



Farm to Summer: *Incorporating Georgia's Bountiful Summer Harvest*

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For Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) & Happy Helpings, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Operators

Photo Credit: Rex Childcare and
Early Learning Center



DECAL's Nutrition Services Vision Statement

Working together with our partners to eradicate hunger and ensure nutritious meals for **all** Georgians!



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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov



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Learning Objectives



Define Farm to Summer.



Learn what's in season during the summer, ways to increase seasonal produce on menus, and where to buy Georgia-grown foods.



Explore simple ways to engage participants in Farm to Summer activities.



Bonus: Learn about Farm to Summer Week and USDA's Turnip the Beet Award.



What is Farm to Summer?



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Photo Credit: Boss Babies Childcare Center



Farm to Summer

- An initiative that encourages child nutrition programs to feature local fruits and vegetables at their peak freshness and flavor while engaging children in hands-on learning experiences that connect them to where their food comes from.
- Connects local foods, summer meals, and hands-on learning—making Georgia's peak summer produce a perfect fit for CACFP and Happy Helpings operators.



Photo Credit: Boss Babies Childcare Center



What's in Season in Georgia During the Summer?



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Georgia Grown Summer Fruits

- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Cantaloupe
- Honeydew Melon
- Peaches
- Strawberries
- Watermelon



Photo Credit: Little Ones Learning Center





Georgia Grown Summer Vegetables

- Bell Peppers
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Okra
- Summer Squash
- Tomatoes
- Zucchini



Photo Credit: Boss Babies Childcare Center





Why Use In-Season Produce

- Better flavor and texture
- Higher quality and freshness
- Often more affordable
- Easier to find locally
- Supports Georgia farmers and communities





Safety First!

- Summer favorites like melons, blueberries, and tomatoes are in season, but can pose a choking risk for infants and toddlers.
- Remember: Chop, Look, Listen
 - Chop – Prepare the food right.
 - Look – Observe the kids eating.
 - Listen – Sit with kids and engage!

CHOP LOOK LISTEN FOLLOW THE STEPS FOR FOOD SAFETY

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1 DON'T SERVE HIGH RISK FOODS.

Round, hard, sticky, or slippery foods can pose a choking risk.
No peanuts, hot dogs, raw carrots, popcorn, fish with bones, cheese cubes, grapes, cherry tomatoes, seeds, hard candy, dried fruit, or marshmallows.

2 PAY ATTENTION TO TEXTURE & SHAPE.

Hard foods must be cooked or shredded.
Raw carrots and apples can be cooked. Carrots and cheese can be shredded.

Skins, seeds, bones, and pits must be removed.
Healthy fruits like melon must be specially prepared.

Round foods must be chopped or mashed.
Round foods like berries must be chopped or mashed.

3 SIZE IT RIGHT FOR THEIR AGE & STAGE.

All foods must be chopped to the right size.

Age Group	Chopping Instruction	Visual Reference
Infant	1/4 inch = pea size	Small pea
Toddler	1/2 inch = Cheerio size	Cheerio cereal

Every child learns to eat solid foods on their own timeline.

YOU CAN KEEP KIDS SAFE! For more resources and training, visit www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/ChopLookListen.aspx

<https://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/Choplooklisten.aspx>



Increasing Georgia-Grown Produce on Menus



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Start With What You're Already Serving



Identify fruits and vegetables already on your menu



Look for opportunities to swap in Georgia-grown, in-season produce



Fresh fruits and vegetables are often the easiest place to start



Many local foods require little to no extra prep beyond washing



Small changes, like switching one item per week, can make a big impact



Maximizing Your Food Budget



Saving money in one area of the menu can help support higher-quality fruits and vegetables



Look for places where lower-cost items can be used strategically



Reinvest menu savings into fresh, in-season Georgia produce



Small shifts can make fresh summer produce more affordable and realistic



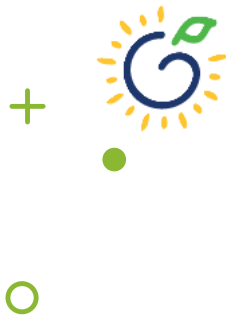


Cost Comparison Example

Taco Tuesday	CACFP Serving	ABC Learning Center (Ages 3-5)	SFSP Serving	Sunshine Summer Meals
Item	Ground Beef Tacos (M)	Black Bean Tacos (MA)	Ground Beef Tacos (M)	Black Bean Tacos (MA)
Required M/MA Amount	1.5 oz eq cooked beef	3/8 cup black beans	2 oz cooked beef	1/2 cup black beans
Cost per Serving	\$0.83 per child	\$0.25 per child	\$1.11 per child	\$0.28 per child
Cost for 100 Children	\$83.00	\$25.00	\$111.00	\$28.00
Total Savings		\$58.00 saved in ONE meal		\$83.00 saved in ONE meal



