

Chapter 2 Starting Points

The Philosophy and Values of Cooking Up A Rainbow

EAT WITH YOUR EYES AND TASTE THE RAINBOW!

2.1 “Cooking Up a Rainbow” is the bright side of “cooking up a storm”. Hawaii’s farmers grow a great variety of fresh, vibrant fruits and vegetables, delivered to the markets sometimes within a day or two after they are harvested. Fruits and vegetables are the best way to add colors, excitement and variety to your meals.

2.2 What makes our meals exciting?

- **Natural and farm fresh** - It's easy eating greens! And red, and yellow, and orange, and purple
- **How do we know the food is fresh?** Think of the **time and distance** it takes the food to reach you. How long does it take from the time it is harvested to the time you cook it? How far does it have to travel to reach your kitchen? The shorter the time and distance, the fresher it is! **The best fresh foods are the ones closest to home!**
- **Seasonality:** The seasons create rhythm in our life through the year. Fruits and vegetables taste best, and are least expensive, when they are in season. Using seasonal produce create variations so we are not eating the same food all the time. We also have something to look forward to during different times of the year.



2.3 Healthy meals have to be tasty and exciting!



- Most people don’t tend to eat food just because it’s healthy. **We eat food because it looks and tastes great!**
- **Taste** is one of the most important factors when deciding what to eat. The rainbow of colors from whole foods (unprocessed, unrefined foods) provides naturally delicious flavors, key nutrients, and makes meals look good.
- **Farm fresh foods come with their own flavors and seasoning:** Fruits and vegetables have natural sugar that makes dishes taste sweet and appealing. The acids in fresh fruits can really brighten up a dish. The natural sodium in most seafood enhances flavor.

2.4 Expanding our Food Choices: **We eat with our five senses** – sight, smell, taste, touch (mouth feel, texture), and **sound (crunch)**.

- By using our five senses to make decisions, prepare and cook food., we can create a sense of adventure and empowerment for children to exercise their healthy choices in selecting and preparing the foods they like to eat. Use your five senses to make decisions, prepare and cook food.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are **essential ingredients for making exciting** meals: they add texture, color, body, flavor, and moisture to a dish.

2.5 Taking Control over our Food Environment:

- **Cooking gives you control over what you eat**, what you buy and have at your home. You can feel better and be reassured when you know the ingredients that are going into the dish, how the food is prepared and cooked, and what you are eating.
- **Your food environment includes your pantry and refrigerator.** Create an environment conducive to good health. **Convenience** is another important factor when deciding what to eat. If healthy food options are available around the house, then it's easier to choose and eat them.
- **Offer children the freedom to choose** between a variety of fresh, healthy choices for snacks. Yogurt, fruit, whole grain crackers etc.
- **Fruits and vegetables are the original fast food.** Banana – it comes in its own packaging. Just peel and eat! Cherry tomatoes – just wash and eat. Frozen grapes make great snacks. Precut carrots and sweet bell peppers so they are ready to go when you're hungry.



- **Expose children to new foods multiple times. Do not coax or bribe children to try a new food.** From a very young age, children learn to feel secure through routine and structure and with people and things that are familiar to them. Expose children to food multiple times so that they become familiar with the food and then they may be more inclined to try it when they are ready.

- **Both parents and children can be involved in the decision making process.** When children are involved in planning and preparing their meals and snacks, they gain a sense of ownership and are more likely to eat what they make and try new foods.
 - **The adult's role is to provide healthy food choices.** The adult's role (teachers, health educators, parents) is to provide structure, support and guide – not do take over or do it for them.
 - **Children model behaviors after adults.** If adults eat healthy, then that increases the likelihood that the children will eat healthy too.
 - **The child's role is to decide whether to eat and how much to eat.** Adults need to trust that children will learn to choose a variety of healthy foods if they are given the opportunity to make their own food choices. Be patient as it takes children (and adults) time to learn new skills for making healthy decisions.
 - **Be respectful and appreciate differences in taste.** People have different taste preferences and cultural foods. Sometimes you may not like something at the time, but may like it later if it is prepared in a different way.

