

# Lesson 3 – Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foods



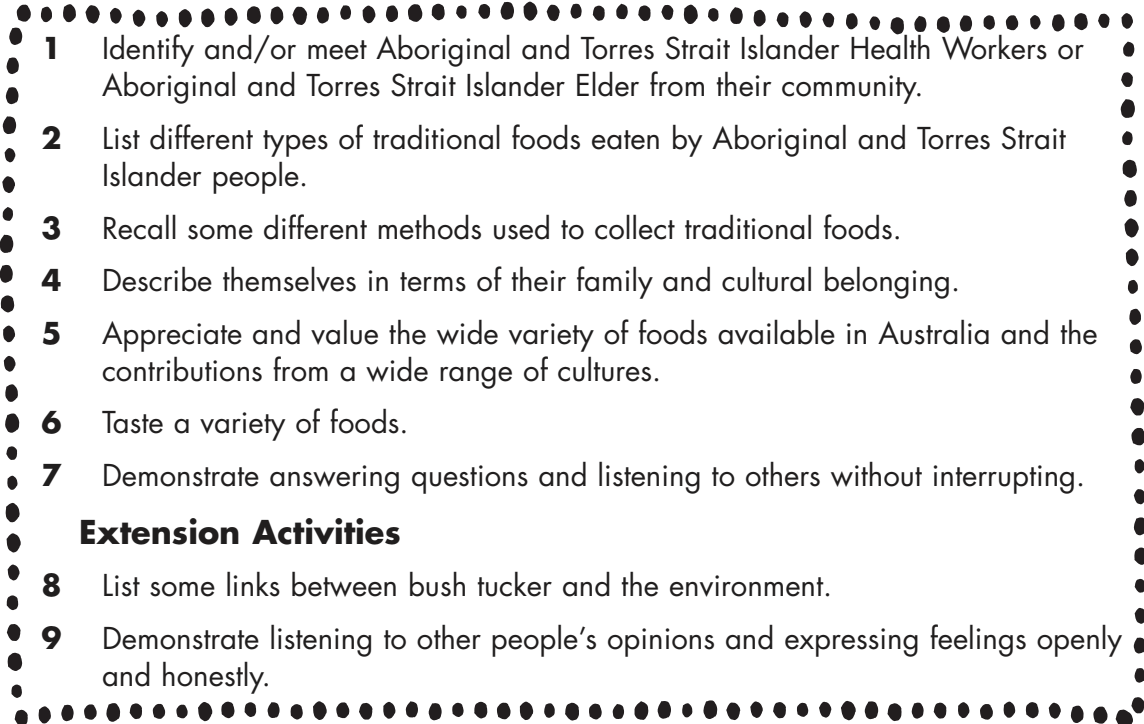
Learning statements and ways of working addressed in Lesson 3

EARLY LEARNING AREA		Learning Statements
Health and Physical Learning	Children build a sense of wellbeing by making choices about their own and others' health and safety with increasing independence	
Social and Personal Learning	Children build early understanding about diversity by investigating and communicating positively about the social and cultural practices of people in their community	
Active Learning Processes	Children think and enquire by generating and discussing ideas and plans and problem solving	
	Children think and enquire by investigating their ideas about phenomena in the natural world	
	Children think and enquire by investigating technology and considering how it affects everyday life	
Year 1 Learning Statements		
Children build knowledge, understanding and skills to:		
Health and Physical Learning	identify healthy food choices	
Social and Personal Learning	investigate their sense of self as a member of different communities including home, school and broader cultural groups	
Active Learning Processes	design and communicate ideas through play, drawings or concrete materials	
	reflect on the use of technology in everyday life including the use of technology by Indigenous Australians and different cultural groups	
	reflect on contributions individuals and families make to communities and the environment	
KEY LEARNING AREA		
Essential Learnings by the end of Year 3		
Health and Physical Education	Health behaviours and choices are influenced by personal factors, people and environments	
	A selection of foods from the five food groups is necessary to support growth, energy needs, physical activity and health and wellbeing	
	Individual behaviour and actions, including adopting safe strategies at home, on and near roads, near water, and in relation to the sun, can promote health and wellbeing and safety	
Studies of Society & Environment	Changes and continuities are identified through events, people's contributions and the stories of local communities.	
	Local communities have different groups with shared values and common interests.	
Ways of working		
During this lesson students will:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pose questions and plan simple activities and investigations</li> <li>• identify and collect information and evidence</li> <li>• draw conclusions and make decisions</li> <li>• apply personal development skills when interacting with others</li> <li>• reflect on and identify how behaviours, skills and actions influence health and wellbeing, movement capacities and personal development</li> <li>• reflect on learning to identify new understandings</li> </ul>		



## Learning objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- 
- 1 Identify and/or meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elder from their community.
  - 2 List different types of traditional foods eaten by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
  - 3 Recall some different methods used to collect traditional foods.
  - 4 Describe themselves in terms of their family and cultural belonging.
  - 5 Appreciate and value the wide variety of foods available in Australia and the contributions from a wide range of cultures.
  - 6 Taste a variety of foods.
  - 7 Demonstrate answering questions and listening to others without interrupting.
- Extension Activities**
- 8 List some links between bush tucker and the environment.
  - 9 Demonstrate listening to other people's opinions and expressing feelings openly and honestly.

