

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Happy 2008! Thank you to all of you for your positive comments and feedback on our first food newsletter. We appreciate your enthusiasm, and will do our best to address your good ideas in upcoming issues of *Food For Thought*. Among the suggestions that we received, many of you requested some recipes for healthy snacks (besides fruits and vegetables!) to make at home. So, we've done a bit of homework and found a few Calvin Hill favorites that we hope you'll enjoy.



## What is the Food Committee?

The Food Committee is a small group of Calvin Hill parents who are interested in promoting nutrition and improving the diversity and quality of food served at the school. Our current efforts include this *Food For Thought* newsletter, which highlights healthy food activities throughout the school and addresses nutrition issues of special interest to parents; and ongoing projects to promote healthful eating for Calvin Hill's children, such as a new pilot program to expand the variety of snacks served in the Kindergarten class (highlighted in this month's newsletter). If you are interested in joining the Food Committee, please send an email to Carla. Or, if you have suggestions for activities that you would like the Food Committee to address, please drop a note in the parent pocket of Rebecca Puhl in the Threes' Room.

## FOOD NEWS

### Kindergarten: Healthy Snacks for the New Year!

The Kindergarten class began 2008 with a new, voluntary healthy snack project to encourage consumption of nutritious foods. Parents can now volunteer to bring in alternative food options for snacks and lunchtimes on Mondays and Wednesdays, including pre-cut fresh fruit (e.g., grapes, pineapple) or vegetables (e.g., celery sticks, cucumbers) or other nutritious snacks to be served to the class. So far, the kindergarten class has enjoyed eating broccoli, red grapes, peppers, baby corns, kiwi, cucumber, clementines, and dried apricots. This has been a wonderful way to provide the classroom with more diverse food options and has proven to be lots of fun for the kids! This month the class can look forward to edamame, rice cakes, and other fun snacks. Parents can sign up to bring in a snack on the calendar posted on the refrigerator, and for more information please leave a note in the parent pocket of Cheryl Andresen (Jaden's Mom) in the Kindergarten class.

Thanks for your comments about December's article on organic and locally grown foods. Organic foods can sometimes seem too labor-intensive and expensive, but there are additional ways to find organic food options relatively cheaply and conveniently. The local farmer's markets now accept food stamps, and larger grocery stores such as Shaw's or Stop & Shop on Dixwell Avenue in Hamden, or Trader Joe's in Orange also carry organic options.



## Preschool: Nutritious Popsicles a Hit!

The Preschool recently held a meeting to discuss what they wanted to learn at school. Ian mentioned that he wanted to learn how to make popsicles. A few days later Emma brought in her Mom And Me Cookbook with a delicious popsicle recipe made with real fruit. Since some of the fruits in the recipe were out of season, the class substituted frozen fruit for the fresh ones, using frozen strawberries, frozen peaches and fresh kiwis. This nutritious recipe was a delicious success!



Here's the recipe for your popsicle eater:

### Traffic Light Freezer Pops

#### Ingredients:

¼ Small watermelon  
3 Large ripe peaches  
5 Large kiwi fruits  
½ cup superfine sugar  
3 tablespoons of water

#### Directions:

For the “Red”: Remove the seeds from the watermelon. Puree the flesh in a blender with 1/3 of the sugar. Pour the puree into the freezer pop molds so that they are 1/3 full. Freeze for 1 ½ hours.

For the “Yellow”: Peel the peaches. Blend the flesh with another 1/3 of the sugar. Pour this yellow puree onto the frozen red puree so that the molds are now 2/3 full. Freeze until solid.

For the “Green”: Peel the kiwi fruits. Blend with the water and remaining sugar. Press the puree through a sieve to get rid of the seeds. Fill the molds, then add the sticks and freeze.



## Threes' Room: Apple Taste Survey Reveals Yellow Apples the Winner!

In January, the Threes' Room conducted an Apple Taste Survey, where children tasted red, yellow, and green apples. While the competition was close, yellow apples were ultimately chosen as the winner (with 8 votes), red apples came in second (7 votes), and green apples were third (5 votes). (Teachers' preferences were included in the survey). The children enjoyed tasting the apples, choosing their favorite, and understanding the preferences of the other children in the classroom. More fruit tasting surveys are underway this month, and we will report the results in the next newsletter!



## MUFFIN MANIA

Looking for a healthy snack recipe or a fun indoor weekend activity this winter? Try baking apple bran muffins! While there are countless muffin recipes out there, it's hard to find a truly "healthy" muffin that also meets the needs of your child's discerning taste buds. This recipe has been a success in the Threes' Room, and we hope it will be a success in your kitchen as well.