Cross-Utilizing Produce



Ways to Use Seasonal Produce

- Offer as Taste Test
- Serve in a Meal
- Simple Prep Activity
- Re-Serve in a Different Way



What This Can Look Like in Practice

Bell Peppers

- Plain, sliced for snack
- Sliced on a deli meat wrap
- Diced into sloppy joes or chili

Cucumbers

- Plain, sliced for snack
- Added to leafy green salads
- Blended into Tzatziki yogurt-based sauces for gyros

Fruit

- Served fresh earlier in the week
- Combined later for yogurt parfaits, fruit salad, smoothies, or fruit pizza





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Exposure Matters: Start Small

- Serving fresh produce as part of a reimbursable meal is ideal, **but it's not the only way to participate**
- If your budget doesn't allow enough fresh produce to meet the meal component:
 - Purchasing a **small amount for a taste test is still meaningful**
- Taste tests:
 - Expose children to fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Help build familiarity and acceptance
 - Support Farm to Summer goals, even on a limited budget



Where to Find Summer Produce



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Where to Find Georgia-Grown Foods?



Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Membership/subscription-based model where families or programs receive regular boxes of in-season produce from a local farmer or grower.

Pros:

- Variety of seasonal produce
- Supports local farmers directly
- Predictable delivery schedule

Cons:

- Requires upfront payment
- Contents vary week to week — less control
- May include unfamiliar items that require meal planning adjustments on hub partners



Farmer's Market

Weekly markets where multiple local farmers sell fresh, seasonal produce.

Pros:

- Wide seasonal selection
- Opportunity to talk with growers
- Supports multiple farms in one stop

Cons:

- Seasonal days/times
- Prices may be higher than wholesale
- Limited to local proximity and transportation logistics



Farm Stand

Local produce stand or roadside stall that may sell items from one or more farms.

Pros:

- Very fresh, seasonal produce
- May connect to one or more farms
- Often lower prices than markets

Cons:

- Availability may vary weekly
- May not have consistent hours
- May lack proper invoicing for CACFP/SFSP records (written receipts are acceptable)



Where to Find Georgia-Grown Foods?



Food Hub

Organization that aggregates, distributes, and markets products from multiple local farms

Pros:

- Centralized ordering from multiple growers
- Often meets procurement invoicing requirements
- Convenient for larger programs

Cons:

- May charge distribution fees
- Produce may not be as fresh as direct-purchase
- Availability can vary depending on hub partners



Local Grocery Store

Retail outlets featuring “Georgia Grown” produce or local signage

Pros:

- Convenient and accessible
- May include local items alongside regular inventory
- Easy to track for procurement documentation

Cons:

- Limited seasonal selection
- Higher prices than direct sources
- Produce may not be truly local depending on labeling



Direct from Farmers

Buying directly from a local farmer, via site visits, phone orders, or informal arrangements.

Pros:

- Strong program-farmer relationships
- Possibility for flexible pricing and bulk discounts
- Highest level of transparency in sourcing

Cons:

- Requires procurement process adherence
- Irregular availability
- Logistical planning needed for pickups/delivery



A photograph showing several young children and an adult gathered around a table, looking at items in a bag. The scene is brightly lit, and the children appear to be engaged in a learning activity. The text is overlaid on the image.