## Resources

- Guest speaker – Community Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Elder
- Flip charts 7, 8, 9
- 'When my family eats' and 'Five senses' handouts for each student
- Story book and/or DVD (see Activity 2 / Resource List p 86-90)
- Butcher's paper
- Coloured pens, crayons, coloured pencils, paint, brushes
- Pictures of traditional food
- Variety of food samples (see Activity 7)

### **Extension Activity**

- 'Using my senses' handout

## Things to do before the lesson

- Read background information
- Decide which activities you will use for your class
- Organise the guest speaker, if you will be doing Activity 1
- Photocopy 'When my family eats' and 'Five senses' handouts
- Photocopy the 'Traditional foods' pictures
- Invite parents to share information about culturally-specific foods in their family (Activity 3)
- Prepare butcher's paper mural if doing Activity 4
- Access story book
- Ask students to remember 'My Food Book' if it has been at home
- Purchase or collect foods (if children are to bring them in from home)
- Chop and put food into small containers (see Activity 7)

### **For Extension Activity**

- Photocopy 'Using my senses' sheet.

# Traditional Food Background Information



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the traditional owners of Australia. They form two distinct and diverse cultural groups and within these two groups there is even wider diversity.

You should avoid grouping these two cultural groups into one group.

## Beliefs

All food has meaning in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Aboriginal people believe that the land and all animals and plants were created by ancestral spirits of the Dreaming. The Dreaming refers to a period of time when everything was created. Each food was created by the ancestral spirits; some are even ancestral spirits changed into another form, like the honey ants of Papunya in Central Australia. Certain people or groups of people have special links with certain foods which are called their totems. These people may be forbidden to kill and eat their totems, except perhaps in special ceremonies. Customs, rules and religious lore govern most aspects of the gathering, cooking and eating of traditional foods.

## Social Roles

In traditional times, the gathering and eating of food was a social event. It was very hard work and it involved the entire family and/or community. Each person had a job that they had to do - whether it was in the collection, preparation or cooking of the food. Aboriginal women provided most of the traditional bush foods required for each community and Torres Strait Islander women also were the main food providers for the family. The women gathered the plant foods, garden foods, eg. yam, taro, cassava, wild yams, eggs, shellfish and small animals whilst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men fished and hunted for larger land and sea animals such as dugong, kangaroo and turtles. Learning about daily survival, including food-gathering practices, began at an early age for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. From the time they are born, children are included with the collection of food and other daily chores.

## Diet

Before European people came to Australia, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders were very healthy. This was because they ate a very healthy and balanced diet with lots of exercise. Aboriginal people ate a large variety of plant foods such as fruits, nuts, roots, vegetables, grasses and seeds, as well as different meats such as kangaroos, 'porcupine'<sup>7</sup>, emus, possums, goannas, turtles, shellfish and fish. The Torres Strait Islander people ate a variety of garden food such as yams, taro, wild yam, cassava, fruits such as wongai, sorbie, coconuts, sea almonds, and meats such as pig, stingray, turtles, dugong, shellfish and fish. Sometimes they traded foods with people from different regions. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders knew which foods gave them energy for hunting, performing at ceremonies or traditional feasting, which foods stopped them from getting sick and which foods they needed to build strong bodies. They also knew which plants could be used as medicine. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders knew a lot about the animals and plants. This knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation.

## Knowledge of the environment

Aboriginal people had to move around from place to place in order to hunt and gather the food that was available. Torres Strait Islanders stayed in one place but planted gardens and gathered bush foods and shellfish to feed their family. The availability of food depended on the place and the season. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders knew (and many know today) a great deal about the land, the sea, the habits of animals and the seasons. Traditionally, neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander people had calendars or used clocks. Instead, they used the rain, tides, winds, stars, moon and the coming and going of different animals and plants to identify different seasons. Certain plants are used to indicate the season for particular foods. In Aurukun, for example, milk-wood blooms announce the season for stingray and oysters and blood wood blooms announce the time for collecting sugarbag. In the Torres Strait, people know that seagull eggs are ready to eat when certain trees are flowering.

