



Raising

HEALTHY EATERS

Yael Dror



Introduction

About Yael

Yael Dror is a worldwide Nutritionist. She holds a Master's degree in Physiology and a Bachelor's degree in Nutrition. But, most importantly, Yael is a mother of 3 active children.

Since 2000, Yael has leveraged her passion for nutrition to help people in all walks of life achieve better health. She served as chief dietician in Schneider Children's Hospital in Israel, for numerous children's wards: Oncology, BMT, FIT, cardiac, chest surgeries and internal medicine. Through this, she discovered an intense passion to instill healthy eating habits in children.

Yael established her clinic in Sunnyvale, California in 2014 to provide nutrition services to individuals and organizations. She collaborates with local organizations such as Stanford's Sports Medicine Department, Google, the JCC in Palo Alto, REI and Silicon Valley Triathlon Club and more.

She hosts children's nutrition workshops that teach healthy habits and balanced diet tips to children in an interactive way with games and fun activities.

For many years, Yael was a professional consultant for "Hop," a children's TV channel. She had a weekly nutrition segment on radio shows, TV shows, and even the "Good Morning Show," Israel's most popular show.

Yael has always had a penchant for healthy eating and staying active. Especially with a previous career as a professional athlete, competing in many international track & field competitions throughout Europe.

Currently, Yael is a Co-founder & Vice President of Content at Habitz, a startup for kids. She co-created and launched the Habitz mobile app, which empowers children ages 6-13 to make healthy choices using A.I. (www.habitz.com).



The essence of this book

This is not a cookbook. Sure, it has recipes, but the reason I wrote this book is to help parents learn how to raise kids who have a healthy relationship to nutritious foods and develop wholesome eating habits.

As a nutritionist and mother of three energetic children, I know how difficult it is to combine healthy eating with the reality of stressful, busy lifestyle. The power of this book is in understanding the importance of childhood nutrition, which can help you develop your own family healthy habits with delicious recipes. In this book, I'm going to help you to find the right balance and give you many tips how to do it in a simple delicious way.

I want to invite you to read, cook, and enjoy Raising Healthy Eaters.

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Yael Dror'.

Special Acknowledgements

Editor: Molly Elwood

Graphic design: Michal Feld

Icons: www.icons8.com

Photographer: Tamar Guzansky, Yarnin Israel

Layout assistant: Daniella Granados

The secret to kid-friendly vegetables

It's not a secret that vegetables, which come in wide variety of flavors, textures, shapes, colors, and sizes, have almost endless nutritional benefits:

- Rich in vitamins and minerals
- High in fiber
- Low in calories
- Help the immune system function
- Reduce the risk of many diseases
- Improve the digestive function
- Help prevent and treat constipation

There's always a feeling of a big gap between our understanding, as parents, about how important vegetables are for our health, and our children's willingness and readiness to eat them. Because although vegetables have many nutritional benefits, that's not necessarily a big selling point for kids. Often there's even a feeling of a "struggle" when trying to convince your child to just taste a new vegetable.

And yes; vegetables are definitely an "acquired taste." They're not as soft as pastry dough, they're not as sweet as chocolate or candy, and they often have a sour taste and are harder to chew (but try explaining to a child that that's just healthy dietary fiber!). And yes, sometimes the nutritional benefits of vegetables affect their taste and texture, creating the child's strong refusal to eat them.

However, there are some important secrets you should know about vegetables, secrets that could help us make them more palatable and pleasant for kids to eat. Some of the secrets are related to the preparation process. Others break myths that we've grown up with for many years. Understanding the hidden secrets of vegetables can give us parents great tools to encourage our children to eat more vegetables—and to make sure they'll enjoy them and gain their nutritional benefits.

Curious about what those secrets are? Let me tell you!

Veggies can be sweet

Every vegetable contains a certain amount of carbohydrates. But in most cases, in their fresh or cooked form, we won't taste any sweetness. That's because these carbohydrates aren't in a structure that can create a sweet flavor. When vegetables are exposed to temperatures of 330°F (165°C) or higher, the carbs begin to change their structure; a "caramelization process" is taking place, and the sweet flavor starts to appear. Some vegetables, such as onions, will reach a high level of sweetness, which is very different from their original taste. This will happen when exposing the veggies to high heat, such as during baking, grilling, or frying.

