

Healthy Celebrations

Ideas and recipes
for early learning
services

Contents

Introduction	3
About us	5
Sample celebrations guideline	6
Celebrations – ideas and recipes	8
• Birthdays	8
• Chinese New Year	12
• Heart Day	16
• Easter	20
• Mother’s Day and Father’s Day	24
• Pacific Island Language Weeks	26
• Matariki	30
• Eid	34
• Diwali	38
• Christmas	42
• General tips and information	46

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.

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

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

Children's taste preferences, habits and attitudes towards healthy food are established early and lay the foundations for their future wellbeing.

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 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
learnbyheart.org.nz



Fuelled4life is a free tool providing support and resources to help you improve food and nutrition in your early learning service. Fuelled4life will assist you in all areas of food provision whether it is menu planning, recipes, help with lunch boxes, celebrations, and catering advice.

Being signed up with Fuelled4life makes it even easier to achieve a Healthy Heart Award. Using our recipes and resources can help you complete the Food Provision strand of the Healthy Heart Award.

For more information
fuelled4life.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-only.
- 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 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.

Signature: _____

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
- 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 smoothies* plain popcorn, fruit kebabs, veggie and fruit platter with yoghurt dip, mini pizzas*, cookie cutter sandwiches, banana 'ice cream'*.

* Visit fuelled4life.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

Frozen yoghurt and fresh fruit ice blocks



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
unsweetened, low fat yoghurt	1 ¾ cups	1.1 kg	2.2 kg
chopped grapes*	¾ cup	335 g	670 g
chopped paw paw*	1 cup	335 g	670 g

* This can be replaced with any seasonal fruit.

Method

1. Blend or mix the yoghurt and fruit together.
2. Fill ice block moulds with yoghurt and fruit mix until each mould is full.
3. Place a stick into each ice block.
4. Freeze and serve when required.



Banana cake



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
self-raising flour	2 cups	5 cups	1.25 kg
unprocessed bran	2 cups	5 cups	900 g
dates, chopped	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups
ripe bananas, mashed	3	900 g	1.8 kg
baking soda	1 tsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
reduced-fat milk	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups	1.88 L
margarine	3 Tbsp	125 g	250 g
golden syrup or maple syrup	6 Tbsp	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups
eggs, beaten	2	5	10

Method

1. Preheat oven to 190°C.
2. Place the first four ingredients in a bowl.
3. Dissolve the baking soda in milk.
4. Melt the margarine and golden/ maple syrup together in a microwave or in a small saucepan.
5. Add baking soda/milk mixture and syrup mixture with the eggs to the ingredients in the bowl. Do not over-mix as this will toughen the mixture.
6. Spoon into lightly oiled or non-stick cake tin (three-quarters fill). Bake for 30-40 minutes or until a skewer inserted comes out clean.



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



Photo: Courtesy of Childspace Wilton



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 buns



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Dough			
sugar	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp	4 Tbsp
warm water	½ cup	1 cup	2 cups
dry yeast	½ tsp	1 ½ tsp	1 Tbsp
salt	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp
plain flour	1 ½ cups	3 ½ cups	1.75 L
baking powder	½ tsp	1 tsp	2 tsp
Filling			
finely shredded cabbage	1 ¼ cups	3 cups	1.5 L
dry shiitake mushrooms	3	8	16
lean pork mince	80 g	200 g	400 g
green onions, thinly sliced	2	5	10
eggs	1	1	2
salt	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp
finely chopped ginger	1 tsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
low sodium soy sauce	1 tsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
corn flour	1 tsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
sesame oil	1 tsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
baking paper			



Method

Bun dough

1. In a large bowl, dissolve sugar in water. Sprinkle in yeast; let stand for about 10 minutes, until frothy. Stir in salt. Mix in enough of the flour to make soft ragged dough. Turn out onto floured work surface. Knead for about 8 minutes, adding as much of the remaining flour as necessary, until smooth, elastic and no longer sticky to the touch.
2. Place in a greased bowl, cover and let rise in warm draft-free place (a tea towel over the bowl works) about three hours until doubled in bulk.
3. Punch down dough and turn out onto lightly floured surface. Flatten slightly and sprinkle with baking powder. Knead into ball, incorporating baking powder completely, about 1 minute. Cover and let rest for 10 minutes.