Engaging Children

Food, Farms & Gardens



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Photo Credit: Rockmart Early Childhood Development Center



Conduct a taste test of a seasonal fruit or vegetable

- Introduce children to fresh, seasonal foods in a low-pressure way
- Easy Taste Test Ideas
 - Fresh fruit slices (peaches, watermelon, blueberries)
 - Raw vegetables with dip (cucumbers, bell peppers)
 - Simple combinations:
 - Fruit parfaits
 - Veggie wraps
 - Fresh salsa
 - Smoothies



Photo Credit: Kids 'R' Kids Learning Academy





Involve children in simple cooking or no-cook prep activities

Easy, Low-Prep Activity Ideas

- Fresh salsa using Georgia-grown tomatoes
- Fruit cups with blackberries, blueberries & strawberries
- Parfaits with fresh peaches, yogurt and granola

Kid-Friendly Tasks

- Wash produce
- Tear or cut into pieces
- Measure ingredients
- Add or stir ingredients



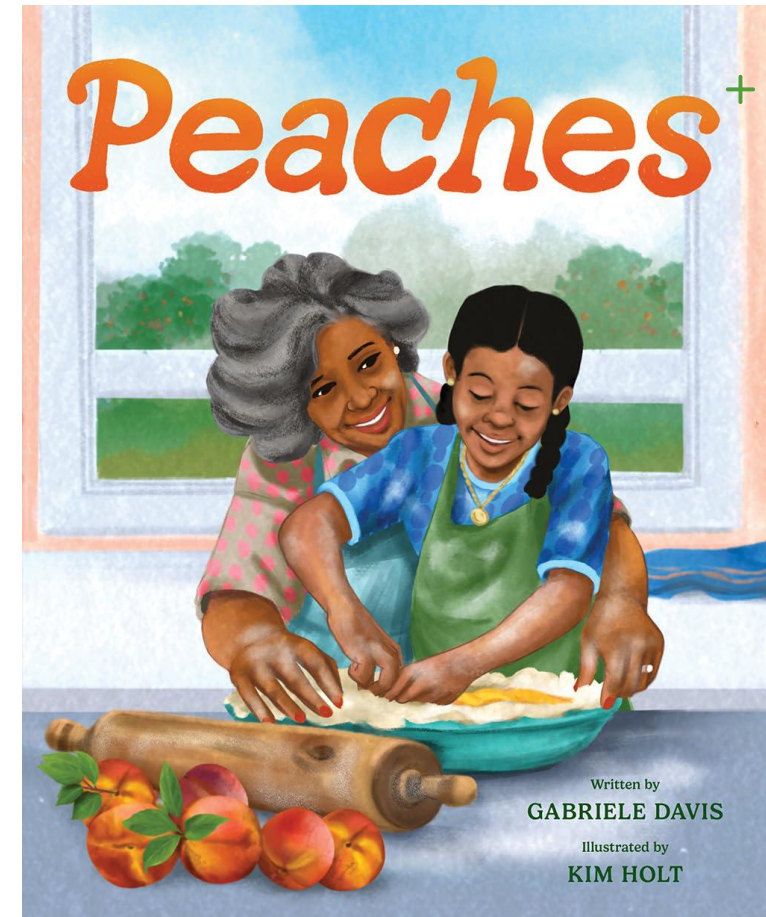
Photo Credit: Forsyth County Head Start





Read a book about farms or food origins

- An easy way to connect children to where food comes from
- Supports literacy, nutrition, and agriculture learning
- Works for young children and school-age youth
- Can be paired with foods being served
- Book Ideas
 - [Children's Books About Nutrition](#)
 - [Farm to ECE Children's Book List](#)
 - [Georgia Farm Bureau Book Recommendations](#)
 - [10 Children's Books about Farms and Farm Workers](#)





Gardening-Related Activities

- **If You Have a Garden**
 - Use existing containers or raised beds for:
 - Observing plant growth
 - Watering or harvesting
 - Talking about how food grows
- **If You Do NOT Have a Garden**
 - Try simple, quick activities instead:
 - Re-growing items like green onions or lettuce
 - Growing a bean in a bag or observing seeds
 - Discussing how farmers grow the foods being served



Photo Credit: Boys & Girls Club of Greater Augusta





Learn about or visit a local farm

- Visit a local farm or learn about one in your community
- Invite a farmer to talk with children (in person or virtually)
- Share photos or videos of Georgia farms and farmers
- Talk about where food comes from during meals and activities

Photo Credit: Pre-K Preparatory Learning Academy



What You Can Do This Summer



1

Choose one Georgia-grown summer food

2

Feature it more than once during the week, alongside other fruits and vegetables

3

Ask a vendor about local or seasonal availability

4

Conduct one taste test or hands-on food activity

5

Talk with children about where their food comes from during meals





Announcements



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Farm to Summer Week is June 22-26, 2026!

