



Autumn Mix & Match Meal Kit

Variety is the spice of life! And not just for adults, but for toddlers, too. Research has shown that kids who are exposed to the highest number of different foods are most likely to willingly try new foods and more likely to eat a wide variety of foods on a regular basis.

But even the foodiest among us can get into a food rut, and it can be incredibly challenging to find nutritious whole foods that our children will eat. That's where the Mix & Match Meal Chart comes in.

The math is simple:

{complex carb + vegetable + fruit + protein = a balanced meal}

Good Nutrition is as Easy as 1-2-3-4!

The Mix & Match Meal Chart takes the guesswork out of nutrition. Choose one food from each column on the chart and your kiddo will have a balanced meal—it's *that easy*. And it doesn't matter if it looks like a "normal" meal to you or me; whatever weird combos your kiddo likes are fine, so long as she's got one food from each column on her plate.

For a snack, offer a protein and a veggie *or* a fruit. Remember that snacks are not meant to be the same size as a full meal. Cutting down on the amount of carbs served for snacks can also help increase the amounts of fruits and veggies consumed during the day.

How much of each?

Here are the USDA's guidelines on serving sizes for children:

	12–36 Months	36–48 Months
Carbohydrates	3 ounces, half from whole-grain sources	4–5 ounces, half from whole-grain sources
Vegetables	1 cup	1½ cups
Fruits	1 cup	1 cup
Milk or Dairy	2 cups	2 cups
Protein	2 ounces	3-4 ounces

Use these as general guidelines, not hard and fast rules. If, for example, you notice that your child is eating a huge amount of carbs at each meal, but a very small amount of veggies, it might be time to change the size of the portions you offer. (Offer fewer carbs, and when they're hungry enough, they'll eat more veggies.)

Mix & Match in 4 Action Steps!

1. Print out the Meal Charts and the corresponding shopping lists and meal ideas.
2. Decide how you want to use the chart:
 - a. Will it be just for breakfast, lunch and snacks?
 - b. Or will you use it for dinners too?
 - c. Will it be just for your toddler?
 - d. Or will the whole family use the chart?
3. Head to the store to stock up on all the foods on this week's Meal Chart.
4. BONUS! Write down your child's favorites during the week so you can start to build your own meal chart.

Here's a disclaimer, though, before you get started: **I am not a doctor or a registered dietitian, and the Mix & Match Meal Chart is not medical advice. Before changing your child's diet, you should always consult with your pediatrician. Picky eating problems can be very complex, and you and your doctor should discuss any possible medical causes before changing your child's diet.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Why a fruit *and* a vegetable column?

Because most kids don't get their recommended daily servings of fruits and veggies, and if a kid isn't going to like something on his plate, it's a lot more likely to be the vegetable than the meat or the carb. But exposing kids to a fruit and a veggie at each meal teaches them that eating fruits and vegetables is a normal part of every meal. Repetition is the key here. Keep serving those plants at every meal.

What about the rest of the family?

You'll find a list of meal ideas for each week after the food charts, and many of the meals are appropriate for everyone. I find that a great way to get the baby eating what the whole family is eating is to serve "deconstructed" meals. So, for example, if we're having tacos for dinner, the baby might get a portion of ground beef or shredded chicken (seasoned or not, depending on your child's tastes), a portion of shredded cheese, some chopped up tomato and avocado, and a torn up whole wheat tortilla.

I've also included handy printable shopping lists for each week. If you use the meal suggestions and the shopping lists (and a dose of your own creativity), you should find that you don't have to purchase anything different for your toddler than for the rest of the family.

Plums aren't available at my market.

All of the foods in these charts are suggestions, so feel free to substitute within the same column from different weeks at will if something is unavailable or if something else is on sale.

That being said, with a few exceptions, most of the fruits and vegetables are available fresh, frozen, and in some instances, canned, which can be a lifesaver in the dead of winter. Buy organic whenever possible,

especially for kiddos. And when buying canned, always look for products packed in water or 100% juice, and buy in glass or cardboard Tera Paks whenever possible to avoid BPA. Also, for kids with fewer teeth, try grating hard fruits and veggies (like celery and apples) to make it easier to eat!

My toddler won't eat _____.

Don't be so sure. Toddlers are fickle creatures, to be sure, and what they don't like one day, they might love another day. My advice? Offer up everything on the meal chart at least once, even if you think they don't like it. Kids need to be exposed to a new food many times before it will gain acceptance.

Try not to stress if your child doesn't want to eat a particular food on a particular day. Part of the beauty of the meal chart system is that you know your child is getting a balanced meal every single time he sits down to eat. If he refuses to eat his broccoli at dinner, some of the stress has been alleviated, because you know he got fruits and vegetables at breakfast, lunch, and snack time.

If you have a REALLY picky eater, be sure to offer one thing you know they like at each meal—even if that means going off-chart. So, for example, if your kiddo can't get enough mac 'n' cheese, just swap that in for the complex carb—and then pick a fruit, vegetable, and protein from the chart to go with it.

Can I add...?

Of course! These charts are just meant to be a starting place. Making a stir-fry and want to include veggies that aren't on the list? Go for it! Serving up a different kind of meat to the family tonight? Feel free to substitute. Got some leftovers that need to be used up? By all means.

Still have questions?

Email me! I am here to help. Just send an email with "MIX & MATCH MEAL CHART QUESTION" as the subject to lacy@laughinglemonpie.com.

