Birch Hill Community House

Ancestral Diet Curriculum for Kids

Ancestral Diet for Kids is aimed to preserve culturally appropriate foods and medicines to reduce risk of diet related illness by empowering and engaging children and young adults to make healthy, real food choices for a well lifestyle. This curriculum is in conjunction with the Well For Culture "indigenizing fitness" curriculum and should be referred to simultaneously.

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What are Ancestral foods?

Ancestral foods are foods that are wholesome, natural, organic and Indigenous to North America. Examples include fruits, veggies, roots, herbs, and meats. An ancestral diet contains very little starch and sugar. Ancestral foods give our bodies the proper nutrients we need to grow up strong and healthy—just like our ancestors did for thousands of years! By eating ancestral foods we can make our families, communities and our earth a healthier place once again.

There are many things to consider while adopting an ancestral based diet. The following sections will teach about identifying ancestral foods, the Anishinaabe traditional foods pyramid and seasonal Anishinaabe eating cycles. Each concept plays an important role, thus all concepts should be considered as one when preparing snacks and meals.

Identifying Ancestral Foods

- Ancestral Foods are not made in a factory, they’re come from our mother earth and can be harvested (like wild rice) or caught (like walleye) or hunted (like deer meat) or gathered (like berries).
- Ancestral foods should contain fewer than 4-5 ingredients if packaged in a box or bag.
- Ancestral foods are local and organic, non-GMO, seasonal, and environmentally sustainable.
- Ancestral foods are mostly processed at home with our hands (as opposed to in a factory).
- Ancestral eating is cultural. Native people can role model this way of eating, as our cultural values understand the significance of remaining close to the earth. We can lead the way in returning this healthy eating style to other tribes and even the rest of the world.

Refer to the Anishinaabe Food Pyramid and Anishinaabe Seasonal Eating Cycles for a list of ancestral foods local to Anishinaabe territory.
Non-Ancestral Healthy Foods

Below is a list which identifies non-ancestral whole foods that are not necessarily local to the region but are easily accessible in a grocery store and healthy to eat. Foods imported from other regions should be used in moderation with a preference for indigenous foods that our bodies are more familiar with. In today's world, sometimes it is necessary to combine healthy non-ancestral foods with available indigenous foods. The following foods are good to incorporate:

- kale
- spinach
- collard greens
- avocado
- mushrooms
- beets
- apples
- oranges
- bananas
- grapes
- cantaloupe
- honeydew
- watermelon
- sweet potatoes
- pecans
- corn
- beans
- cucumbers
- grass-fed meats
- wild game meats
- whole eggs
- walnuts
- cranberries
Anishinaabe Traditional Foods Pyramid

The original Anishinaabe food pyramid is much different from the standard American food pyramid. The Ojibwe version includes wild game meats, wild fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds and wild rice – all of which are holistically healthy for all people but especially critical to the holistic wellness of Ojibwe people as the foods carry cultural and spiritual significance in addition to nutritional value. On the contrary, foods that we see on the traditional American food pyramid like wheat (even whole wheat!), grains, oats and dairy products are not traditional food for Native American peoples and do not contribute to our health or wellbeing. To maintain a whole and healthy ancestral diet, be sure to refer to the Anishinaabe pyramid – not the traditional American pyramid.
Anishinaabe Seasonal Eating Cycles

The great spirit has blessed us with healthy foods that are available in our very own lands. Eating with the seasons is a way of honoring the food of that season that has nurtured our people for generations. Eating local and with the season benefits our minds and bodies since our biochemistry naturally adjusts according to the season; just like the foods of the lands do! A happy mind makes for a happy spirit! Our ancestral environments contain good microbes that also exist in our bodies naturally, helping us maintain good health. For healthy snacks, look to eating foods within the Anishinaabe Eating Cycles and Anishinaabe Food Pyramid.
Wiisiniida – Lets eat!

