Illinois Child Care Bureau News

October – December 2014

Dear Provider:

Have you tried any of the delicious recipes in Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook for Homes? There are several recipes using sweet potatoes – the focus of this newsletter – see Tasty Tots on page 31, Sweet Potato and Black Bean Stew on page 57.

ICCB welcomes **Antaquila Allen** of Dolton, **Ruth Allen** of Chicago, **Kishna Anderson** of Beach Park, **Christina Barrera** of Round Lake Park, **Shawana Brown** of Chicago, **Britney Brown** of Dolton, **Yvette Coats** of Country Club Hills, **Caurice Cole** of Chicago, **Tomika Cooley** of Lansing, **Vaniscia Easter** of Riverdale, **Amy Ganus** of Rockford, **Angelica Green** of Maywood, **Serena Harris** of Chicago, **Shelby Huntley-Green** of University Park, **Ghazala Javed** of Des Plaines, **JoAnn Konstantopoulos** of Chicago, **Michael McAllister** of Sauk Village, **Tina Mengel** of Lake in the Hills, **Michael Miles** of Chicago, **Jacqueline Morris** of Chicago, **Ana Nedelea** of Chicago, **Florence Purifoy** of Rockford, **Sonia Roa** of Chicago, **Pertrice Rutledge** of Kankakee, **Laura Schneider** of Melrose Park, **Kizzie Shelton** of Dolton, **Alexis Stewart** of Chicago, **Rubicela Vega** of Chicago, **Angelas White** of Chicago, **Eva Wilkins** of Chicago, and **Michelle Wright** of Waukegan.

ICCB's staff is available to assist you as you continue to develop your knowledge of good nutrition for healthy children.

REMINDER: Your completed **Enrollment Renewal Worksheet** for FY15 was due September 15. If you have not submitted the renewals, please complete renewals immediately to avoid losing reimbursement with October menus. Mail, fax, or email them to the Illinois Child Care Bureau office.

ICCB's office will be closed:

- ✓ Thursday, November 27 and Friday, November 28 in observance of Thanksgiving
- ✓ Wednesday, December 24 – Thursday, December 25 in observance of Christmas
- ✓ Thursday, January 1, 2015 in observance of New Year's Day

~ Cathy, Kim, Mary, Marguerite, and Sonia

Reimbursement rates effective as of July 1, 2014:

rate level	breakfast	am snack	lunch	pm snack	supper	evening snack
Tier I	$1.31	$0.73	$2.47	$0.73	$2.47	$0.73
Tier II	$0.48	$0.20	$1.49	$0.20	$1.49	$0.20

If you have a question about your current tier status, please call the Illinois Child Care Bureau at 773.444.0115 and ask to speak to Ms. Klimek.

A Provider You Should Know

by Kim Klimek, Compliance Supervisor

Ms. Betty Weems has owned and operated **Snuggle Bunnies** day care, located in Kankakee for the past 12 years. Prior to opening her home day care, Ms. Weems was a legal secretary for a law firm. Ms. Weems decided to change careers after her children began elementary school. She began volunteering in her child's classroom and continued to volunteer at the school wherever she was needed. The suggestion to open a day care home came from one of her child's teachers and Ms. Weems began taking classes in child development. Once she was enrolled in child development coursework, she realized that she had found her true passion.

Ms. Weems is currently teaching the children to become more health conscious. They are working on poster boards that represent "good things to eat" and "bad things to eat". The children and Ms. Weems collect pictures of different types of food from magazines and newspapers, then place them on the appropriate boards. The children really enjoy this project.

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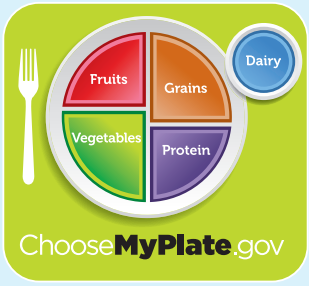
Celebrate SWEET POTATOES

What is the difference between a sweet potato and a yam? According to *Fun Science Facts from the Library of Congress*, there are over 600 varieties of yams and 95% of these crops are grown in Africa. Compared to sweet potatoes, yams are starchier and drier. Today the US Dept of Agriculture requires labels with the term 'yam' to be accompanied by the term 'sweet potato' Unless you specifically search for yams, which are usually found in an international market, you are probably eating sweet potatoes.