Week One

CARBS	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	PROTEIN
brown rice	celery	apples	cottage cheese
yams	leeks	figs	turkey
100% whole wheat bread	okra	grapefruit	salmon (fresh cooked or canned)
corn tortillas	radishes	grapes	beans
whole wheat bagels	broccoli	quince	peanut butter

Week Two

CARBS	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	PROTEIN
rice noodles	spinach	kumquats	eggs
baked blue corn chips	artichokes	persimmons	chicken
natural graham crackers	olives	plums	ham (low sodium)
oatmeal	pumpkin	pears	plain Greek yogurt
whole wheat tortillas	carrots	dates	veggie burgers

Week Three

CARBS	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	PROTEIN
barley	rutabagas	guavas	hummus
brown rice cakes	zucchini and yellow squash	blackberries	tofu
whole grain sandwich thins	cauliflower	mandarins	quinoa
polenta or grits	bok choy	pluots	goat cheese or feta
whole wheat pasta	mushrooms	melon	shrimp

Week Four

CARBS	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	PROTEIN
whole wheat couscous	Swiss chard	pomelos	turkey bacon
butternut squash	tomato sauce	oranges	deli roast beef (low sodium)
purple potatoes	green beans	raspberries	canned tuna
whole wheat English muffins	parsnips	pomegranates	chicken tenders
whole grain crackers	beets	dried cranberries	string cheese

Week 1 Shopping List

PRODUCE:

celery
apples
yams
leeks
figs
okra
grapefruit
radishes
grapes
broccoli
quince

BAKERY:

100 % whole wheat bread
corn tortillas
whole wheat bagels

DRY GOODS:

brown rice
peanut butter
canned beans
canned salmon

MEAT:

turkey breast
fresh salmon

DAIRY:

cottage cheese

OTHER:

Week 1 Meal Ideas

- tacos with turkey, corn tortillas, black beans, and radishes with fruit for dessert
- peanut butter and apple sandwich with baked yams “fries” on the side
- brown rice with stir-fried broccoli with apples on the side
- celery stuffed with PB (meal or snack) and cottage cheese
- salmon salad with grated apples and celery served on a bagel
- roasted turkey and baked yams with pan-fried okra and served with grapes
- baked salmon and leeks over brown rice with quince
- canned beans smashed and spread on toast with grapefruit on the side
- salmon and broccoli in a soy-peanut sauce served over brown rice with figs for dessert
- grapes and cottage cheese (meal or snack)

Week 2 Shopping List

PRODUCE:

spinach
kumquats
artichokes
persimmons
plums
pumpkin
pears
carrots
dates

BAKERY:

whole wheat tortillas

DRY GOODS:

rice noodles
baked blue corn chips
natural graham crackers
oatmeal
olives
canned pumpkin

DAIRY:

eggs
plain Greek yogurt

MEAT:

ham (low sodium)
chicken

FROZEN:

veggie burgers

Week 2 Meal Ideas

- oatmeal with pumpkin and yogurt with pears on the side
- smoothie made with fruit, yogurt, and spinach (meal or snack)
- spinach and eggs with plums and tortilla
- ham roll-up with spinach and dates on the side
- hot pot with rice noodles, egg, ham, carrots, spinach and persimmons on the side
- veggie burger in a tortilla with carrots and kumquats on the side
- fruit salad with graham crackers and yogurt (meal or snack)
- chicken salad made with yogurt and shredded carrots, served with blue corn chips and apricots on the side
- gyros made with chicken, spinach, tomatoes, and olives with a yogurt dressing and pears for dessert
- make a dip with pumpkin and yogurt and serve with graham crackers

Week 3 Shopping List

PRODUCE:

rutabagas
guavas
zucchini and yellow squash
blackberries
cauliflower
mandarins
bok choy
pluots
mushrooms
melon

BAKERY:

whole grain sandwich thins
brown rice cakes

DRY GOODS:

polenta or grits
whole wheat pasta
barley
quinoa

DAIRY:

goat cheese or feta
hummus

MEAT:

shrimp
tofu

FROZEN:

OTHER:

Week 3 Meal Ideas

- hummus with rice cakes and cauliflower florets for dipping and fruit for dessert
- stir fry with zucchini, mushrooms, bok choy and tofu served with guavas for dessert
- quinoa salad with zucchini, mushrooms, and feta, served with blackberries for dessert
- shrimp with goat cheese and grits served with yellow squash and melon for dessert
- whole wheat pasta with sautéed zucchini and feta, with mandarins for dessert
- calabacitas (zucchini, mushrooms, corn, feta) served with polenta and pluots for dessert
- hummus sandwich with zucchini sticks and berries for dessert
- smoothie with fruit and tofu (snack or meal)
- roasted rutabaga fries with oven “fried” shrimp and cauliflower gratin and oranges for dessert
- cold barley salad with oranges, feta, and sautéed bok choy

Week 4 Shopping List

PRODUCE:

butternut squash
Swiss chard
pomelos
oranges
purple potatoes
green beans
raspberries
parsnips
pomegranates
beets

BAKERY:

whole wheat English muffins

DRY GOODS:

whole wheat couscous
whole grain crackers
dried cranberries
canned tuna
tomato sauce

DAIRY:

string cheese

MEAT:

turkey bacon
deli roast beef (low sodium)

FROZEN:

chicken tenders

OTHER:

Week 4 Meal Ideas

- tuna with couscous and chard with pomelos for dessert
- beets with oranges, whole grain crackers, and string cheese
- chicken tenders with purple potatoes and green beans with raspberries for dessert
- BLTs on English muffins with pomegranates for dessert
- tuna salad with cranberries in it and crackers with green beans
- deli roast beef roll-ups with green beans, mashed butternut squash and oranges
- English muffin pizzas with string cheese and tomato sauce with raspberries for dessert
- chicken tenders with parsnip “fries” and pomegranates
- couscous salad with pomegranates, crumbled turkey bacon and sautéed Swiss chard

Mix & Match Meal Chart

CARBS	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	PROTEIN