The seasons were not called summer, autumn, winter and spring like we know today. Instead they were known as Wet and Dry seasons. During the wet months, Aboriginal people knew that wattle trees would be blooming and those sea animals such as mullet, crabs, shellfish, mussels, whiting and bream would be abundant. During the drier months, the primary food source included emu, goanna, kangaroo, fowl, berries and fish. Controlled burning of grassland areas would be used to hunt larger animals out from the grasslands in some areas. This is sometimes known as fire-stick burning or back burning. This method of hunting would also ensure new vegetation by next season. Torres Strait Islander people would burn and clear the bushland in readiness to plant new crops.

<sup>7</sup> A word that Aboriginal people often use for echidna

## Customs

In traditional times, collecting, gathering and eating foods were social occasions that had deeply-embedded social customs and values to which people adhered. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders don't eat certain foods, according to custom. Depending on family/social kinship systems, location of birth, each person was given a totem when they were born. Each totem in the Torres Strait represents different clans. They were forbidden to harm, kill or eat their totem, except on specific occasions. Some foods could not be eaten at certain times during the year. There were also some foods that children and pregnant women were not allowed to eat. Certain foods were banned during certain ceremonies. Rules or lore also applied to the gathering, cooking and eating of traditional foods.

## Cooking

Traditionally, the primary methods of cooking used by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders were boiling, steaming, roasting, cooking on open fires or underground ovens. Some foods such as seeds, nuts, fruits and berries could be eaten raw. Vegetables or plant foods such as yams or bush potato, were peeled and mashed. Torres Strait Islanders usually cooked and ate their bush food with the skin on. Most often seeds were ground with water to make a paste, which then could be eaten raw, or cooked as a damper in the hot ashes of an open fire. Some foods contained poison and therefore had to be leached in water. Larger animals were mostly cooked on an open fire or buried on hot coals under the ground.

In Torres Strait Islander culture this method of cooking is known as Kup Mari.<sup>8</sup>

When it came time to serve the food, the older people or Elders were fed first.

This was a sign of great respect. There were special rules for dividing food and the Elders received the best portions of each food. But Torres Strait Islanders, because of 'good pasin' (cultural sharing), shared the same best portion of the food. When Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders cooked foods, there was also a lot of singing and dancing. This dancing and singing is known as a 'Corroboree', 'shake-a-leg' or traditional island dancing.

<sup>8</sup> Kup Mari is also sometimes spelt as Kup Mauri, Kap Mauri or Kap Mari.

## Today

The way some Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders live today is very different from many years ago. Most Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people speak English, although for some, English may be their second or third language. Most people wear western clothes, live in various styles of housing and eat western foods. Some Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders still eat traditional bush food, but the way that the food is gathered and cooked has changed. For example, in some places rifles have replaced spears, cars have replaced walking by foot, dinghy and outboard motors replaced rowing canoes and plastic/nylon nets have replaced hand spun/woven nets (dilly bags). However, traditional foods are still important and hold great value in both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families today.

Today most Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders eat a lot of pre-packaged and/or frozen foods that can be bought from shops. One reason for this is convenience and another is the lack of available hunting land and reduced stocks of live food. Although Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders still have Corroborees and traditional island dancing and cook Kup Maris, food is mostly cooked on electric or gas stoves, barbecue and microwaves.

Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people come from large extended families and spend a lot of time together because families are very important to them - especially the Elders. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children call the Elders Nanna, Aka, Athe (grandparents), Aunty or Uncle out of respect. Extended families are common in both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. This means that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have their immediate family plus the grandmother and grandfather, aunty and uncle and cousins living together in one house. Sharing of food and other important things is a family way of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