Why doesn't this happen every time we cook?

When you cook vegetables in a pot with hot water, they cannot reach temperatures high enough to pass the caramelizing process threshold. Water boils at 212°F (100°C) and won't go higher during cooking. In addition, when you cook vegetables in a liquid (like in a soup), the liquids soften the sweet taste and the vegetables can lose their strong flavors.

How can I create "sweet vegetables?"

One easy and simple way is to bake the vegetables in the oven at high temperature for 50-60 minutes. If you want to prepare a vegetable dish in water/liquid, first give them "heat stroke" in the cooking pot or pan. "Heat stroke" means using a small amount of oil for light frying; once the vegetables brown and soften a bit, then add the cooking water. This way, you will have great stew or soup with richer flavors.

Nutritional benefits in cooked vegetables

When we talk about the nutritional benefits of vegetables, the most common recommendation is to eat them fresh. Some will even say to "only eat them fresh!" The reason is that some of the essential vitamins, such as vitamin C, may be destroyed during heating. That's why many people believe that vegetables that have been heated (cooked or baked) have no more nutritional value. This isn't true!

Heating vegetables can actually offer *additional* nutritional benefits for some vitamins. For example, vitamin A (which belongs to an important group of antioxidants in the food called "carotenoids"), is absorbed better when you heat the vegetable. For example, the absorption of vitamin A from carrots increases by 20-30% when eaten cooked compared to fresh. Think about adding carrots next time you're making soup! What's more, the minerals found in vegetables (potassium, magnesium, calcium, phosphorus, etc.) are not destroyed by heating, nor are dietary fibers.

Therefore, it's not always necessary to insist children "only eat fresh vegetables." In many cases, such as carrots, the vegetable's taste changes when you cook them—and many kids are much more willing to try and eat cooked carrots as opposed to fresh ones. However, it's important to serve both fresh and cooked/baked vegetables. This helps your child figure out which vegetables they like and in which form, and also teaches them how to integrate them into their daily menu and meals.

The power of vegetable soup

Soup is a great way to serve vegetables for your children. As mentioned above, the vegetables in soup won't be a rich source of vitamin C, but they will provide many other nutritional values. Soup is a great way to introduce children to new tastes that they wouldn't be exposed to in another form. For example, for kids who don't like the texture of chopped vegetables and refuse to eat vegetable soup, try blending the soup after cooking it, with all the vegetables. This allows kids to eat a soft, smooth-textured soup while exposing them to the flavors of vegetables and herbs.

Another advantage of soup is that a large proportion of vegetables' minerals pass into the soup broth. So, even if the child only chooses to eat the broth—without touching any vegetables—they will still receive a lot of nutritional value from the soup.

In short: soup is a great nutritional food for the whole family. It has high nutritional values and can easily be integrated regularly in family meals—even for children who refuse to try vegetables.

My tip:

For a rich-flavored vegetable soup: Follow these cooking steps: First, heat a pot with a little bit of oil. Then gradually add the different kinds of vegetables you want to cook, to give them "heat stroke." Only then, after all the vegetables were exposed to the heat, add the water/broth and give the soup its cooking time.

Tunisian couscous soup



 4-5 servings

Tunisian couscous soup is the specialty dish of my mother-in-law, Sara Saroussi. She learned how to make this rich, flavorful soup while she was still a young girl—and she continues to make it the same way, every week, for the family’s Friday night meal. In our family, Tunisian couscous soup is Sara’s most loved dish. It’s one of her trademarks. I had the honor of cooking with her and learning this recipe when she came to visit my family in the U.S. a few years ago.

The soup contains fresh vegetables, fresh herbs, garbanzo beans, and a “rainbow of flavors” in this vegetarian version of the recipe. You can also make the same version with the addition of chicken to get an even richer taste.

When you combine this soup with a bowl of couscous, you get a great tasting, nutritious whole meal in one bowl!

