

Food Policy

Here at Alfresco we understand the importance of providing children with a healthy, balanced diet as outlined in the EYFS as it has such a large impact on their growth and development. Our food is prepared fresh onsite by our cook using wholefoods and organic produce as much as possible. The menu is mainly vegetarian with occasional fish and does not include high sugar, high salt, or ultra processed ingredients. We are able to cater for children with allergies or intolerances.

We understand how easily children can develop a taste for less healthy food and how exposure to these can influence their preferences and future palate. If you decide to opt out of your child eating food prepared by Alfresco we ask you to provide meals and snacks which are consistent with our ethos and considerate of the other children.

Our site is nut free so any food brought to Alfresco must not contain any nuts or traces of nuts. Lunchboxes should also not contain meat, other than fish.

High sugar, high salt, or ultra processed foods (for example biscuits, chocolate, white bread, crisps, flavoured yogurts) should not be routinely brought to Alfresco. A good explanation of what is meant by ultra processed food can be found here:

[Impact of ultra-processed food on children's health - House of Lords Library](#)

Exceptions will always be made for children where there is a medical need and, although technically considered an ultra-processed food, we provide formula for children who drink it. We also appreciate that any food can be part of a healthy diet if it is eaten in moderation so do not discourage occasional treats, for example bringing cakes for a child's birthday or toasting marshmallows over a fire.

Please note that we do not have refrigeration facilities for children's lunchboxes. Therefore, any food brought to Alfresco must be packed in a suitable container that will keep it fresh until it's time to eat. During warmer months, an ice pack will be necessary to maintain the right temperature. If food has not been stored correctly, for example if it contains fish which has not been kept chilled, then we will be unable to give it to your child for health and safety reasons and instead we will provide a meal for the child and add the cost to your invoice. Please do not provide any food which needs to be heated or requires any preparation other than placing it on a plate.

How we implement food and drink

1. Before a child is admitted to the setting we obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies or intolerances that the child has, and any special health requirements.
2. We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs - including any allergies - are up-to-date
3. We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.

4. We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink which is consistent with their dietary needs and their parents' wishes.
5. We provide menu's in advance and these are shared with families in weekly updates.
6. We provide nutritious food at all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
7. We include foods from a variety of cultural backgrounds where required, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
8. We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.
9. We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate.
10. We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
11. We encourage children to eat foods offered, and foods are not restricted on plates.
12. We provide children with utensils which are appropriate for their ages and stages of development, and which take account of the eating practices in their cultures where required.
13. We understand that children may still use hands and fingers if they are not able to use cutlery and this is not restricted. Knife and fork use is encouraged around 3 years of age.
14. We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the day. Children should bring their own, clearly labelled water bottle with them every day.
15. Babies are offered formula milk where required and in line with their baby routine sheets.
16. We do not offer squash or fizzy drinks. Only water, formula or expressed milk where required.
17. We do not force children to eat foods.
18. We do not provide foods that may choke children. We follow the Early Years Food Choking Hazards Policy from food.gov.uk.

Baby Led Weaning

Some parents choose baby-led weaning for their babies, which means offering only finger foods (from six months), letting them feed themselves rather than spoon-feeding them foods that are puréed or mashed. We are happy to accommodate baby-led weaning at Alfresco; just let us know if this is your preference, and we will offer a variety of small portions of foods that are easy for baby to hold and digest, and then increase the amount of food given as needed over time. We may also include food such as mashed potatoes or yoghurt, but babies will be allowed to feed themselves this using either their hands or a spoon.