- Encourages child nutrition programs to feature fresh, locally grown foods in meals and snacks
- Promotes Georgia-grown, seasonal fruits and vegetables, like peaches and tomatoes, at their peak freshness and flavor
- Encourages pairing meals with hands-on, age-appropriate activities such as gardening, cooking, taste testing, music, movement, and physical activity
- Visit Nutrition Services' [Farm to Summer Week](#) webpage to plan your celebration



Note that some items pictured should **NOT** be served to children under the age of four as they pose a choking risk (i.e., cherry tomatoes and raw carrots).





High Quality Summer Meals Award Program: USDA's Turnip the Beet Award (*SFSP Only*)

- Recognizes Happy Helpings sponsors who go above and beyond to ensure summer meals are appetizing, appealing, and nutritious.
- Nomination deadlines will be announced in the Happy Helpings Newsletter.
- Learn More
 - [USDA's Turnip the Beet! High Quality Summer Meals Award Program](#)
 - [DECAL's Turnip the Beet Award](#)
 - [Tips for Sponsors: Completing the Nomination Packet](#)
- Questions? Contact Nutrition Education Specialist at Morgan.Chapman@decal.ga.gov.



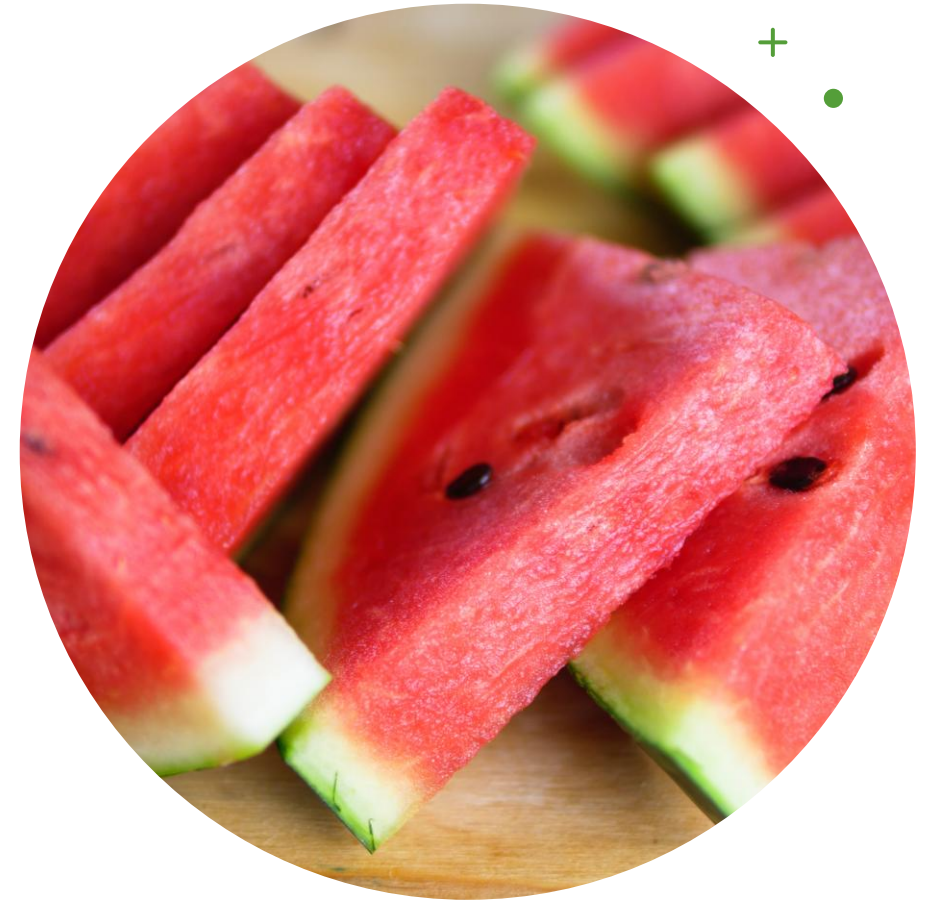
Photo Credit: DeKalb County Recreation





Resources

- [Fruits & Vegetables | Find Georgia Grown](#)
- [USDA Local Food Directories](#)
- [Using Federal Funds to Purchase Local Food](#)
- [Updates to Federal Micro-Purchase and Simplified Acquisition Thresholds for Procurement](#)
- [Georgia Organics' Sourcing Directory](#)
- [What's in Season in Georgia?](#)
- [Georgia Harvest Calendar](#)



