



what you eat.

early childhood celebration guide for national nutrition week.

Celebrate National Nutrition Week with playful experiences that help children explore, enjoy and connect with food.

This year's Love what you eat theme encourages children to discover food through curiosity, play, family, culture and connection.

This guide is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework and includes thoughtfully curated ideas that can be adapted for babies, toddlers, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children.

Here are some easy and inclusive ideas to help your early childhood centre get involved.



NATIONAL
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create a food discovery station.

Giving children the freedom and opportunities to explore food beyond the plate can open a whole new world of curiosity for them. Set up a simple food discovery station where children can investigate foods through sight, smell, touch, colour, shape and texture. Tasting should always be optional. You might include a small selection of fruits, vegetables or herbs, depending on your service's food safety and allergy procedures.

Children could:

- Look closely at colours, shapes and patterns
- Touch or smell food if they choose
- Compare two foods and notice similarities and differences
- Look inside a cut fruit or vegetable and notice seeds, layers or textures
- Draw, paint or talk about what they notice

make it work for different ages.

- For babies and young toddlers, keep the experience simple and responsive. An educator might safely present one food or herb, name what the child is noticing and respond to their gestures, sounds and expressions.
- For older children, add questions, comparisons and predictions. Children might guess what is inside a food, describe its features or investigate where it grows.



**print the food explorer
conversation cards for older
children on the next page!**

food explorer cards.

It looks like...

It smells like...

It feels like...

The colour reminds me
of....

The shape looks like...

Something that
surprised me was...

Draw the food below...

create a love what you eat food map.

A food map can be a great visual way to celebrate cultural diversity, spark conversations about food traditions and help children discover the many food experiences within their community.

Invite families to share a food, meal or family tradition that is meaningful to them. It might be a family favourite, a food connected to their culture or heritage, something enjoyed during a celebration, or simply a meal they love sharing together.

Add family contributions around a world map, map of Australia or a mood board.

Children can contribute by:

- Adding a photo or drawing of a food their family enjoys
- Sharing who they enjoy eating the food with
- Talking about a celebration or memory connected with the food
- Listening to and learning about the food experiences of other families



invite families to participate using the email template on the next page!



download the 'food our family loves' activity sheet (.docx) here!

create a love what you eat food map.

family email template.

Subject: Help us create our National Nutrition Week food map!

Dear families,

National Nutrition Week is coming up from 12-18th October, and this year's theme is 'Love what you eat' by the National Nutrition Foundation.

To celebrate, we're creating a food map that reflects the foods and food experiences within our community.

We would love your family to share one food, meal or food tradition that is meaningful to you. It could be a family favourite, a dish connected to your culture or heritage, a food enjoyed during a celebration, or simply something you love eating together.

Complete the attached 'A food our family loves' card and, if you would like, include a photo or drawing. We will bring everyone's contributions together to create our Love what you eat food map.

We can't wait to celebrate the foods and stories that make our community special!

Kind regards,
[Service/educator name]



grow something you can eat.

Help children make connections between food and the world by growing something edible at your service.

Some ideas include growing herbs, microgreens, lettuce, or another plant suitable for your space and setting.

Children could:

- Help add soil and plant seeds or seedlings
- Water and care for the plants
- Observe changes over time
- Take photos or make drawings of what they notice
- Measure or compare growth
- Smell or explore harvested herbs and produce
- Use the harvested food in a cooking or mealtime experience, where appropriate

make it work for different ages

- Babies can observe plants, safely explore the smell or texture of suitable herbs such as mint leaves, coriander, basil with an educator, and take part in simple routines such as helping hold a watering can.
- Toddlers can scoop soil, water plants and notice simple changes as well as name the tastes and textures such as sour, salty, pungent, smooth, bumpy.
- Kindergarten children can participate in more complex activities including investigation, documenting changes and cooking experiences.



download the 'growing food journal', 'grow your own microgreens instructions' and email template on the following pages.

growing food journal.

What are we growing?

We planted it on:

What do we think will
happen?

Today we noticed...

We harvested on...

What did we discover?

Draw or add a photo of our plant:



grow something you can eat.

grow your own microgreens.

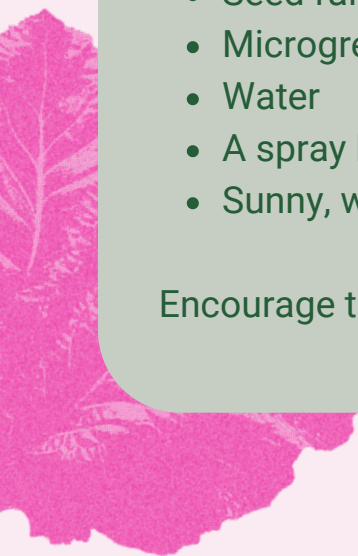
Microgreens grow quickly, making them a fun way for children to watch food grow and change during National Nutrition Week. The best microgreens for 3-5-year-olds include pea shoots, sunflower shoots, spinach, kale and broccoli.

Reusing clean plastic berry punnets also gives everyday packaging a second life!

What you'll need:

- Clean, empty strawberry or blueberry punnets with drainage holes
- Seed-raising mix or suitable potting mix
- Microgreen seeds suitable for growing and eating
- Water
- A spray bottle/watering can
- Sunny, well-lit spot

Encourage the children to participate in the planting activity.



grow something you can eat.

grow your own microgreens cont.

Day 1: Get Planting

Fill the punnet with a shallow layer of seed-raising mix. Sprinkle the seeds evenly across the surface and gently press them down. Mist gently with water.