Kids love this soup because it’s simple and rich at the same time. It has a great flavor, but it’s not too strong or spicy—and the cinnamon is a treat that many kids will recognize. Also, the soup can be eaten with any vegetables they like (my son asks for carrots only) or even without any vegetables (which is how my daughter likes it), while still offering many nutritional benefits. And of course, having the whole meal in one bowl makes it super easy for me and for them to enjoy the meal.

Preparation:

In a big soup pot, fry onion with oil over medium heat. Once the onion is golden, add sliced carrots and stir gently for 2-3 minutes. Add zucchini, tomato, and squash. Sauté until vegetables soften; also about 2-3 minutes. Add celery and garbanzo beans; stir gently.

Add paprika, ground black pepper, turmeric, and cinnamon. Let simmer for 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

In a separate pot, bring 5 cups of water to a boil. Add boiling water to sautéed vegetables.

Cook over high heat until broth returns to a boil. Then stir in cabbage and herbs (dill, parsley, cilantro). Once mixed, reduce to a low-medium heat and let soup simmer uncovered for 1½ hours.

Add salt after 1 hour of cooking.

Ingredients:

- ½ medium sized onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 cup soft cooked garbanzo beans or 15.5oz/439g can of organic garbanzo beans
- 2 carrots, cut into sticks
- 2 zucchinis, diced
- 1 ripe tomato, diced
- 4 whole cabbage leaves
- 2 stalks celery with leaves, chopped
- ½ butternut squash or ¼ pumpkin, diced (23.8oz/680g)
- 2 sprigs dill, including stems
- 2 sprigs parsley, including stems
- 2 sprigs cilantro, including stems
- 5 cups boiling water
- ½ tablespoon red paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

My tips:

Adding chicken: If you want to add chicken to the soup, I recommend using larger pieces. Add it after frying the onion and before adding the carrots.

Then continue the recipe as written. Before serving, I remove the chicken from the soup and place it in a serving dish.

Note: This recipe is gluten free. However, once you add couscous, it will contain gluten.



Serving:

There are two ways to eat couscous soup:

Separately: Serve couscous on plates and the soup in a separate serving bowl. In this way, the soup is ladled over the couscous, like a dressing.

Together: Fill a soup bowl halfway with couscous, then fill it the rest of the way with soup. Stir.

The first option is the traditional Tunisian way (and the way my mother serves it). But personally, I like it better when it feels more like soup.

My tips:

Too-thick soup: If the soup is too thick after an hour of cooking, you can add another cup of boiling water.

When to add seasoning: It's important to add seasoning before adding the water. This delivers a wider range of flavors. Taste the soup before the end of cooking the vegetables and, if needed, add more salt according to taste.



The healthy advantage of finger foods

What's the right way to eat our meals? We all try to raise our children with good table manners; for example, sitting when we eat, not talking with our mouths full, eating with a spoon or fork and not with our hands. But are we missing something? Could there be an advantage if our children will eat some kinds of foods with their hands? Should we encourage it?

What is “finger food?”

“Finger food” is food served in a small form factor. It's easy to hold and eat with your fingers and you don't need a spoon, fork, or knife. In the early stages of childhood, around the age of one, finger food plays an important role in healthy development and it's recommended that parents integrate finger food into a child's meals. Eating finger food helps the child be more independent; letting them control what they're eating and what comes next (in contrast to when they were fed by adults).

Finger food helps a child develop new muscle-skills, like the ability to hold small things in their little fingers. It's also important for developing neuronal- cognitive connections; i.e., creating eye-hand coordination to pick up food from the plate and bring it to their mouth. It might look easy, but it's a challenging task for a young child!

Eating with your hands: A pure joy!

Finger food isn't just for the earliest solid food eaters. For children, the enjoyment of experiencing food is more than just the taste. They want to touch the food, to feel its texture, to hold it—and if they enjoyed that, then they're more willing to try and taste it. That's one of the reasons why chicken nuggets and french fries are often the most popular meal on the kids' menu. And yes, that's not exactly a “healthy meal” which I'd like my kids to eat, but understanding this principle of holding and eating food with your hands can help us create a better dining environment for encouraging children to eat healthy.

Is it bad manners?