Resources for Providers & Families



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Chop, Look, Listen — A Mealtime Safety Initiative from DECAL

A new initiative designed to help early childhood educators prevent choking and promote safe eating habits



<https://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/choplooklisten.aspx>

1.833.354.HELP

GEORGIA SEEDS for SUCCESS



SEEDS Helpline

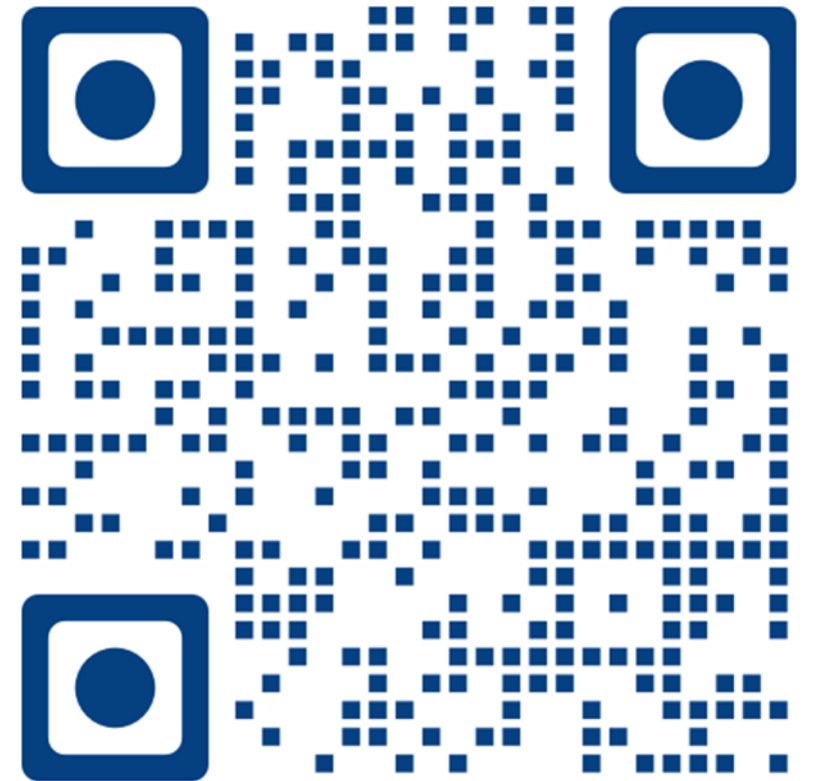
- In order to enhance and encourage children's social, emotional, and behavioral development, DECAL has launched the Georgia SEEDS for Success initiative.
- Georgia's SEEDS for Success is a collaborative lead by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) to support and align the state's initiatives related to increased social emotional development and decreased challenging behaviors in early childhood settings.
- Visit the SEEDS webpage [here](#) to learn more.





DECAL has a developmental monitoring website!

[Development.decals.ga.gov](https://development.decals.ga.gov)



Find Help Georgia

- Enter your zip code.
- **Search for free or reduced cost services** like medical care, food, child care, financial assistance, job training, and more.
- Resources available in several languages.