## Apple Bran Muffins

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup natural bran  
1 cup whole-wheat flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup granulated sugar  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp cinnamon  
1 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 cup applesauce  
1 egg  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup low-fat plain yogurt  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  vegetable oil

In bowl, combine bran, flour, sugar, cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder. Mix well. Add applesauce, egg, yogurt, vegetable oil, and stir just until combined.

Spoon batter into nonstick muffin tins. Bake at 400 degrees for 25 minutes or until firm to the touch. Or, make “mini” muffins and bake for about 10 minutes.

Source: Anne Lindsay. The Lighthearted Cookbook. Canadian Heart Foundation.



## Yippee for Yogurt!

Calvin Hill is excited to announce that yogurt will now be offered as part of the weekly menu in all classes.



## Findings from the Calvin Hill Veggie Study

Last spring, Calvin Hill participated in a study with the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity at Yale, to learn whether preschool children will eat more vegetables if exposed to them repeatedly. The Preschool and Kindergarten classes participated, where children were offered raw vegetables (green peppers, cauliflower, and snow peas) daily at school, during lunch, over a period of two months. Vegetables offered to each child were weighed before and after daily consumption. The results of the study are now available, with the notable finding that children fluctuated between days when they refused to taste the vegetables to days when they ate the entire serving of vegetables offered to them. The consumption patterns were encouraging, showing that 48% of children ate cauliflower on at least 3 occasions, 61% ate snow peas on at least 3 occasions, and 61% ate peppers on at least 3 occasions.



The results of this study are important for our future vegetable eaters at Calvin Hill. Parents and caregivers often stop offering children healthy foods if they have been rejected several times. But variability in consumption of vegetables may be due to a number of factors in a child's environment like daily hunger, mood, attentiveness to food in general, or daily classroom or home activities. This study shows that it may help parents, caregivers and teachers to recognize that individual variability is common (some days children will feel like eating a particular food, but may reject the same food the next time it is offered!). Refusal to eat a particular food does not necessarily mean it will be refused in the future. Many children will eat at least small amounts of foods that are offered frequently.



Both the school and home environment provide important opportunities for helping children develop healthy eating habits. To encourage vegetable consumption, offer veggies first! When children are hungry, they are more likely to eat the foods offered to them. So, before serving the main meal for lunch or dinner, have veggies available on the table ready and waiting for kids to munch on. And, don't forget that positive parental messages about healthy foods like vegetables are really important! Even one positive message from parents every day may go a long way in promoting healthy food preferences.



### Save the Date!

**The next Calvin Hill Potluck will be Sunday April 6<sup>th</sup>, and this family food event will also include a puppet show! Sign-up sheets will be posted in each classroom closer to the date. Hope to see you there!**



## The Low-Down on High-Fructose Corn Syrup

With so much attention to family nutrition and health, parents often find themselves trying to decipher labels on packaged foods in the grocery store when deciding what food items to purchase. There is certainly a lot of information to keep track of, and most of us scan food labels for serving sizes, calories, grams of fat and carbohydrates. While these are indeed important food facts to consider, sometimes we forget to look *below the food label* at the **list of ingredients**, which can be easily forgotten, but has equally important information. All food labels list the product's ingredients in order by weight. The ingredient in the greatest amount is listed first. The ingredient in the least amount is listed last.

An especially important ingredient to look for is ***High-Fructose Corn Syrup***. What is this, and how does it impact your family's health?

High-fructose corn syrup is a sweetener and preservative used in many processed foods. It is made by converting the glucose in cornstarch into fructose, and has begun to replace sugar because it extends the shelf life of foods and is sweeter and cheaper to produce than sugar. For these reasons, it can be found in almost all foods containing caloric sweeteners, such as sodas, fruit-flavored drinks, canned fruits, dairy desserts, flavored yogurts, most baked goods, cereals, pasta sauces, ketchup, and many other processed foods.

High-fructose corn syrup contributes to poor health and obesity. Foods that have high quantities of high-fructose corn syrup are often high in calories and low in nutritional value. There is a correlation between the rise of obesity in the U.S. and the use of HFCS for sweetening beverages and foods. In addition to its prominent role in the over-consumption of sugar, high intake of fructose has also been suggested to contribute to insulin resistance and adverse health effects, such as diabetes and high cholesterol.

So, it's especially important to check food labels because it's surprising how many foods contain high-fructose corn syrup. In trying to limit foods that contain high-fructose corn syrup, consider the following tips:

- Choose fresh fruit instead of juice or fruit-flavored drinks. (Even better: choose fresh fruit instead of juice).
- Reduce consumption of soda and commercially baked goods.
- Choose unsweetened snacks - a handful of nuts, low-fat cheese, or vegetables.
- At breakfast, choose low-sugar whole-grain cereals instead of a cereal bar, toaster pastry, or sweetened cereals.
- In the grocery store, spend a few minutes looking at alternative brands of your favorite food items. There may be an alternative available without high-fructose corn syrup.