# Lesson 3 Plan



Content	Resources
<p><b>Revise</b> Revise with students what they learnt in the last lesson.</p>	
<p><b>Activity 1 Traditional and contemporary food of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</b></p> <p>Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are the traditional people of Australia.</p> <p>Discuss with the students different aspects of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lifestyles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders live? Coasts, islands, bush. Many people also live in the city and the country.</li> <li>• How did they collect food? Get children to ‘act out’ spearing kangaroo, hunting, fishing, collecting shellfish, digging for roots, show Flip chart 7.</li> <li>• Types of bush tucker eaten – brainstorm different foods (land and sea).</li> <li>• Food-related practices – importance of family, culture for survival.</li> <li>• Highlight that during traditional times people were very healthy and strong.</li> <li>• Ask an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Elder, or Health Worker to be a guest speaker to talk about traditional bush tucker. Provide them with some guidelines about the topic they are to speak about. You can suggest they talk about:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ The name of the traditional group and land they come from.</li> <li>→ Types of food eaten, possibly a few traditional name of foods.</li> <li>→ How food was collected and hunted.</li> <li>→ Different social roles of traditional group members when gathering food.</li> <li>→ The cultural importance of food.</li> <li>→ The place of traditional foods in the modern diet.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure your introduction of the guest speaker to the students highlights the respect that the Elder commands in the community. See QSA’s document, <i>Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guest speakers</i>, <a href="http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/approach/indigenous_g009_0712.pdf">www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/approach/indigenous_g009_0712.pdf</a></li> <li>• If an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander speaker is not available, discuss these concepts with the class, based on the background reading and through reading books with the class (see reading resources in Section 5).</li> </ul> <p><b>Extension Activity - discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only the animals and plants that were needed to feed people were taken from the land. That way there was always enough food and the land stayed healthy.</li> </ul>	<p>Background reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flip chart 7</li> <li>• Try to bring an example of bush food to show children</li> <li>• Guest speaker (see possible contacts listed on page 7 or in Section 7)</li> </ul> <p>Reading books</p>



## Activity 2 Food story and discussion

- Read another suitable book with the class or show them a DVD about traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander foods. Where possible find a story that relates to your local area. *Pigs and Honey* (Adams, 1989) is a good story about collecting bush tucker in modern day Australia.
- You could also show the class a DVD such as 'Salt water & sand tracks', Vol. 1 or sing songs from the Aunty Wendy's mob resources, including: 'Until The Fire Is Out' in the 'Growin' Up Strong' album and 'Tucker' in the 'Happy to be me' album.
- After the story/song/DVD, lead a discussion, including types of food eaten, social roles, food-related practices and family involvement.

Story book or DVD or CD (see Resources list p 86-90)

## Activity 3 Families and Food

- It is important to highlight that many Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders today eat modern foods. They may also continue to eat traditional foods, particularly for special occasions.
- Read the poem 'When my family eats'. Give students a copy of the poem to paste in their Food Book. Ask the students to take the poem home to read with their parent/s or guardian/s.
- Many cultures have special foods that people eat. Do the students have examples of other culturally important foods that are eaten in their house?
- Ask children and/or parents from a variety of cultural backgrounds to share stories about special or culturally specific foods in their family. Ask children to talk about:
  - What foods are eaten by their family?
  - Who prepares the food? Why?
  - When are the foods eaten?
  - Where are the foods eaten?
- When the children are speaking about their 'special foods' encourage other children to ask questions.
- Discuss the importance of respecting other cultures and families and sharing our special knowledge and foods.

Flip chart 8

Photocopies of poem - 'When my family eats'

<p><b>Activity 4 Bush Tucker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go through Flip chart 9. Ask students if they have tasted any bush tucker. If they have, ask them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Did they collect it themselves? Was that fun? Did they go with family? (like the children in <i>Pigs and Honey</i>). Opportunity for children to share their own cultural practices with the class.</li> <li>→ Who gave it to them?</li> <li>→ What did it taste like?</li> <li>→ Did they like it?</li> <li>→ Where were they when they ate it?</li> <li>→ Did they have to cook the bush tucker?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If they have not tasted any bush tucker, ask them what food would they like to taste and why.</li> </ul> <p><b>Create a bush tucker mural</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write the heading 'Bush tucker in our community'.</li> <li>• Students can either draw or colour pictures of traditional foods. Pictures could be glued on the butcher's paper to make a classroom mural for display. You might like to ask some students to draw or colour-in the heading on the butcher's paper.</li> </ul> <p><b>Extension Activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw the 'Food Star' on the mural and ask students to decide which bush foods belong in the 'Food Star' (all the foods on the master sheet are everyday foods).</li> </ul>	<p>Flip chart 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pictures of traditional foods from both land and sea Activity sheet</li> <li>• Sheets of butcher's paper or coloured card joined to make mural-sized sheet (depending on space on classroom wall)</li> <li>• Paints, brushes, crayons, coloured felt tip pens</li> <li>• Glue, scissors</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activity 5 Extra activity - Taste some local bush tucker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community member or parent to bring in some traditional foods for the children to try.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, you could ask the community member or parent to bring in some commonly eaten foods in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, eg. damper, stew, sop sop, chicken semur and coconut curry. You could use these foods in the 'Food detective game' or have a separate tasting with the community member or parent describing the different foods.</li> </ul>	<p>Bush tucker</p>

<sup>9</sup> Some children may have known severe food allergies, so be careful to select foods that will be safe for all children. Obtain permission from parents for children to participate and consider inviting parents to be involved to present food to the children.