Filling

1. Cover mushrooms with hot water in a bowl; soak about 20 minutes or until soft. Remove mushrooms from water. Cut off stems and thinly slice caps.
2. Place cabbage in a large bowl. Add prepared mushrooms with pork mince, green onions, egg, salt, ginger, soy sauce, corn flour and oil. Toss to combine. Set aside.

Wrapping

1. Roll out dough into a log shape (or two logs if making 50 serves). Slice into equal pieces; roll or press each into 3-inch circle. Spoon 1.5 to 2 tablespoons of filling onto centre of each circle. Gather dough together around filling, stretching slightly if necessary, to form a pouch and twist to seal top.
2. Cut 3-inch squares of baking paper for each bun. Place each bun, sealed side up, on square of paper. Arrange in steamer trays about 2 inches apart. Cover and let rise for 45 minutes.
3. Bring water to boil in steamer or wok. Cover and steam, two trays at a time, for 5 minutes. Reverse trays and steam for about 5 minutes until puffed and dry to the touch.

Heart Day

Heart Day is part of the Heart Foundation's Annual 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. 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 - smoothies, red fruit and vegetables (e.g. red apples, capsicum, tomatoes, plums etc), dips, 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

Rice paper rolls



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
red cabbage, finely shredded	½ cup	150 g	300 g
carrot, cut into fine strips	½ cup	250 g	500 g
coriander leaves, chopped	1 cup	125 g	250 g
sweet chilli sauce	¼ cup	150 ml	300 ml
sesame oil	1 Tbsp	40 ml	80 ml
cooked chicken or pork mince	200 g	500 g	1 kg
rice paper sheets	20	50	100

Method

1. Place the cabbage, carrot, coriander, chilli sauce, sesame oil and mince in a bowl and mix well.
2. Dip each piece of rice paper in a large bowl of warm water until soft and then place on a board.
3. Place 2-3 tablespoons of the mixture at the side of the rice paper. Fold the rice paper over to cover the filling and then fold in the two sides and roll up to form a parcel.
4. Place on serving trays, cover with a damp cloth until ready to serve.
5. Serve with a sweet chilli dipping sauce.



Heart Day

Beetroot dip



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
beetroot, drained	450 g can	1.875 kg	3.75 kg
Greek-style yoghurt	1 cup	1 kg (1 L)	2 kg (2 L)
fresh lemon juice	2 Tbsp	½ cup	1 cup
ground cumin	1 tsp	4 tsp (20 ml)	40 ml

Method

Combine all ingredients thoroughly in a food processor. Serve with fresh vegetables.





Past winners of the annual 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

Carrot sticks & hummus



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
chickpeas, canned, drained, rinsed	1 can (400 g)	2 ½ cans (1 kg)	5 cans (2 kg)
garlic	1 clove	2 cloves (10 g)	5 cloves (25 g)
tahini	¼ cup	¾ cup	1 ¼ cups
lemons, freshly squeezed	1	2	5
ground cumin	pinch	¼ tsp	½ tsp
ground pepper	pinch	¼ tsp	½ tsp
olive oil	1 Tbsp	2 ½ Tbsp	⅓ cup
water	1 Tbsp	2 ½ Tbsp	⅓ cup

Method

To make hummus, place all ingredients in a food processor or blender and blend until smooth. Enjoy with carrot sticks or other vegetables.



Hot cross buns



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
Dough			
dried yeast	1 ½ tsp	20 g	50 g
brown sugar	2 Tbsp	50 g	100 g
reduced-fat milk	1 cup	550 ml	1.1 L
warm water	1 ¼ cups	550 ml	1.1 L
wholemeal flour	2 cups	520 g	1 kg
plain white flour	4 cups	1 kg	2 kg
ground allspice	1 ½ tsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tb
ground cinnamon	1 tsp	2 tsp	1 Tb
ground cloves	1 tsp	2 tsp	1 Tb
margarine	¼ cup	140 g	280 g
eggs	2	4	7
mixed candied citrus peel	1 cup	470 g	940 g
currants	1 ½ cups	470 g	940 g
Crosses			
plain white flour	½ cup	80 g	160 g
water	2 Tbsp	50 ml	100 ml

Method

Dough

1. Dissolve yeast with brown sugar, milk and water.
2. In a separate bowl, sift together flours and spices.
3. Rub margarine into flour mixture.



