	4.25 kg
Salt-reduced vegetable stock	6 cups	3.75 L	7.5 L

Method

1. Add oil, onion, carrot and celery to a large pot and cook on a medium heat until soft.
2. Add any starchy vegetables such as kūmara, potato or pumpkin.
3. Add stock and simmer gently for 15 minutes or until vegetables are soft.
4. Add any finely chopped greens such as bean, spinach or broccoli and cook for a further 5-10 minutes or until tender.

Serve with wholemeal bread.

* This dish is appropriate for tamariki aged 4-6 years but the size and texture of vegetable pieces may need to be modified for tamariki aged 1-3 years.



Eid

Eid al-Fitr is the celebration of the end of Ramadan, a holy month when Muslims around the world fast (no eating or drinking) from before dawn until dusk. Since Muslims follow the lunar calendar, Eid is celebrated once the new moon is sighted after the 29th or 30th fast, this is the first day of the month of Shawwaal (the 10th month in the Islamic lunar calendar).

Once the moon is sighted, Muslim adults give their Fitra (money or food donation) to those in need. The recommendation is also for everyone to give in charity beyond their normal habit. On Eid day, there is a communal prayer in the morning and the rest of the day is spent with family and friends.

Ideas to celebrate

- Say “Eid Mubarak”! (Eid Blessings!)
- Wear your best clothes
- Prepare wholesome dishes together with produce from the garden and share with your centre community
- Raise money to give to the local mosques who distribute food and money for Eid
- Raise and donate money for other charities like KidsCan or a local food bank
- Make gifts and cards for family members
- Create colourful prayer mats
- Decorate the room with geometrical Islamic designs and crescent moons



RECIPES

Fruit phirni

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Basmati rice	¼ cup	125 g	250 g
Milk	3 cups	1.8 L	3.6 L
Pureed fruit	1 cup	625 g	1.25 kg
Fresh fruit, chopped	2 ½ cups	1 kg	2 kg

Method

1. Grind the rice in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle until quite fine and almost powdery.
2. Heat the milk over a low to medium heat and add the ground rice and sugar.
3. Stir often while it cooks to stop lumps from forming.
4. Continue to cook until it has thickened to a paste.
5. Remove from heat and stir in the fruit puree.
6. Pour into individual serving bowls or one large container and refrigerate until set.
7. Garnish with the fruit and serve cold.

Tips

- Any pureed fruit will work in this recipe, but berries are particularly good.
- If using a mortar and pestle you can soften the rice by soaking in water for 30 minutes prior to grinding. Drain the water off before grinding, this will make it easier and quicker.

* This dish is appropriate for tamariki aged 4–6 years but the size and texture of fruit pieces may need to be modified for tamariki aged 1–3 years.

Vegetable biryani

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Oil	2 Tbsp	75 ml	150 ml
Onion, grated	2	625 g	1.25 kg
Carrot, grated	2	625 g	1.25 kg
Ginger, chopped	1 Tbsp	25 g	50 g
Garlic, crushed	4 cloves	50 g	100 g
Biryani/korma paste	4 Tbsp	185 g	370 g
Crushed tomatoes	1x 400 g can	1 kg	2 kg
Eggplant, grated	1	750 g	1.5 kg
Basmati rice	1 ¼ cups	625 g	1.25 kg
Canned lentils, drained and rinsed	1x 400 g can	625 g	1.25 kg
Water	1 ½ cups	900 ml	1.8 L
Plain unsweetened yoghurt	¼ cup	160 g	320 g
Broccoli, finely chopped	4 cups	750 g	1.5 kg

Method

1. Pre-heat oven to 200°C.
2. In a large oven-proof casserole dish heat the oil and add onion and carrot, cook until softened.
3. Add ginger, garlic, biryani/korma paste, tomatoes and eggplant. Cook slowly until eggplant is soft and tomatoes have reduced to a paste.
4. Add basmati rice, lentils, water and yoghurt. Bring to a boil then turn off heat, cover with a lid and place in the oven.
5. Cook for approximately 45 minutes or until the rice is cooked and beginning to get crisp around the edges.
6. Mix broccoli through and cook for a further 15 minutes or until the broccoli is soft
7. Remove from oven and serve.



Diwali

Diwali is the festival of lights, an ancient Hindu festival celebrated each spring. The festival signifies the victory of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. To celebrate, houses are decorated with candles, colourful lights and huge firework displays are held while families share feasts. Those celebrating also decorate their houses with colourful Rangoli artworks – patterns created on the floor using coloured rice or powder.

When is it celebrated?

The festival preparations and rituals typically extend over a five-day period, but the main festival night of Diwali coincides with the darkest night of the Hindu Lunisolar calendar month Kartika, normally between mid-October and mid-November.

Ideas to celebrate

- Make candles out of bees or soy wax
- Learn about different vegetables and ask families to donate one each to make a vegetable curry
- Rangoli artwork, drawn on concrete with chalk or designed with fresh flowers
- Make paper-plate Rangoli
- Bollywood dancing
- Make paper Kolams and garlands
- Musical games, such as musical chairs
- Invite parents in to read a story

“To celebrate Diwali, we share traditional dishes such as vegetable curry with our children and families, but cooked with less salt and oil and butter free pudding with minimal sugar and fresh fruit.”



