

Seasonal Menu (Autumn)

Introduction:

Balanced diet is the key foundation for establishing children’s health, whereas schools are an important setting for children to develop healthy eating habits from an early age. In this context, the Department of Health encourages all kindergartens and child care centres to design menus with reference to its “Nutrition Guidelines for Children Aged 2 to 6” under the “StartSmart@school.hk” Campaign, so as to create for children a campus environment conducive to healthy eating, and to bring their diets in line with the principle of “3 Lows 1 High” (i.e. low fat/oil, low salt, low sugar and high dietary fibre).

The cool breeze in the air signals the imminent arrival of autumn. What good choices are there for a healthful, seasonal menu? Let’s take a look at the sample menu below, which comes with several features:

1. The menu features dishes made with a variety of seasonal autumn vegetables like French beans, okra, pak choy, yard-long beans, lotus roots and winter melons. This can give children more opportunities to try out different vegetables.
2. Many seasonal autumn fruits such as star fruits, pears, persimmons and mandarins are served as snacks to ensure that children can obtain a wide range of nutrients and broaden their knowledge of fruit varieties.
3. Natural ingredients such as onions, tomatoes, shiitake mushrooms, carrots, baby corns and pumpkins can enhance food flavours and reduce the use of seasonings like salt and sugar.
4. A variety of foods are served as breakfast and snacks to give children a broader intake of nutrients and increase the diversity of the menu.
5. Based on the recommendations of the ‘Healthy Eating Food Pyramid’, this menu provides children with foods from the essential food groups to ensure a balanced intake of nutrients.

To learn more about the recommendations on healthful ingredients and cooking methods, please refer to the “Nutrition Guidelines for Children Aged 2 to 6” at https://startsmart.gov.hk/files/pdf/nutritional_guide_en.pdf.

Example Menu for Autumn

Week One	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast	Oatmeal with dried apricots in low-fat milk ^①	Low-fat cheese sandwich	Steamed Chinese bun + Low-fat milk	Vermicelli soup with shredded chicken and cabbage	Congee with lettuce and minced pork
Morning Snacks	Orange	Pear	Apple	Red grapes	Persimmon
Lunch	Stewed fish fillets with straw mushrooms and winter melon ^②	Stir-fried chicken fillets with French beans	Stir-fried sliced pork with okra and black fungus	Tofu with pumpkin and minced meat	Noodles with onion and scrambled egg ^②
Afternoon tea ^③	Tomato egg sandwich	Noodles with Chinese lettuce and minced beef	Macaroni with cabbage and fish puree	Boiled baby taro ^③ + Low-fat milk	Oat bread + Low-sugar, calcium-fortified soy milk
Week Two	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast	Oat bread with raisins + Low-fat milk	Oatmeal with raisins in low-fat milk ^①	Noodle soup with Shanghai cabbage and shredded pork	Congee with pumpkin and peanuts	Cornflakes + Low-fat milk
Morning Snacks	Kiwi fruit	Mandarin	Banana	Strawberries	Dragon fruit
Lunch	Steamed eggs with minced pork + Blanched pak choy	Steamed fish fillets with chopped garlic + Stir-fried choy sum	Stewed chicken with chestnuts + Blanched seasonal vegetables	Braised sliced pork with lotus root + Blanched broccoli	Angel hair with fresh bamboo shoots and assorted vegetables
Afternoon Tea ^③	Boiled corn ^③	Sandwich with tomato and chicken	Steamed scallion roll + Low-sugar, calcium-fortified soy milk	Blanched potato ^③ + Low-fat milk	Cherry tomatoes ^③

Week Three	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast	Steamed Chinese bun + Low-sugar, calcium-fortified soy milk	Congee with assorted mushrooms and minced chicken	Low-fat cheese and tuna sandwich	Conchiglie with pak choy and minced meat	Oatmeal with sweet potato in low-fat milk ^①
Morning Snacks	Orange	Star fruit	Pear	Green grapes	Banana
Lunch	Steamed tofu with shredded chicken and shiitake mushrooms	Scrambled egg with diced yard-long beans	Steamed fish with lemons ^④ + Blanched vegetables	Stir-fried chicken fillets with dragon fruit and bell peppers ^②	Gemelli with fresh tomato and Bolognese sauce
Afternoon tea ^⑤	Cherry tomatoes ^③	Oat bread + Low-fat milk	Boiled corn ^⑥	Wheat sandwich bread with peanut butter + Low-sugar, calcium-fortified soy milk	Tuna and cucumber sandwich
Week Four	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast	Oatmeal with red dates in low-fat milk ^①	Soba soup with seasonal vegetables and minced beef	Congee with spinach and dace fish balls	Oatmeal with raisins in low-fat milk ^①	Oat bread with raisins + Low-fat milk
Morning Snacks	Kiwi fruit	Persimmon	Papaya	Mandarin	Apple
Lunch	Stir-fried shredded pork with hyacinth beans and mushrooms ^②	Steamed tofu with straw mushrooms and assorted peas ^②	Steamed eggs with dried whitebait + Blanched choy sum	Fish fillets with low-fat white sauce	Shanghai noodle soup with carrots and shredded pork
Afternoon tea ^⑤	Boiled corn ^③	Sago soup with pumpkin and low-fat milk (less sugar)	Wheat sandwich bread with peanut butter + Low-sugar, calcium-fortified soy milk	Vermicelli soup with assorted vegetables	Cherry tomatoes ^③

Remarks:

Half-day pre-primary institutions may refer to the snack recommendations of this example menu and give children one to two servings of grain foods, half serving of fruit or one serving of dairy products.

Nutritional tips on 'Less salt and less sugar':

- ① Replacing evaporated milk or condensed milk with low-fat milk can decrease the fat content of the dish. You can also add a small amount of red dates, raisins, dried apricots or sweet potatoes to enhance the sweet flavour.
- ② Natural ingredients like onions, tomatoes, mushrooms and bell peppers can be used for seasoning, thereby reducing the use of salt and sugar.
- ③ Fresh foods are healthy snack choices since they contain less salt and sugar than pre-packaged foods like biscuits and cakes.
- ④ Lemon has a fresh taste, which can reduce the foul smell of fish as well as the use of high-sodium condiments like fish sauce.
- ⑤ Water should be the main beverage served during snack time. Avoid serving beverages that are high in sugar content, e.g. instant malted drinks and fruit juice with added sugar.