In every society, there are certain table manners we try to teach our children, and that's a good thing. In many homes, we ask kids to sit quietly at the table, to use a knife and fork, to not to make too much of a mess around them, and to eat the variety of foods they're served. And that's fine! But as we understand how important it is for children to eat with their hands, we need to make sure we schedule time for this in our weekly meals. When we set the right boundaries and let children enjoy finger foods, we can find the balance between good table manners and healthy food exploration. By the way, kids aren't the only ones who enjoy finger food. Adults love them, too! Chicken wings, french fries, popcorn, nachos, tortilla chips, street tacos... We also enjoy finger food party appetizers served on a nice tray, allowing us to eat them right away. Think about it: there's a time and a place for everyone—kids and adults—to eat with their hands.

Healthy ideas

Finger food can be served as a snack, as part of a meal, or even be the whole meal. And some foods can easily be eaten with knife and fork or with our fingers, depending on the presentation.

Some examples of healthy finger/hand foods include:

- Baby carrots
- Carrot, celery, or cucumber sticks
- Bell pepper sticks (serve a few different colors)
- Grapes, cherry tomatoes, olives
(if the child is young/<2 years old, cut them to half)
- Broccoli, cauliflower (cut into small florets a child can hold; can be served fresh or cooked/blackened)
- Sugar snow peas
- Chicken drumsticks
- Corn, corn on the cob, baby corn (canned)
- Small veggie muffins
- Hearts of palm (canned)
- Fresh mushrooms

Baked and breaded cauliflower

 2-4 servings

As a child, there was a dish that was both very tasty and a lot of fun to eat. It was cauliflower which was separated into small florets, covered with batter, and fried. It was delicious! I have to be honest; as a child, I wasn't that fond of cauliflower, but this dish was the best! I think a big part of the fun was that it was a finger food. I could hold and eat it without using a fork or a plate.

As I got older and had kids of my own, I wanted to give them the same fun experience with food I had as a child. Today, I'm very into healthy foods without giving up on a great taste, so I was looking for a new way to prepare this classic dish for my family. By baking the cauliflower instead of frying it and mixing a healthy fiber into the bread crumbs (oat bran blends wonderfully), the dish gets the "healthy twist" I was looking for.

Yes, it's still crunchy and tasty. And it's a finger food that the whole family can eat as a snack or as part of a light main meal. I love this dish! Hope you will enjoy it like I do.

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 350°F/177°C. Place parchment paper on a wide baking sheet, then grease paper with oil.

In a large pot, bring 4 quarts of water to a boil. Add cauliflower florets and boil for 15 minutes.

Drain water from cooked florets and let them cool in the pot for 5 minutes.

In a small bowl, mix the egg with the seasonings (cumin, salt, black pepper). Using a pastry brush, spread the egg mixture onto the cooked florets.

In another small bowl, mix the breadcrumbs with oat bran. Sprinkle mixture over the cauliflower. Gently stir with spoon until florets are covered.

Place breaded cauliflower florets on prepared baking sheet.

Bake for 50-60 minutes.

Ingredients:

- 1 large cauliflower, cut into medium-sized florets (the size of a child's fist)
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup breadcrumbs
- 3 tablespoons oat bran
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons oil or baking spray

My tip:

*Make it golden:
You can increase the oven's temperature to 420°F/215°C during the last 10 minutes to give the cauliflower a nice, brownish color.*



Kids and calcium: Healthy foods for growing bodies

Calcium is an essential mineral for healthy nutrition. First off, it's a major structural component of bones and teeth. Proper calcium intake is important throughout our lives, but it's especially important for children because, up until the age of 20 to 25, our bones are forming rapidly; this period of development determines the bone composition we'll have as adults. That means a child's eating habits can affect their future bone density as well as growth potential (including height). Therefore, calcium should play a central role in children's nutrition, every day!

In addition to its important role in building bones, calcium has many other functions in maintaining health and balancing different systems in the body. Calcium is involved in the function of the nervous system, in maintaining an electrical balance within cells, and even in muscle function, preventing pain and muscle cramps—especially during exercise and later in life during pregnancy.