4. Add egg to yeast mixture.
5. Knead flour mixture and yeast mixture together to form a slightly sticky dough.
6. Add dried fruit and knead.
7. Cover the dough in a large bowl and allow to rise until doubled in size.
8. Weigh the dough into 80g portions and shape into buns.
9. Allow to rise again until approximately doubled in size.

Crosses

1. Mix together the flour and water.
2. Roll dough into thin strips.
3. Place strips on top of buns in a cross.

Baking

1. Heat oven to 220°C.
2. Brush the tops of the buns with trim milk.
3. Bake for approximately 10 minutes or until well browned on top and cooked through.
4. Transfer buns to a wire rack to cool.



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



Bircher Muesli can be whipped up the night before so it's all ready for the morning. You can use any seasonal fruit for this recipe.

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 6	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
peaches in natural juice	400 g tin	1 kg	2.5 kg	5 kg
apple, peeled, cored and grated	1	3	500 g	1 kg
pear, peeled, cored and grated	1	3	500 g	1 kg
rolled oats	2 cups	5 cups	1.125 kg	2.25 kg
ground cinnamon	½ tsp	2 tsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
low-fat natural yoghurt	¾ cup	1 ½ cups	1 kg	1.8 kg
almond flakes, toasted (optional)	½ cup	1 ½ cups	312.5 g	625 g
reduced-fat milk	1 cup	2 ½ cups	1.5 L	3.125 L
banana	1 banana	2 ½ bananas	6 bananas	12 bananas

Method

1. Drain the peaches and reserve the juice, chop the peaches into bite-size pieces.
2. Add the peaches, apple, pear, rolled oats, cinnamon and reserved peach juice into a bowl, mix to combine. Fold through the yoghurt and almonds.
3. Allow to stand covered for an hour or overnight.
4. Spoon the muesli into individual bowls. Serve topped with milk, banana and/or apple slivers.

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

Pacific Island Language Weeks

RECIPES

Suruwa – curry fish lolo



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 4	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
vegetable oil	2 Tbsp	5 Tbsp	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups
onion, finely diced	1	2	750 g	1.5 kg
fresh ginger, crushed	1 Tbsp	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp	6 $\frac{1}{4}$ Tbsp	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup
garlic, crushed	4 cloves	15 cloves	125 g	250 g
curry powder	2 Tbsp	5 Tbsp	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups
water	1 cup	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	6 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups	3.125 L
light coconut cream	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups	3 cups	1.5 L
fish fillets	600 g	1.5 kg	3.75 kg	7.5 kg
bok choy, washed and chopped	1 cup	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	1.25 kg	2.5 kg
tomato, diced	1 large	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	1.25 kg	2.5 kg
fresh coriander, chopped	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	9 cups

Method

1. Heat oil in a medium-sized saucepan.
2. Add onion and cook slowly until soft.
3. Add ginger, garlic and curry powder and cook for another minute.
4. Add water and coconut cream and cook gently for 10 minutes.
5. Add fish, bok choy and tomato and cook for approximately 5 minutes or until the fish is cooked through.
6. Sprinkle with coriander before serving.
7. Serve with taro, kumara or potato and salsa.

Sua fa'i – Samoan banana soup



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 4	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
ripe bananas	3	8	19	38
water to cover				
sago	1-2 Tbsp	1/3 cup	3/4 cup	1 1/2 cups
lite coconut cream	1/3 cup	3/4 cup	2 cups	4 cups (1 L)
lemon or lime juice (optional)				

Method

1. Peel and mash bananas with a masher or fork, leaving some lumpy bits.
2. Add enough cold water to cover the bananas.
3. Add sago and stir through.
4. Place the banana mixture in a saucepan. Bring to the boil over a medium heat, then reduce heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally until sago goes transparent.
5. Stir in the coconut cream just before serving.
6. Serve warm with a squeeze of lime or lemon juice.