Food Activity for kids:

Now that you have learned about ancestral foods, name or draw healthy food option for each section. Practice your Ojibwemowin words for “knife” and “fork”!
Five Healthy Grocery Store Habits

1. Stay on the outer perimeter of the store.
The perimeter of the store is where you’ll find fresh food such as produce and meats. Staying clear from aisles will prevent you from buying unhealthy foods.

2. Avoid anything with a long shelf life or without an expiration date.
In the isles of the grocery stores you’ll find all the boxed and bagged foods without expiration dates. This is because they’re packed with ingredients that can hardly be considered real food (remember: just because it’s edible doesn’t mean it’s food!). These preservative packed items like cereal, pop tarts, chips crackers, and other junk food have been linked to obesity, diabetes, hyper-tensity and brain fog.

3. Avoid foods with more than 4 ingredients or with ingredients you can’t recognize or pronounce.
We should always be aware of what we’re eating and feeding our children. If a food contains more than 4 ingredients, something unnatural and unhealthy is involved. Stick to whole foods or bagged/boxed foods with fewer than 4 ingredients.

4. Avoid frozen foods meals like frozen pizzas or anything in cans, boxes, or bags.
Frozen foods usually contain preservatives and lots of sodium that lacks the essential enzymes our bodies need to break down food. Frozen organic berries with no preservatives are an exception.

5. Spend a little more and invest in our children’s health
Healthier food isn’t always expensive but when it is, look at it as an investment in the health of the people, especially our children and their future. Our children deserve to be fed only the best nutrient dense foods. Continuing cross collaborations with community garden projects will reduce cost of ancestral foods.
Four Elements of Ancestral Eating

Ancestral eating is more than just snacking and eating for physical health. It is eating for a healthy mind, emotions and spirit. This is a common indigenous perspective and today science is just beginning to prove how ancestral food can effect our mental and emotional state in a good way.

**Mental**

Eat foods for a clear mind! Eating ancestral foods can have a positive impact on the way your brain works.

**Emotional**

Eating healthy food should effect how we feel in a good way. Food should make us feel satisfied and happy, not guilty or sad. We should always eat the right amount of food, ever too much or never too

**Physical**

Eat Food for fuel! Eating nutrient dense foods will power your body with sufficient protein, fiber, healthy fats and vitamins to give you the fuel your body needs to grow strong. Food should strengthen our immune system, keeping us safe from illnesses.

**Spiritual**

Eating ancestral foods teaches us to be connected to the land. We should always show gratitude for the food we eat and honor for the life giving elements that bring all life.
Identifying Harmful Products & Ingredients

Next is a list of the foods that should be excluded from preparation of snacks and meals for kids. These foods have been linked to diabetes, obesity, hypertension, celiac disease, food addiction, brain fog, neurodegenerative disorders and inflammation in the body. Studies show that children with autism, FASD and ADHD will experience a greater sense of well being from avoiding foods containing these products. Avoid these harmful ingredients while choosing food products and snacks for kids. Whole foods are much healthier than processed and packaged. But, if you do buy processed foods, look for the organic options which have little or no added synthetic colors or preservatives.

The following should be AVOIDED altogether:

- wheat products
- gluten products
- dairy products
- soy products
- pastries
- donuts
- foods cooked in hydrogenated oils like sunflower oil, corn oil, & wesson oil
- products with labels like 'fat free' and 'low fat products'

Sugars and artificial sweeteners such as:

Acesulfame-K,
Saccharin
Aspartame
Sucralose
Sucrose
Fructose
High Fructose Corn Syrup
dextrose
(maltodextrin, sucrose, dextrose, are all synonyms for sugar)

*NOTE* It may seem like a difficult task to try to avoid all of these items because they are so commonly found in foods today. Just remember that these are ingredients that Indigenous peoples have lived without for thousands of years 0 if we could do it then, we can do it now! Before these foods came, Native peoples lived healthy lifestyles free of diseases and in harmony with the Mother Earth. Congratulations on taking the first healthy step toward learning about the harmful nature of these products. You have now put them on your food radar to be conscious of when you’re preparing meals for both children and adults.
Healthy Fats

Healthy fats have been the main source of fuel for Native people for thousands of years. Our bodies metabolize fatty acids for fuel more efficiently than fuel from carbohydrates. Our brains only make up 2% of our body but use about 20% of our body’s energy. The brain is 60% fat. Therefore, we need healthy fats for cognitive performance: this is *especially* important for developing children. Today carbohydrates make up most of our diets in America. But by returning to a diet high in healthy fats, we can restore healthy minds and bodies.