## Activity 6 Using our senses

To collect and hunt for bush tucker, people had to rely on their senses.

Collect bush tucker and/or play 'Food Detectives' to demonstrate using their senses to the students.

### Collecting Bush Tucker

- To collect and hunt for bush tucker, people had to rely on their senses. (The book 'My Home in Kakadu' demonstrates how people use their senses to collect food). They needed to be very clever at using different senses. What are the five senses that people needed to use and how would they use them to collect bush tucker?
  - Smell – smelling for animal scents.
  - Sound – listening for the noises of animals.
  - Sight – looking for tracks in the sand.
  - Touch – collecting honey ants.
  - Taste – eating good bush tucker.
- Ask the students to 'act out' spearing kangaroo, hunting, fishing, collecting shellfish, digging for roots etc. These are all traditional ways of collecting bush tucker.
- You could use Traditional Indigenous Games detailed on the website given in the resources section (p 93). Throwing games such as Gorri (p 59-60 of the Traditional Indigenous Games book) or tracking games such as Waayin (p 77-8).
- Highlight to students that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders still eat bush tucker, but the way the food is gathered and cooked may have changed, eg. in some areas, rifles have replace spears, cars replace walking on foot and electric or camp ovens are often used to cook food. Ask local Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders about how their people collect/collected food and also discuss how people collected food in the story in Activity 2.
- DVDs 'Salt water & sand tracks', Vol. 1 and 'Tribal tucker' (see Resources, Section 5, p 90) show Aboriginal children and Elders collecting bush tucker. You may want to show a DVD to the class and discuss the ways used to collect food shown in the DVD.
- If there is a bush tucker garden established in your school (or in a nearby location), organise a class visit to the garden.

*Ngutana-Lui Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Studies Centre*, run by Brisbane Catholic Education and located in Inala, Brisbane, provides 'hands on' experiences for classes. Their programs contains sessions on traditional foods, artefacts, arts and crafts, song and dance and Torres Strait Islander culture.

### Extension Activity

- To understand the changes to Ways of collecting bush tucker, ask students:
  - "If you were looking for bush tucker, would you prefer to walk to find it or drive in a car?" Then ask them to explain why.
  - "Would you rather cook all your meals in an oven or on a fire?" Ask them to explain why.
- Depending on your geographic location, organise a school excursion into the bush with Elders to look for tracks, listen for animals, etc.

Traditional Indigenous Games website

Bush tucker DVD

If you wish to visit the Ngutana-Lui Centre phone 07 3033 7200 for a booking

## Activity 7 Food Detectives – What Food Am I?

- You will need a variety of foods<sup>10</sup> from the five food groups (including bush tucker, if possible – see Activity 5) – cut into bite sized portions. You will only need one or two pieces of each food. You could ask the students to bring a sample of one type of food from home.
- Ask students to wash and dry their hands.
- Get students to sit in a half circle on the floor and choose 4-5 students to sit at the front.
- Place a serviette in front of each student. (If a student does not like the food it can be placed on the serviette)
- Blindfold students and allow students to use their senses to identify different foods (the blindfold can be frightening to some students, this can be substituted for a feely box or paper bag).
- Ask other students to take turns in choosing a food and giving it to a blindfolded student.
- Work through the questions below choosing a variety of foods. Explain that the student is not to guess the food immediately, but they are to use adjectives to describe the food – see below.
- Instruct students who aren't wearing blindfolds not to give away clues or call out the answer.
- Give other students a turn with the blindfold and repeat the exercise using different foods.

**Questions to ask the students:** How does the food ...

**Feel?** Hot, cold, wet, slimy, rough, soft, smooth, round

**Smell?** Fresh, sweet, fruity

**Taste?** Bitter, sweet, sour, salty

**Sound?** Crunchy, juicy.

### What is it?

This activity should be done with a variety of foods including foods the students may not be familiar with, eg. fruits, vegetables, different breads, pasta, rice or cereals.

- Variety of foods
- Serviettes
- 4-5 blindfolds – can use handkerchiefs or tea towels (depending on size of class)  
OR
- Feely box/paper bag

### Home Activity

Take home activity sheet on the 'Five senses'. Complete activity and colour in (may need parental assistance).

Add to 'My Food Book'.

### Extension Activity

Ask the students to complete the activity sheet 'Using my senses'.

'Five senses' activity sheet

'Using my senses' activity sheet.

<sup>10</sup> Some children may have known severe food allergies, so be careful to select foods that will be safe for all children. Obtain permission from parents for children to participate and consider inviting parents to be involved to present food to the children.