Tip: To serve cold, pour into individual bowls and refrigerate.

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
- 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

Kamo kamo fritters



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 4	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
kamo kamo (kumi kumi), grated	½ (~600 g)	1.5 kg	3.75 kg	7.5 kg
egg, beaten	1	3	7	13
plain flour	⅓ cup	¾ cup	2 cups	4 cups
dried dill	2 tsp	5 tsp	¾ cup	1 ½ cups
garlic, crushed	2 cloves	4 cloves	60 g	125 g
vegetable oil	1 Tbsp	2 ½ Tbsp	⅓ cup	¾ cup

Method

1. Squeeze excess water out of kamo kamo and place in mixing bowl. Add egg and mix through well.
2. Mix through just enough flour to make kamo kamo start to stick together. Add dill and garlic, and stir through.
3. Cook in a non-stick frying pan over medium heat with a little oil to help it turn golden. Turn and cook on other side.





Friendship soup



Families are invited to bring a vegetable from home to add to the soup.

Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
vegetable oil			
chopped vegetables (onion, carrot, celery, kumara, pumpkin, etc)	4-5 cups	10-12 cups (1.5-1.8 kg)	3-3.75 kg
salt-reduced vegetable stock	6 cups	15 cups (3.75 L)	7.5 L

Method

1. Heat oil in a heavy-based saucepan and stir fry onion and carrot for 3-4 minutes.
2. Add remaining vegetables and stir fry for 4-5 minutes.
3. Add stock and simmer gently for 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
4. Serve with wholemeal bread.

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
- Make dates into a gift by stuffing with cashews/walnuts, wrapping them in cellophane and adding a ribbon with name tag
- 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	225 g	550 g
reduced-fat milk	3 cups	3.125 L	6.25 L
sugar	2 Tbsp	125 g	250 g
Pureed fruit, no added sugar	1 cup	1 kg	2 kg
fruit for garnish	½ cup	410 g	820 g

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.

Vegetable biryani



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
vegetable oil	2 Tbsp	⅓ cup	⅔ cup
onion, chopped	2 medium	700 g	1.4 kg
carrot, chopped	2 medium	500 g	1 kg
ginger, crushed	1 Tbsp	2½ Tbsp (25 g)	5 Tbsp (50 g)
garlic, crushed	4 cloves	10 cloves (37.5 g)	75 g
biryani/korma paste	4 Tbsp	150 g	300 g
tomatoes, chopped	2 medium	500 g	1 kg
eggplant, diced	1 medium	750 g	1.5 kg
basmati rice	2 cups	1 kg	2 kg
canned chickpeas	1 cup	2.5 cups (412.5 g)	5 cups (825 g)
water	4 cups	2.5 L	5 L
unsweetened yoghurt	3 Tbsp	½ cup (112.5 g)	1 cup (225 g)
peas	3 cups	900 g	1.8 kg

Method

1. Heat oven to 150°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, 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 peas through and cook for a further 10 minutes or until the peas are hot through.
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
- Try making dried vegetables or fruit using a dehydrator
- Make roasted chickpeas
- 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



Diwali

RECIPES

Chickpea and cauliflower curry



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
vegetable oil	2 tsp	20 ml	40 ml
medium onion, diced	1	375 g	750 g
garlic cloves, crushed	2	25 g	50 g
curry powder	1 ½ Tbsp	50 g	100 g
low-fat coconut milk	1 cup	685 ml	1.37 g
water	1 ⅔ cups	1 L	2 L
medium carrots, peeled and sliced	1 ¼ cups	560 g	1.12 kg
butternut pumpkin, peeled and diced	1 ¾ cups	1 kg	2 kg
cauliflower florets	3 cups	900 g	1.8 kg
frozen peas	3 cups	950 g	1.9 kg
chickpeas, drained and rinsed	400 g can	1.2 kg	2.4 kg
light evaporated milk	2 ½ cups	1.5 L	3 L
lemon juice	2 Tbsp	60 ml	120 ml
fresh coriander, chopped	¼ cup	20 g	40 g