– Amber Learning Centre

Photo: Courtesy of KINZ East Tamaki



RECIPES

Lentil and vegetable curry

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Oil	1 Tbsp	35 ml	70 ml
Onion, finely diced	1	375 g	750 g
Garlic, crushed	2 cloves	25 g	50 g
Curry powder	1 ½ Tbsp	25 g	50 g
Garam masala	1 Tbsp	10 g	20 g
Coconut cream	½ cup	315 ml	630 ml
Water	3 cups	1.85 L	3.75 L
Carrots, finely chopped	1	350 g	700 g
Pumpkin, peeled and finely chopped	2 cups	650 g	1.3 kg
Cauliflower, finely chopped	3 cups	900 g	1.8 kg
Broccoli, finely chopped	3 cups	660 g	1.32 kg
Canned lentils, drained and rinsed	1 can	600 g	1.2 kg
Evaporated milk	1 can	930 ml	1.86 L
Fresh coriander, finely chopped	¼ cup	25 g	50 g

Method

1. Heat oil in a large pot and add onion, cook gently until lightly browned.
2. Add garlic, curry powder and garam masala and continue to cook for a further minute.
3. Add coconut cream and water and bring to the boil then reduce to a gentle simmer.
4. Add carrot, pumpkin and cauliflower and cook until just about tender.
5. Add broccoli and lentils and cook for a further 10 minutes until vegetables are soft.
6. Add evaporated milk and heat until just simmering then remove from the heat.
7. Garnish with coriander.

This curry is best served with steamed brown rice.



Christmas

Christmas Day is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, which also has many secular aspects, such as gift-giving (Saint Nicholas/Santa/Father Christmas), lights, advent calendars, decorations and Christmas trees. It is observed most commonly on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration.

Ideas to celebrate

- Make snow globes using old jars, white glitter and water. Use glue to secure the lid to the jar.
- DIY Christmas trees and decorations
- Tug of war with a giant Christmas cracker
- Make snowmen using strawberries and yoghurt
- Santa-sack race and reindeer races
- Make a Santa veggie tray
- Make gingerbread men and candy canes with play dough
- Cut fruit and vegetables into festive shapes
- Give to those in need – raise money for food bank, City Mission, Salvation Army, KidsCan
- Learn and sing Christmas carols with actions
- Play rob the nest with Christmas presents
- Plan and perform a Christmas dance for whānau



Success Story

“For our Christmas parties, we provide families with a list of food ideas, including recipes from the Heart Foundation website – everyone puts their name to one. It makes a much more colourful and balanced array of party food!”

– Parnell Early Childhood Centre



RECIPES

Couscous tabbouleh

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Dry couscous	1 ⅓ cups	700 g	1.4 kg
Boiling water	1 ⅓ cups	800 ml	1.6 L
Feta cheese, crumbled	1 ⅓ cups	300 g	600 g
Parsley, chopped	2 cups	300 g	600 g
Fresh mint, chopped	⅓ cup	30 g	60 g
Spring onions, sliced	2	65 g	130 g
Lemon zest	1 Tbsp	15 g	30 g
Lemon juice	⅓ cup	200 ml	400 ml
Olive oil	2 Tbsp	100 ml	200 ml
Cracked black pepper	¼ tsp	5 g	10 g
Tomato, finely diced	2 cups	1 kg	2 kg

Method

1. Place the couscous in a bowl and cover with boiling water.
2. Cover the bowl with a lid or cling wrap and let it stand for 10 minutes.
3. Break up the soaked couscous with a fork and refrigerate until cold.
4. In a large bowl mix together the remaining ingredients with the cold couscous.
5. Serve or refrigerate until needed.



Oaty banana balls

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Rolled oats	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup	165 g	330 g
Cocoa powder	2 tsp	10 g	20 g
Ripe banana	$\frac{2}{3}$	120 g	240 g
Honey	2 tsp	50 g	100 g
Orange zest	2 tsp	5 g	10 g
Tahini	1 Tbsp	25 g	50 g

Method

1. Blend oats and cocoa until fine.
2. Add remaining ingredients and blend until it forms a soft dough.
3. Roll into bite sized balls and refrigerate.

Tip

- The dough may seem quite soft initially, but they will become more firm in the fridge.

* This dish is appropriate for tamariki aged 4-6 years but the size and shape of the balls may need to be modified for tamariki aged 1-3 years.



General celebration tips

- Consider ways to recognise special occasions with the child as the focus, shifting the emphasis away from food.
- Incorporate a physical activity component to your celebration.
- Create a healthy snack list and have parents sign up to choose an item – even better if you can supply the healthy recipes.
- Promote your celebrations and events as water-only, add washed fruit slices and fresh herbs to water jugs.
- Make sure there is a balance of savoury to sweet foods and fresh vegetables and fruit are available.
- If foods are served that are higher in sugar or saturated fat, ensure that they are cut into child-sized portions.
- Rename family takeaway nights to shift the focus away from food such as family fun night.

For more support and information

heartfoundation.org.nz – Tohu Manawa Ora | Healthy Heart Award, one-on-one support to promote healthy eating and physical activity in your early learning service.

Search 'Fresh Made' for recipe ideas, tips and resources.

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The Heart Foundation is New Zealand's heart charity, leading the fight against our country's biggest killer – heart disease. As a charity, the Heart Foundation relies on the generosity and goodwill of everyday Kiwis to support its work.

We provide support for people and their families affected by heart disease. We also fund leading-edge research and specialist training for cardiologists, while our education and prevention programmes tackle heart disease head-on in the community.

Through our work with young children, we create a foundation for keeping hearts healthy into the future.

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