

Picky Eater Pointers



7 Picky Eater Pointers

Picky eating is normal, and most kids eventually outgrow it. But when you're in the thick of an all-white food jag or a vegetable hasn't passed your child's lips in days, finicky eating habits can be tough to swallow. To make mealtime a positive and nutritious experience for everyone in your family, try one (or more!) of the picky eater tips below. Whether you have the pickiest eater on the planet or an adventurous eater who needs a little nudge every now and again, these creative, proactive tips will work wonders and bring joy back to your table.

> Cook with your Kids: Invite your kids into the kitchen to help with meal prep. Even something as simple as a snack of sliced vegetables with **dip** can set kids up for a lifetime of healthful eating habits. Things might get a little messy, but just think of all the fun you'll have with a tiny sous chef or two by your side.

> Self-Serve Meals: Serve dinner family style in large bowls and platters so everyone at your table can pick and choose what appeals to their taste buds and appetites. It's fun for kids to follow the lead of adults and older siblings, and a self-serve approach (versus plating up everyone's food) allows kids to tune into their hunger and satiety cues.

> Vegetable Do Overs: Ask your kids how they like their vegetables prepared. Sometimes it's not the vegetable itself that turns kids off, but rather, how it's prepared. Your child might dislike the crunchy texture of raw carrots but love them roasted until sweet and tender.

> Recipe Reviewer Chart: Have you ever hired your children to do chores around the house? Well, the next time you want your kids to try a new recipe, hire them. My **Recipe Reviewer Chart** is a one-page download designed to turn your picky or hesitant eater into a savvy food critic. When children are empowered to taste a new recipe and rate it with a smile, a frown, or a neutral face, they're more likely to take that initial (sometimes dreaded!) first bite.

Want more? Listen to my podcast episode on **PICKY EATING**

> Superheroes to the Rescue: Do your children love superheroes? If they do, then use Wonder Woman, Superman, and Hulk to your mealtime advantage. Start by telling your kids that their favorite superhero eats broccoli and peas to make them strong, and then rename fruits and vegetables to things like Spiderman Spaghetti Squash and X-Ray Carrots.

> Plan Meals as a Family: Be the captain of your kitchen, but enlist your tiny troops (AKA your kids) to help with the **weekly meal planning**. You set the rules – at least one veggie with dinner; a whole grain side dish; fruit with dessert – then get busy perusing your favorite food magazines, blogs (hint: check out the Recipe Index on Liz's Healthy table!), and cookbooks. When kids get a say in 'what's for dinner,' they're more likely to get excited about trying new foods.

> Shop the Farmers' Market: Where do tomatoes come from? Have you and your kids ever tried a freshly-picked zucchini? And have you met a real-life farmer? Take your family to the farmers' market to sample fresh produce plucked straight from the farm, and let everyone pick a new fruit or vegetable to bring home. To make your trip to the market even more of an adventure, download my **Farmers' Market Scavenger Hunt**.

Pumpkin Cupcakes with Maple Frosting



Cupcakes don't exactly have a healthy reputation, but with a few simple tweaks, I lightened them up and added a healthy helping of good nutrition. Canned pumpkin is the star in these better-for-you cupcakes, and I used a lot less sugar than what's called for in most recipes. This recipe is easy to make, so ask your kids to help you whisk, mix, and mash! To make the cupcakes even more special, garnish with shaved dark chocolate, candy corn, or naturally-colored decorator sugar. [Makes 12 Cupcakes](#)

INGREDIENTS

Cupcakes

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole wheat flour
- 3 tablespoons wheat germ
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup canned 100% pure pumpkin
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ banana, mashed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup organic canola oil
- 2 tablespoons milk (any kind)
- 2 tablespoons mini semi-sweet chocolate chips

Frosting

- 4 ounces 1/3-less-fat cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons pure maple syrup
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup confectioners' sugar

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Oil or coat 12 muffin cups with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, wheat germ, pumpkin pie spice, baking powder, baking soda, and salt until well combined.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, pumpkin, sugar, banana, oil, and milk until combined. Pour the liquid ingredients over the dry ingredients and stir until just moistened. Stir in the chocolate chips.
4. Spoon the batter evenly into the prepared muffin cups. Bake 20 to 23 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Transfer the pan to a wire rack and cool for 5 minutes. Remove the cupcakes and cool completely before frosting.
5. To make the frosting, place the cream cheese, maple syrup, and vanilla in a bowl and beat at low speed until blended. Add the sugar and continue to beat at low to medium speed until incorporated and the mixture is creamy. Place in the refrigerator and chill for 15 minutes. Spread the frosting over the cupcakes. (Best if stored in the refrigerator.)

PER SERVING (1 Cupcake): 260 calories, 13g fat (2g saturated), 195mg sodium, 35g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 3g protein, 15% vitamin A