Food



Housing & Goods



Health



Disability & Aging



Early Childhood



Caregivers



Adult
Education/Training



Money & Employment

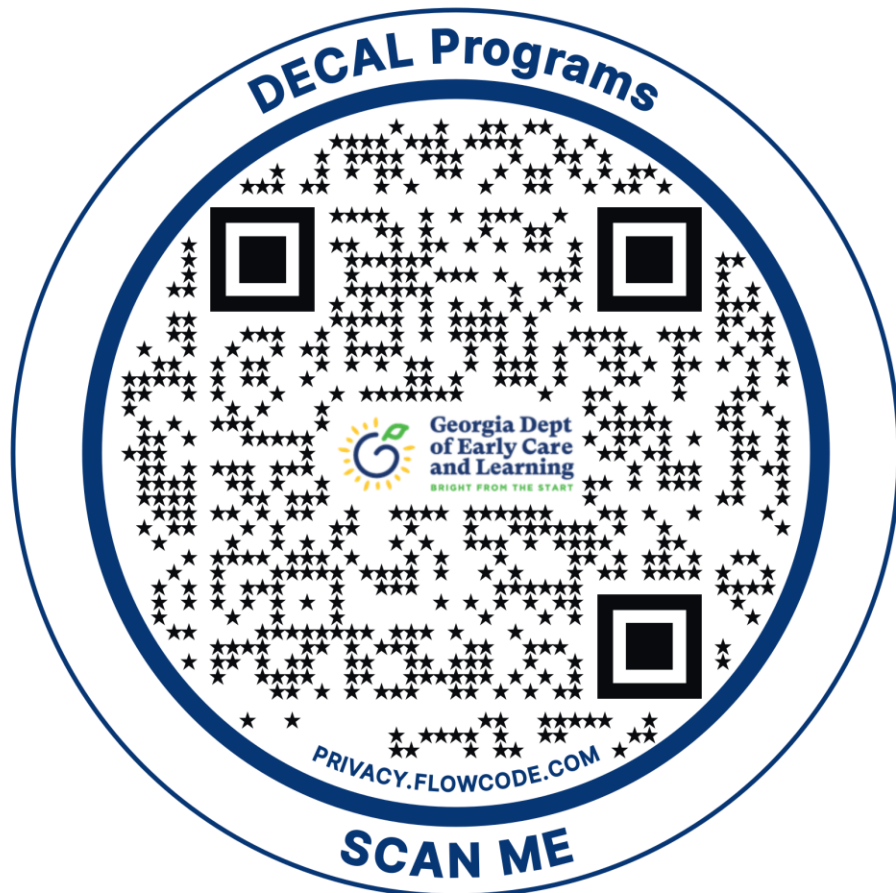


Transportation



Safety & Legal

Check out our provider supports and resources!



Previously Recorded Webinars

https://www.decal.ga.gov/Nutrition/Training_TechnicalAssistance.aspx

Recorded Training Webinars/Videos

+ Administration & Program Operation Webinars

+ Budget Webinars

+ Food Safety Webinars

+ Meal Pattern Webinars

+ Memo Monday Webinars

+ Nutrition Education Webinars

+ Nutrition for Adult Day Care Centers 2023

+ Procurement Webinars

+ Tuesday Tip!

- Tuesday Tip!

- Tuesday Tip! Farm to Summer
- Tuesday Tip! Physical Activity for Adults
- Tuesday Tip! Physical Activity for 0-5 Year Olds
- Tuesday Tip! Feeding Infants in CACFP: 0-5 Months
- Tuesday Tip! Using the Nutrition Facts Label in CACFP
- Tuesday Tip! Vegetarian Meals in CACFP
- Serving Snacks in CACFP
- How to Support Breastfeeding in CACFP
- Serving Milk in CACFP
- Identifying Whole Grain-Rich Foods for CACFP Using the Ingredient List
- Identifying Whole Grain-Rich Foods for CACFP Using the Ingredient List
- Adding Whole Grains to Your Menu
- Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast
- Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Added Sugars
- Choose Yogurts that are Lower in Added Sugar

- Nutrition Education Webinars

- Creative Menu Planning for Nourishing CACFP Meals
- Creative Menu Planning for Nourishing HH Meals
- Creative Meals and Menu Planning Webinar
- Engaging Families in Meaningful Ways
- Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE)
- Farm to Summer
- Farm to Summer: Incorporating Local Foods and Food Education into Your Summer Feeding Program
- Fruits and Vegetables with Infants and Toddlers
- Fostering Multicultural Connections
- Growing Adventurous Eaters
- Healthy Holiday Celebrations
- **Healthy Cooking in CACFP with Chef Asata Reid: A Five-Part Video Series**
 - Healthy Cooking in CACFP with Chef Asata Reid Presents: Using Herbs and Spices
 - Healthy Cooking in CACFP with Chef Asata Reid Presents: Using Seasonal Produce
 - Healthy Cooking in CACFP with Chef Asata Reid Presents: Knife Skills
 - Healthy Cooking in CACFP with Chef Asata Reid Presents: CACFP Snacks
 - Healthy Cooking in CACFP with Chef Asata Reid Presents: Enhancing Meal Appeal
- Infants & Toddlers: Feeding Techniques & Mealtime Tips
- It's Snack Time!
- Let's Hydrate
- Let's Move! Encouraging Physical Activity throughout the Lifespan
- Menu Modifications for Allergies, Dietary Restrictions, Chewing and Swallowing Difficulties
- Menu Planning in CACFP and SFSP
- Nutrition for Adult Day Care Centers