Some interesting facts about this nutritious vegetable.

- Sweet potatoes are fat-free and are a great source of Vitamin E.
- Sweet potatoes are a substantial source of dietary fiber especially when eaten with the skin. There is more fiber in one sweet potato than in a bowl of oatmeal.
- Sweet potatoes are a great source of Vitamin A – providing twice the recommended daily allowance. Vitamin A is necessary for strong tissues and is required to maintain a healthy immune system and develop resistance to infection.
- Potassium in sweet potatoes helps maintain fluid and electrolyte balance in the body cells as well as normal heart function, nerve function and blood pressure.
- Sweet potatoes are more nutritious if cooked with their skins on.
- Sweet potatoes, or yams, actually fit perfectly into a low-carb lifestyle – with major nutritional bonuses to boot.
- Vegetables and fruits contain more than 100 beneficial vitamins, minerals, fibers and other substances.
- Store unwashed sweet potatoes in the refrigerator separately from fruits if possible. Wash sweet potatoes with water using a vegetable brush.
- Fresh sweet potatoes should be cooked within a week or two of being purchased.

- Fresh sweet potatoes can be stored for up to a month.
- Native Americans were growing sweet potatoes when Columbus arrived in America in 1492.
- Sweet Potatoes have been grown in the South since as early as 1648.
- George Washington, the first US President, was a sweet potato farmer.
- Sweet potatoes do not get ripe like other crops. They will continue growing as long as the plant has green leaves 120 to 150 days after harvesting.
- One cup of sweet potatoes equals one medium sized, cooked fresh sweet potato.
- Sweet potatoes are versatile: bake and serve as a side dish, dice and add to soups and stews, cut and bake French-fry style, or mash boiled sweet potatoes and use in breads or muffins.



Choose My Plate

Need ideas for activities, games and more? Visit My Plate for Kids at http://www.choosemyplate.gov/kids/index.html

- Sweet potatoes can be substituted in some recipes that call for white potatoes such as in soups and stews or serve a combination of mashed white and sweet potatoes.

- Seasonings: Cinnamon, nutmeg, brown sugar, and/or orange juice enhances the flavor of sweet potatoes. Young children do not need added salt and there is no need to add any fat for flavor (such as butter or margarine).

- Approximately 40% of the sweet potatoes consumed in the United States are grown in North Carolina.

Need ideas to incorporate more sweet potatoes into your day care menu? Visit SweetPotato.org and NCSweetPotatoes.com for menu ideas.

Make science fun by doing an experiment with the children using sweet potatoes. Visit the Illinois Child Care Bureau website for more instructions at http://www.illinoischildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/July-2012.pdf.

Teaching points for the children may include:

- Sweet potatoes are grown in the ground like the roots of a tree.

- The sprouts on sweet potatoes can be planted in the ground and will produce more sweet potatoes.

- Sweet potatoes are harvested August through October.

- Sweet potatoes are a native American plant.

- Sweet potatoes are rich in vitamins and minerals. Vitamins in sweet potatoes do many important things such as helping you to see and helping prevent infection.

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Ms. Weems also emphasizes the importance of physical activity and has the children moving as much as possible. Ms. Weems has introduced dance as part of their learning. She cares for an autistic child and music helps the child participate in activities with the other children. She has created learning games such as "the math game". Ms. Weems calls out a math problem and the child who answers the problem correctly gets up to show the other children their newly created dance. The children are learning, having fun, and being physically active all at the same time.

For the younger children, Ms. Weems uses ABC Mouse® to teach them their letters and uses writing boards to teach them to write. Ms. Weems felt great pride when a child's kindergarten teacher complimented the parent on how well prepared the child was for school. The kindergarten teacher was amazed to be told the child attended a day care home, not a traditional pre-school.

Ms. Weems enjoys reading to the children and encourages the children to read as well. During the summer, the older children read to the younger children. In addition to reading, the children learn science, social studies, and current events. If one of the children is going on vacation, then all the children research where the child is going and the activities they can do. This activity brings all the children together as a group which makes the vacation enjoyable for everyone. Ms. Weems continually stresses that "learning doesn't stop" regardless of your age.