Healthy fats include: monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (includes Omega 3’s). Bad fats are ‘trans fats’ and are usually found in processed foods.

The following are foods high in healthy fats:

- Wild Game Meats
- grass-fed meats
- whole organic free-range eggs (including the yoke!)
- Fish
- avocados
- walnuts
- pistachios
- almonds
- organic peanut butter (with no added sugars)
- organic almond butter (with no added sugars)
- coconuts
- coconut oil
- olive oil
Healthy Snack Guidelines

1. Prepare snacks that are kid-friendly. Offer organic and gluten free dips to accompany healthy food choices. Read labels to make sure there are no more than 4 ingredients such as: food coloring additives and preservatives.

2. Select only juices that are 100 percent juice. Many products that advertise themselves as "fruit juices" contain no more than 10 percent juice. Avoid soft drinks containing sugar, sucrose, saccharin, aspartame, fructose, high fructose corn syrup, food coloring, additives and preservatives.

3. Eliminate cookies, doughnuts, brownies and other baked goods and limit chips and other salty, saturated-fatty snacks. Instead consider snacks from whole foods like: air- popped organic non-GMO popcorn, organic peanut or almond butter and slices of fruit, or diced fruit salads.

4. Plan ahead when going on outings. Instead of buying snacks at fast-food restaurants or concession stands, pack individual snack bags, filled with nuts and dried fruit to take along with you.

5. Don’t be swayed by advertising or packaging. Many prepared foods that are marketed as kid-friendly are poor in nutrition. For example, popular packaged lunches that come with a treat and a drink provide two-thirds of their calories from unhealthy fat sources and sugar and contain preservatives that are harmful. Instead, consider preparing snacks from whole foods. Good health is the result of this effort.
SNACKTIME REPLACEMENT IDEAS:

- Instead of “granola bars” which contain mostly sugar and wheat, choose an unsweetened trail mix variety with all nuts, fruits and seeds.

- Instead of potato chips or Doritos, choose all-natural non-GMO corn tortilla chips.

- Instead of dairy-based yogurt which contains too much sugar and causes inflammation and upset stomach in lactose intolerant children, choose a coconut milk yogurt.

- Instead of dairy-based sour cream chip dips or vegetable dips, choose guacamole or hummus.

- Instead of factory prepared fruit cups which usually contain sugary syrup, choose whole fruits instead. Keep plenty of whole fruits like grapes and apples on hand.

- Instead of sugary breakfast cereal with dairy milk, serve a wild rice porridge with coconut milk for breakfast. The wild rice can be prepared in bulk ahead of time – simply add coconut milk and heat. Add a bit of maple syrup for taste.

- Instead of sodium and preservative-packed deli meat, choose ground beef or bison or home made jerky instead. Deli meats are among the unhealthiest foods for kids.

- Instead of sugary items for breakfast, cook eggs as often as possible – even hard boiled eggs. Eggs are a superfood containing nearly every healthy fat and nutrient required by the human body. And the best part is, they’re inexpensive and easy to make.
*REMEMBER* Even though healthy, whole foods are sometimes more expensive and difficult to prepare, choosing these foods for children will save time and money in the long run. Healthy food habits will prevent medical problems in the future, and will also keep kids more focused and calm throughout the day.