2.6 You are what you eat – *just think, whatever you eat becomes part of you!*

- **There is no bad food in nature:** it is a matter of what you eat, how you eat, and how much you eat. Salt, sugar, and fat are natural, and integral, elements of a nutritious diet. They are indispensable ingredients that give foods their flavor and for cooking. **Balance and moderation is the key!**
- **Children and adults need a healthy source of energy! Energy balance** can be achieved when we prepare food with natural sources of nutrients.

$$\text{FOOD (ENERGY IN)} = \text{PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES (ENERGY OUT)}$$

Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables provide natural sugar for energy and key vitamins and minerals. Lean sources of protein, low fat and fat free dairy help to build and heal our body and provide essential vitamins and minerals. Fats from plant sources (seeds, vegetable and olive oil, nuts) and fish (salmon, opah) offer flavor, texture and provide energy and help to keep our body warm.

- **Take care of the land, and the land will take care of you – Live sustainably.** Our foods come from the land and waters near our towns and cities. We can ensure a healthy food source only when we take care of our natural resources.



- **Maximize the use of fresh and natural ingredients for a balanced meal:**
 - The best sources of flavor and sweetness come from fresh, locally grown products.
 - Fresh fruits and vegetables complement other elements in a dish – the proteins (meat, poultry, fish, tofu, beans, etc.) and starches (rice, noodles, pasta, bread, grains, etc.).

2.7 The Family that Eats Together Stays Together: *there is more to eating when adults and children eat at the same table*

- Mealtime is a great opportunity for the family to come together and catch up with each other.
- The adult's role is to provide a **pleasant environment** during meals and snacks. Encourage quality family time with conversations about the day and enjoy each other's company. Lecturing or bringing up any topics that may cause negative responses or conflict should be reserved for a more appropriate time.
- Mealtime provides an opportunity for children to learn important social behaviors and manners around the dining table.
- The adult's role is to provide **structured and regular times to eat meals and snacks**. If children graze throughout the day then they won't be hungry when it comes time to eat their regular meal or snack.
- **Your meals become more enjoyable when you focus on the food you are eating.**
 - **Do not eat in front of the TV or computer.** Watching the screen while you eat takes your focus off of what and how much you are eating and makes it harder to listen to your hunger and satiety cues i.e. sensing when you are full.
 - **Children should sit when they eat for safety reasons.** If children walk or play while they are eating it can increase the chances of falling or choking on food. Help to keep children safe and prevent accidents from happening by having the children sit to eat.

2.8 Mindful Eating: *Knowing when you are hungry, and knowing when you are full*

- **Eat when you are hungry and stop when you are satisfied.**
- **Allow children to be in tune with their hunger cues.** Provide structured meal and snack times so children can eat when they are truly hungry. Avoid the urge to snack, or eat something sweet, just before mealtime.
- **Allow children to be in tune with their satiety (*feeling full*) cues.** Adults should not insist or require children to “clean their plate” or eat “two more bites.” Let children decide when they are satisfied and done eating. Left-overs can be saved for school lunch the next day.
- **Take the time to enjoy and appreciate the flavors and texture of food.** It takes about 20 minutes or longer for your body to know when you are satisfied. If you rush when you eat, then you may eat more than you really need because you haven’t given your body the time to let you know you are satisfied.
- **Allow children to serve themselves food at the dinner table.** Expect spills and messes as children refine their fine motor skills. Think of the many times babies and toddlers fall down and learn to get back up as they learn to walk. Allow children to exert their growing independence and decide what they will eat, whether or not they are done eating, or if they are hungry for seconds.
- **Be aware if the child is eating due to boredom or stress** and help them find alternative ways to deal with their situation. Let children chose an activity they enjoy, help them to talk about their feelings when they are ready, take a walk together, and most importantly let them know you are there for them.