

Feeding My Babes

Even though only two of the three of my kids are eating regular, “big people” food, I can already tell that I have one who’s fairly picky and one who will legitimately eat almost anything. Any guesses who is who? If you guessed Nora as picky and Mila as anything, you’re right! I’m pretty sure Baker is going to eat anything and everything.

Here’s a few ideas that I use to trick them into eating a good lunch (and don’t judge me, sometimes it just boils down to bribery to get them to eat).

- **Base your meal on a letter.** Nora is ALL about the alphabet now so we like to implement different letters of the alphabet for lunch. Mila isn’t sure of all her letters, but she plays along and loves it. There have been a few days, when Nora throws out a Q or X that we struggle to make the letter game work, but most days, we can find something! I honestly think about some of this when I am grocery shopping because I know getting my babes to eat is a struggle. (You can also do this with colors – orange: carrots, peaches, oranges, etc).
 - *Here’s a few example: Lunch brought to you by the letter P, so for lunch we have pepperonis, peaches, pea and pretzels. Lunch brought to you by the letter M, so for lunch we have meat (sliced turkey), macaroni and cheese, and mandarin oranges. Lunch brought to you by the letter C, so for lunch we have cottage cheese, corn, and a cherry kartwheel.*
- **Let your kids cook.** Before you shudder at the thought of kids cooking in the kitchen, I do not mean have them full-on roasting peppers and mashing potatoes. It could be something as simple as letting them stir the macaroni and cheese once all the ingredients have been added, or setting the table. I honestly feel when my girls are more invested in preparing for lunch or supper, they’re more excited to eat the food that’s been prepared. It’s kind of like when I have them help me with putting laundry away, they don’t realize they’re “working” and it makes them excited about the ordinary!
- **Have a “garbage” supper every now and then.** I don’t think we ever called it this growing up, but I saw this name online and it made me giggle. When I was little we’d sometimes ask my parents if we could watch TV and have snacks in the living room for supper. It didn’t happen often but I remember it was always so fun! We’d have popcorn, apple slices, BBQ smokies, pretzels...pretty much any snacks that we could find; plop down in front of the TV with our paper plate of snacks and enjoy our little party. Looking back now, those really are some of the sweetest memories because my mom and dad made it special. It didn’t happen often, but when it did I remember thinking, “I’ve got to eat really good so we can do this again.” The best part was: clean up was simple. All the paper plates go in the trash and there wasn’t really a whole lot of dishes to do (kudos Mom and Dad for making things easier on YOU!)
- **Toddler-friendly foods for the Josefiak kids:**
 - hotdogs and macaroni & cheese
 - homemade pizza
 - bierocks or “cheesocks” as my husband calls them (blog coming soon!)

- butter noodles with parmesan cheese (I normally add fruit as a side)
 - lunch meat with crackers and cheese (more of a snack, but my girls love to eat this and some days, it's all they ask for!)
 - spaghetti (kind of a given, but I also plan this one for bath night)
 - potato pizza hotdish
 - biscuits and gravy
 - sloppy joes and chips
 - BREAKFAST (this is THE go-to meal for our little fam bam when no food sounds good and the girls or Ty won't tell me what they want). I also make a LARGE batch of pancakes every time we make breakfast for supper; then I put wax paper in between the extras, put in a plastic bag and freeze them. When we need breakfast, I bring those out, pop them in the toaster and it's pancakes for everyone!
 - cheesy chicken roll ups
 - enchilada lasagna
 - burrito bowls
- **Limit snacks throughout the day** (This one makes me a "mean mom" sometimes). My girls are the QUEENS of asking for snacks. I don't limit their water/milk intake during the day, but I do not let them have more than one snack in between breakfast and lunch; and 1-2 snacks between lunch and dinner/supper. Normally our snacks consist of granola bars, pretzels, 1 Girl Scout cookie, fruit snacks, bananas, pudding cups, Premier protein shakes, blueberries, strawberries or cheese & crackers. I try to limit sugar intake, but let's be real friends, sometimes kids just need snacks to shut 'em up!

So there ya have it...a few ideas to help your toddlers at meal time and in between. Honestly some days are more of a struggle than others, but for the most part I feel pretty blessed that my girls *do* eat pretty well, even if my Nora bug is picky. My pediatrician also told me one time that if a kid eats 1 REALLY good meal in a 48 hour time frame, mixed with a few nutritious snacks, you should be good.

Just remember, motherhood really is a beautiful balance – some days you might be the QUEEN of getting your kids fed, clothed and entertained; while other days, it's a miracle if you get them fed and your own hair brushed. Give yourself some grace Mama (or Dad), you're really doing an awesome job!