**Seasonal Healthy Snacks**

Eating with the seasons of the Ojibwe food calendar is both a fun challenge and a healthy activity. The following healthy snack recipes can be prepared in a classroom setting. Ask the children to join you in preparing a snack. Set up stations where each child has a responsibility. The more they are engaged in the food processes of preparation and serving as a community, the more invested and enthusiastic they will be in their own healthy eating.

**SPRING – Ziigwan**

Ziigwan Snack
Pears with Maple Syrup, walnuts and cranberries

- 4 ripe pears, cored and halved
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 3 Tbs. maple syrup
- 1/4 cup walnuts, broken roughly into fourths

**Directions:**

Place the pears into a microwaveable or oven safe dish. Place them cut side down. Scatter the dried cranberries over the pears. Pour 2 Tbs. of the maple syrup over the pears. Microwave on high for about 3 minutes, stirring half way through or bake for 35 minutes in the oven at 350 F degrees. Uncover and let cool for a few minutes. Stir in walnuts, and drizzle the remaining maple syrup over the pears. Slice and serve.
SUMMER - Niibin
Niibin Smoothie
- 2 avocados
- 2 cups of frozen or hand harvested organic blueberries - 2 organic bananas
- 1 cup of organic, naturally sweetened coconut or almond milk
- 1 cup of ice

Directions:
Using a blender, put ice in first, fruit then add the 1 cup of coconut or almond milk and blend until desired consistency.
This is a creamy delicious, sweet treat with healthy fats to fill you up, as well as the fiber and nutrients in blueberries.

WINTER - Biboon
Wild Rice Cornmeal Cookies
- 3/4 cup of dried cranberries (minced)
- 1 1/2 cup and 2 tbs. of gluten free all-purpose flour
- 3 tbs. of unsalted grass-fed butter
- 1/2 cup of natural maple syrup
- 2 whole organic cage-free eggs
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 3/4 organic non-GMO cornmeal
- 3/4 tsp. sea salt
- 1/4 cup wild rice meal

Directions (yields 25):
Toss the dried fruit and the 2 tbs. of flour together in a small bowl and set aside. In a bowl, beat together the butter and maple syrup until smooth and creamy, about one min. Add the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla, beating until mixed. In a separate bowl, whisk together the 1 1/2 cups of flour, cornmeal, wild rice meal and sea salt. Mix the dried ingredients into the beaten butter mixture until mixed, then stir in the dried fruit. Form the dough into a rectangle and wrap in plastic. Chill the dough for about an hour, or until it is firm enough to handle. Preheat oven to 325°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper, or a light coating of coconut oil. After chilling divide the dough in three lengthwise portions, and roll each peace of dough on a lightly floured surface into smooth cylinder, 1 1/2 -inches diameter. Slice cylinders into
1/8 inch thick cookies and place on a baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes rotating sheets halfway through. Cookie edges should be light brown and centers a little soft. Remove and let cool completely!

FALL - Dagwaagaan
Dagwaagaan Maple Baked Apples (from Mino Wiisinidaa cookbook)
-Apples (1 per kid)
-dried blueberries
-walnuts (chopped)
-lemon juice
-water
-maple syrup
-1 tsp. vanilla extract
-1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
-1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg

Directions:
Preheat oven to 375. Wash and partially core apples; leave skin on top and bottom of apple intact so that the juices won't leak out. In the top half of each apple, make a continuous shallow cut around the outside. Stand the apples upright on the baking pan. Mix blueberries and walnuts together in a bowl. Fill each apple with berry and nut mixture. In a small bowl, whisk together lemon juice, water, syrup, vanilla, cinnamon and nutmeg. Spoon liquid into filled apple core until all liquid is used. Cover and bake for about 45 minutes or until apple sides can be pressed in easily with the back of a spoon. Before serving allow to cool for 15 minutes and then cut apples in half length-wise.
Returning to an ancestral based diet is inherently holistic, rooted in cultural values and is the center of healing and wellness for the people. By returning to this way we're honoring the great creator and the original instructions of living in balance and harmony with the mother earth.

For more information on ancestral eating and indigenizing fitness, visit:

www.wellforculture.com