



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child's/children's school has decided to participate in the Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme, a programme available nationally to primary schools in Ireland.

The Food Dudes Programme aims to encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables. Health experts recommend that children (and adults) eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day. However, many children (and adults) currently eat less than this.

The programme receives financial support from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the European Union through the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme - under which the EU has made funds available for the purchase and distribution of fruit and vegetables to schools.

The programme is managed in Ireland by Bord Bia. It is based on a very successful large-scale study developed by the Food & Activity Research Unit at Bangor University, Wales. It was trialled in schools in England, Wales and has reached more than 3,100 schools in Ireland with outstanding and long-lasting results. The programme in Ireland received a "counteracting obesity" award from the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2006.

There are two levels of participation in the programme within the school; for junior classes and for senior classes. The programme involves two phases. During Phase 1, pupils in senior classes in the school will be offered the opportunity to participate in four tasting days, where they will taste a different fruit and vegetable on each occasion. They will be rewarded with small prizes for eating these foods. Phase 2 then encourages children to bring in and eat fruit and vegetables from home as part of their daily lunch diet. Please see overleaf for some suggestions and lunchbox ideas.

The aim of the programme is to encourage children to try fruit and vegetables and come to enjoy the taste of the foods. They also come to think of themselves as healthy eaters who enjoy fruit and vegetables. The programme takes only a small amount of time in school but will hopefully result in health benefits for all who participate. Your child will automatically be included in this programme. However, if for any reason you do not want your child to take part (e.g. if they are allergic to a certain type of fruit or vegetable), we would be grateful if you could inform the school.

We hope you and your child have fun with the Food Dudes!

--Your regional Food Dudes Project Manager

TIPS & IDEAS

To help you make the most of the Food Dude lunchboxes that your child/children will be receiving, we have enclosed some Tips and Ideas below - we hope you find them useful.

Children need lots of energy and nutrients from food, particularly when they are growing. Try to encourage them to eat lots of fruit and veg (you should aim for at least 5 portions a day) to help ensure they have the required amount of vitamins and minerals. Variety is one of the keys to a healthy balanced diet and this applies just as much to the fruit and veg you eat. The more types of fruit and veg included the better, because different fruit/veg contain different nutrients. Including a range of colours, flavours and textures can help make food more interesting and enjoyable. But it can sometimes be difficult to make packed lunches that are varied, interesting and healthy. We hope you find the information given below helpful.

- Sandwiches are a popular choice for packed lunches and can be easily filled with a variety of salads. A mixed salad could be put in the veg tub, to be eaten with the usual sandwiches.
- Use fruit and veg in different forms, whether cooked or raw.
- Some vegetables taste good grated (e.g., carrots) and some (e.g., carrots, celery, peppers) can be cut into sticks, and perhaps eaten with a dip.
- Have a variety of fruit or veg in a pot and create a 'salad'. You might like to try a fruit salad of banana, orange, pineapple slices with a sprinkling of raisins and a veg salad of lettuce, sweetcorn, grated carrot, peas or tomato.
- Stir-fries can include fruit and/or vegetables. Save some from the previous evening meal and put in one of the lunchbox tubs.
- Mix cheese (cubes or grated) with a portion of fruit and/or any of the above vegetable items.
- Pack fruit juice in your child's lunchbox instead of cordial or fizzy drinks. Make sure it's 100% pure juice with no added sugar. Smoothies (made mostly of fruit) are also a healthy fruit drink.
- Ideas of the kinds of fruit/veg that could be included in a lunch box include:

FRUIT		VEGETABLES	
Apples	Raisins	Cucumber	Lettuce
Satsuma	Peaches	Broccoli	Mixed veg
Grapes	Pineapple chunks	Peppers	Celery
Strawberries	Melon	Sweetcorn	Green beans
Bananas	Pears	Carrots	Cherry tomatoes
Oranges	Plums	Cauliflower	Coleslaw
Fruit Salad	Dates	Mixed beans	
Kiwi	Cherries	Mushrooms	

- Keep encouraging your child to try new foods - you never know, they might like it!

For more tips and ideas visit our website at www.fooddudes.ie