Ms. Weems typically cares for children 6 months to 12 years old. She enjoys sharing what the children are doing in her day care and writes a quarterly newsletter for the parents. Snuggle Bunnies has an open door policy – the parents/guardians are able to visit the children at any time of day. This encourages the parents/guardians to observe their children at play or listening attentively during reading time. She feels fortunate her business operates at full capacity most of the time.

Joseph Weems, her husband, is her day care home assistant and enjoys the children as much as Ms. Weems. They work together as a team. When a new food is introduced, Mr. Weems will sing his "yum yum" song. The children laugh and enjoy his singing, as well as eat the new food. They have found that family-style service works best for them. The children like to serve themselves and are more willing to try new foods. Ms. Weems knows the importance of appropriate portion sizes depending on the child's age and looks forward to serving menu items from Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook for Homes which was distributed to all ICCB day care home providers during their last home visit.

Ms. Weems stated that the most rewarding part of her career is seeing the transition from day care to school. When the children enter school, they are well prepared. She is filled with pride knowing "what I do does matter. I do make a difference". Looking back, Ms. Weems would choose the same career although she would have started it much earlier.

The most challenging part for Ms. Weems' day is handling all the important paperwork required of a business owner and participant on the food program. Snuggle Bunnies is open 7 days a week, so finding down time is challenging. She appreciates the training she has received from Louise Huber, her Illinois Child Care Bureau Program Advisor. Currently, Ms. Weems' husband does Snuggle Bunnies grocery shopping for the day care. Ms. Weems plans each day's meals early in the morning so the meals are ready on time for her scheduled meal and snack service times. Ms. Weems inputs her attendance and menus online using Minute Menu™ Kids2go during the evening.

Ms. Weems takes her job very seriously and enjoys furthering her education by attending classes with the ultimate goal of receiving a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education. She believes it is important to be recognized as a child development professional. Lastly, Ms. Weems enjoys getting visits from the older children no longer in her care and stated "you know you've done your job when they come back to visit".

recipes

Harvest Stew

Ingredients

¾ TB vegetable oil
¾ cup onions, peeled and diced
1/3 cup carrots, peeled and diced
½ cup celery, diced
1 TB flour
1/3 tsp low-sodium chicken base
1 ¼ cup water
1/8 tsp salt-free seasoning
1/3 tsp garlic powder
1 cup canned low-sodium diced tomatoes
1 cup fresh sweet potatoes, peeled, cubed 1”
½ cup fresh red potato, unpeeled, cubed 1”
1 cup cooked diced chicken, ½” pieces
2 cups canned low-sodium Great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
½ cup fresh baby spinach, chopped

Instructions

1. Heat vegetable oil in a large pot over medium heat. Cook onions, carrots, and celery for 5 minutes allowing them to brown slightly.

2. Sprinkle flour over the vegetables. Stir well. Add chicken base and water. Stir constantly. Bring to a boil.

3. Reduce heat to medium. Stir in salt-free seasoning and garlic powder. Cook uncovered for 2 minutes. Add tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and red potatoes. Simmer uncovered for 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir frequently. Add chicken, beans, and spinach. Stir.

4. Continue to simmer uncovered for 10 minutes. Serve hot.

Servings: 6

All-Star Snack

Ingredients

1 cup carrots, sliced
½ cup sweet potatoes, sliced
1 ½ cups apples, peeled and sliced
1 TB brown sugar
1 cup water, divided

Instructions

1. Bring ¾ cup of water to boil. Simmer carrots and sweet potatoes until tender. Drain and cool.
2. In baking or casserole dish, alternate sweet potatoes and carrots with apples.
3. Sprinkle brown sugar on top.
4. Add remaining water. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until apples are tender.
5. Remove cover and bake until golden brown on top.

Servings: 6

Special thanks to the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission, the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission, the National Food Service Management Institute at The University of Mississippi, and the University of Illinois Extension Program. For delicious recipes and more visit SweetPotato.org and NCSweetPotatoes.com.

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