Method

1. Gently sauté the diced onion with the canola oil until soft and lightly browned. Add garlic and curry powder.
2. Add water and coconut milk. Bring to the boil then reduce to a gentle simmer.
3. Add carrot, pumpkin and cauliflower. Cook until just about tender.
4. Add peas and chickpeas. Cook for a further 5 minutes then remove from heat.
5. Heat evaporated milk in a separate pot until hot but not boiling. Add hot evaporated milk to curry.
6. Garnish with lemon juice and coriander on top, don't mix it through.
7. This curry is best served with steamed brown rice.



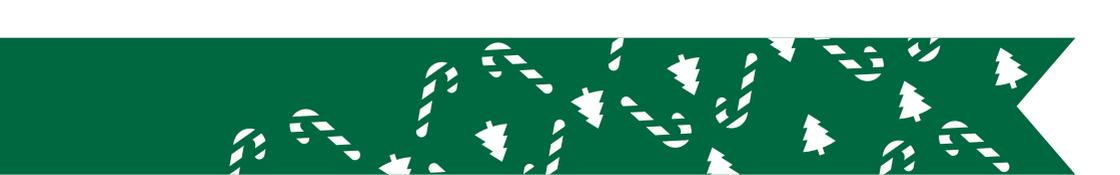
Christmas

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 Fuelled4life website – everyone puts their name to one. It makes a much more colourful and balanced array of party food!”

– Parnell Early Childhood Centre



Christmas

RECIPES

Couscous tabbouleh



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
dry couscous	2 ¼ cups	9.25 g	1.85 kg
boiling water	2 cups	1.25 L	2.5 L
feta cheese	⅔ cup	375 g	750 g
parsley, chopped	2 cups	300 g	600 g
fresh mint, chopped	¾ cup	50 g	100 g
spring onion, sliced	1	175 g	355 g
lemon zest	3 Tbsp	50 g	100 g
lemon juice	¼ cup	150 ml	300 ml
olive oil	¼ cup	125 ml	250 ml
cracked black pepper	1 tsp	10 g	20 g
tomato, diced	2 ¼ cups	1.125 kg	2.25 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.

Note: This recipe is intended as a main-sized portion for adults. Adapt the portion size to be appropriate for children.

Chocolate, fruit and nut truffles



Ingredients

INGREDIENTS	SERVES 10	SERVES 25	SERVES 50
nuts, chopped	¼ cup	40 g	80 g
dried apricots, chopped	¼ cup	50 g	100 g
dried dates, chopped	¼ cup	50 g	100 g
orange juice	¼ cup	75 ml	150 ml
orange zest	½ tsp	5 g	10 g
rolled oats	⅔ cup	125 g	250 g
sunflower seeds	¼ cup	80 g	160 g
cocoa powder	1 ½ tsp	20 g	40 g

Method

1. Place all ingredients into a food processor and blend until it forms a slightly sticky ball.
2. With clean hands, shape into balls approximately 20g each.
3. Keep refrigerated.



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

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

fuelled4life.org.nz – Recipes, tips and one-on-one support

Special thanks to the following individuals and organisations for their contribution to this resource:

Sarah Gerritsen – Auckland University, School of Population Health

Fern Pereira – Parnell Early Childhood Centre

Antonia Crawley – Taonga Education Centre Charitable Trust

Cherilynn Buckingham – Au Pair Link NZ

Lisa Frank – KINZ East Tamaki

And to all the fabulous early learning services who shared their case studies.





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.

This resource was developed by the Heart Foundation with funding from the Ministry of Health.

Heart Foundation, PO Box 17160, Greenlane, Auckland 1546
T 09 571 9191 E info@heartfoundation.org.nz W www.heartfoundation.org.nz



Printed 2017

ISBN 978-1-927263-64-8

The Heart Foundation of New Zealand is a registered charity (CC23052) under the Charities Act 2005