



Action Schools! BC



# Eat Smart Celebrations

Celebrations and parties are a fun way to mark special events or holidays and students look forward to the change in school routine. Celebrations often include food and drinks that may not fit into Canada's Food Guide food groups. Celebrations give schools the chance to reinforce classroom food and nutrition lessons. With a few easy changes, most food and drinks can support the health and learning of students and expose them to a variety of new types of food and flavours. If food is used for celebrations, aim for at least 80% healthy choices.



## "But It's Only Once in A While..."

Student and teacher birthdays, holidays, "100 Day", sports day, year end parties, dances, and graduation parties are some of the celebrations that often include food at school.



## Why celebrating with healthy food is important:

- ✓ Eating habits are learned at a young age
- ✓ Teaches students that healthy foods can be "fun foods"
- ✓ Supports the health lessons being taught in the classroom
- ✓ Helps to keep students' teeth healthy
- ✓ Provides a healthy school environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice
- ✓ Demonstrates that the school values the health of their students
- ✓ Encourages students to taste new, healthy foods through peer acceptance



## Did You Know?

- ✓ Canadians of all ages get more than 20% of their calories from high calorie, low nutrition foods, high in fat, sugar or salt
- ✓ When healthy choices are offered in schools, children and teens are far more likely to meet the recommended number of servings of vegetables and fruit and teens are more likely to meet the recommended number of milk and alternatives servings



# Celebrate With Easy and Fun Ideas for Healthier Foods and Drinks



*Be aware of any food allergies in your classroom when planning food and drinks for celebrations.*

- ✓ **Friendship Fruit Salad** – make a fruit salad with fruit contributed by every student.
  - ✓ **Rainbow Salad** – ask students to bring a vegetable or fruit from a colour group. Layer the washed and chopped vegetables and fruit in a glass bowl to create a rainbow salad.
  - ✓ **Make Your Own Pizza** – use whole wheat crusts, tortillas, pitas, naan, or English muffins as the pizza dough. Add low sodium tomato sauce or salsa, vegetables, and low fat cheese.
  - ✓ **Make Your Own Yogurt Parfait** – use plain yogurt with cereal that has 4 or more grams of fibre and 5 or less grams of sugar. Add fresh or canned fruits (packed in juice or light syrup).
  - ✓ **Make Your Own Pita or Wrap Party** – add hummus, chopped vegetables, roasted meat or poultry, and/or low fat cheese to whole wheat pita pockets or tortillas.
  - ✓ **Make Your Own Trail Mix** – mix together unsalted pretzels, cereal that has 4 or more grams of fibre and 5 or less grams of sugar, dried fruit, and sesame and pumpkin seeds.
  - ✓ **Fruit Smoothies** – blend together equal parts of 100% juice, yogurt or kefir and fresh or frozen fruit.
  - ✓ **Fruit Kabobs with Yogurt Dip** – place cut up pieces of fruit on kabob sticks and dip in yogurt.
- ✓ **Themes:** Challenge the class to find or bring in food from Canada’s Food Guide that:
    - is BC Grown
    - is from different countries or cultures that they are studying
    - is green for St. Patrick’s Day
    - is in different shapes (e.g., triangle sandwiches, cubes of cheese, melon balls, etc.)
    - is red and green for Christmas
    - is red and yellow for Chinese New Year
    - can fit with Halloween celebrations, e.g., witch’s brew (soup), pumpkin smoothie, etc.

## Celebrate Without Food

Children with food allergies may be put at risk or feel left out when celebrations include food. There are many other fun ways to celebrate special occasions.

- ✓ **Birthdays** – parents can donate a book to the school library in the child’s name or make a donation to the child’s favourite charity in the school’s name; sing Happy Birthday to the child; post her or his photo on the class bulletin board.
- ✓ **Holiday Season** – collect food for local food banks; partner with a school in a low income neighbourhood and create a gift box of school supplies; make cards for children in another country, residents from a homeless shelter, or seniors in a care home.
- ✓ **Valentine’s Day** – students put their name on a big, red paper heart and pass it around the classroom to have other students put positive comments on the heart.

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- 1 Classroom Healthy Eating Action Resource (K to 7) and Workshop at [www.actionschoolsbc.ca](http://www.actionschoolsbc.ca)
- 2 Bake healthier recipes from the “Bake Better Bites” cookbook available at [www.healthyeatingatschool.ca](http://www.healthyeatingatschool.ca)
- 3 Adapt a favourite recipe using substitution tips from Dietitians of Canada “Recipe Analyzer” [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)