Day 2-3: Water and watch

Place the punnet in a well-lit position and keep the growing mix moist, but not waterlogged. Invite children to look closely each day. Can they spot the first shoots appearing?

Day 4-6: Watch them grow

Continue gently watering as needed. Take photos, make drawings or measure the microgreens as they grow.

Day 7 onwards: Ready to harvest

Many microgreens can be ready to harvest in around 7-14 days, depending on the variety and growing conditions. When ready, cut the microgreens just above the soil.

Educator tip: Start growing your microgreens at the beginning of National Nutrition Week and document the changes throughout the week using the Growing food journal. If they aren't ready to harvest by the end of the week, keep the investigation going!

Once harvested, collaborate with the chef/cook at the service to incorporate the fresh microgreens into a recipe with children participating in this activity.



grow something you can eat.

family email template.

Subject: Help us grow something special for National Nutrition Week!

Dear families,

National Nutrition Week is coming up from October 12-18th, and this year's theme is Love what you eat by the National Nutrition Foundation.

As part of our celebrations, we'll be growing microgreens with the children and watching them change from tiny seeds into something we can eat.

To help us get growing, we're collecting clean, empty plastic strawberry and blueberry punnets to reuse as mini growing containers. If you have any at home, we'd love for you to wash them, remove any remaining fruit or packaging where possible, and bring them into the service by [insert date].

It's a simple way for us to reuse something that might otherwise be thrown away, while helping children explore where food comes from and how it grows.

Thank you for helping us get our little garden growing!

Kind regards,
[Service/educator name]



open a mini market.

Turn your home corner or dramatic play space into a mini food market! Use items you already have around your service such as pretend food, baskets, reusable shopping bags, clean food packaging or food pictures and invite children to shop, explore and play.

Keep it simple or let the market grow with children's ideas. Older children might create signs, shopping lists, organise food displays, simultaneously supporting their numeracy and communication skills.

You could include:

- Fruit and vegetable stalls
- Basket and reusable shopping bags
- Simple signs and food labels
- Shopping lists and texters
- Pretend money and a checkout for older children
- Photos of local markets, grocery shops or food stores familiar to your community



read books about food.

Stories can be a wonderful way to explore food, culture, family traditions, and where food comes from.

During National Nutrition Week, incorporate food-themed books into story time, classroom activities, or quiet reading sessions to encourage conversations about the foods children enjoy and the experiences that make food meaningful.

Books can help children:

- Discover new foods
- Explore different cultures and traditions
- Learn where food comes from
- Build vocabulary related to food and cooking
- Share their own food experiences

After reading, encourage children to reflect on the story by asking questions such as:

- What foods did you see in the story?
- Was there a food you recognised?
- Did the story remind you of a meal you enjoy?
- Was there a food celebration or tradition in the book?
- What food would you like to try?



see the food book ideas poster on the next page for inspiration!

read books about food!



Jasper McFlea would not eat his tea
Author: Lee Fox, Mitch Vane



Cool as a Cucumber
Author: Sally Smallwood



I Can Eat a Rainbow
Author: Annabel Karmel



Eating the Alphabet
Author: Lois Ehlert



Oliver's Vegetables
Author: Vivian French



Are You Eating Something Green?
Author: Ryan Sias



I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato
Author: Lauren Child



Monsters don't eat broccoli
Author: Jean Barbara Hicks



Beautiful Bananas
Author: Elizabeth Laird



Rainbow plate
Author: Dr Preeya Alexander



What We Eat
Author: Jennifer Cooper-Trent



Off to the market
Author: Alice Oeher



follow the food journey: from scraps to soil and back again.

Explore what happens to food beyond the plate. Use a worm farm, compost system, garden or simple picture sequence to help children investigate how suitable food scraps can become part of a new growing cycle.

Try:

- Collecting suitable fruit and vegetable scraps after a food experience or meal
- Sorting pictures or items into 'compost' and 'not for our compost' according to your service system
- Adding suitable scraps to a compost bin or worm farm
- Observing changes over time
- Using finished compost in a garden or pot

**print the interactive 'follow the food
cycle' activity template on the next page!**



follow the food journey.

Print this page out and cut the below stages into cards and invite older children to put the food journey in order.

We pick
food to
eat



Some food
scraps go
into the
compost or
worm farm



The scraps start to
turn into compost



Compost helps our soil
and new plants grow



Plants grow in the
soil



We eat and enjoy our
food



more ways to celebrate.

Looking for another way to bring Love what you eat to your service? Try one of these simple ideas.

- Create a family recipe book for each room: Invite families in each room to share a recipe or food they love and a little about the story behind it. Bring the contributions together into a room recipe book that children and families can revisit throughout the year.
- Host a family picnic or shared gathering: Invite families to spend time together over a relaxed picnic, morning tea or afternoon gathering. Keep participation voluntary and consider allergies, dietary requirements, budgets and your service's food safety protocols.
- Invite a family member for a cooking activity with the children.

keep the learning going.

National Nutrition Week can be the beginning of ongoing conversations and play around food, family, culture, community and the natural world.

A market can stay in dramatic play. A family food map can continue to grow. Seeds can become a garden project. A room recipe book can be revisited with families throughout the year.

This National Nutrition Week, create opportunities for children to explore food in ways that are playful, inclusive and meaningful to them.

show us how your service is celebrating.

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#LoveWhatYouEatNNW
#NNW2026



what you eat.