Some examples of calcium-rich foods include:

- Milk (cow, goat, sheep)
- Cheese
- Yogurt
- Egg whites
- Sardines (when eaten with the bones)
- Cabbage
- Broccoli
- Collard greens
- Kale
- Mustard greens
- Tahini
- Sesame seeds
- Almonds

How much calcium does your child need per day?

Age	Daily amount
months 0-6	mg 200
months 6-12	mg 260
years 1-3	mg 700
years 4-8	mg 1000
years 9-18	mg 1300

When is the best time to consume calcium to promote growth?

It's important to combine calcium-rich foods into a child's menu throughout the day to reach the recommended daily amount (200-1300 mg/day)—that means three servings a day!

However, not many people know that it's especially important to eat calcium-rich foods before bedtime. The reason is that a child's fastest growth stages occur at night, while asleep. This is due to a high secretion of growth hormones that occur only during deep sleep—and only in darkness (!).

As night approaches, a child's body improves calcium absorption to promote better growth. Therefore, it's very important to include calcium-rich foods during dinner; e.g., cheese, cottage cheese, ricotta, feta cheese, mozzarella, yogurt, milk, eggs, sardines, green veggies, and more.

The best cheese for healthy bones: Ricotta

Ricotta is considered one of the most important cheeses in regards to nutrition. Ricotta contains a high amount of whey protein and whey is the highest quality protein from dairy. Although the amount of protein is not necessarily as high as in yogurt or other cheese products, your body's absorption efficiency of ricotta is very high. Ricotta is also a good source of calcium, phosphorus, and selenium. And when we talk about calcium-rich foods, ricotta is considered the undisputed champion in this field. That's because ricotta contains 150 mgs of calcium per serving (1/4 cup/62 g). That means that a single cup of ricotta offers 600 mg of calcium!

Best of all: Ricotta has a relatively neutral flavor. That's its advantage! Ricotta easily absorbs other flavors, making it simple to prepare sweet and salty foods with the same cheese. You can combine ricotta into many of your children's favorite foods without them even noticing. For example, mix ricotta with shredded cheese when making a homemade pizza. It can also be added to things like scrambled eggs, omelets, grilled cheese sandwiches, cheesecake, sweet or salty pastries, casseroles, muffins, and more.

My tip:
Choosing the right ricotta: You can find many kinds of ricotta cheese in the grocery. Some are high in saturated fat, which isn't considered a good kind of fat. Instead, I buy "part-skim ricotta," which has less saturated fat and fewer calories.

Ricotta cranberry muffins

 12 muffins

I love cheesecake, even more than chocolate cake! And my son is the same; at birthday parties, he seldom finishes a slice of cake piled high with frosting. But cheesecake—he'll never share cheesecake with anyone. Another thing he loves is cranberries (dried and lightly sweetened). He adds them to his cereal and his yogurt; sometimes he just eats them plain as a snack.

One of the things that worries me the most nowadays—in a good way!—is the fact that my son is growing all the time. I feel like he's getting taller every morning. I use the word “worried” because I feel we're both racing to supply enough calcium for his bones. So in this recipe, I take advantage of the two things he and many kids love: cheesecake and cranberries.

These small, cheesecake-like muffins are the perfect way to tuck away the extra protein and calcium a child needs for healthy growth. By adding sweetened cranberries, I'm able to reduce the sugar to just 4 tablespoons. And each muffin contains 110 mg of calcium, which is 10% of a child's daily recommended intake.

In short, these muffins are a delicious, easy way to power up your child—and you won't need to nag her to eat them.

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 420°F/215°C. Grease muffin tin or line with paper baking cups.

In a large bowl, mix together all dry ingredients. Add ricotta, eggs and vanilla extract to dry ingredients and mix well with a spoon. Evenly distribute batter into muffin tin.

Bake muffins for 10 minutes. Then reduce heat to 350°F/177°C and continue baking for 35-40 minutes or until muffin tops are light brown.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup (8 oz./228g) 2% Greek yogurt (I use Fage)
- 1 container (1 lb/454g) ricotta cheese, part skim (I use Galbani)
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons unbleached flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon peel (optional)

My tips:

Fallen muffins: At the beginning of baking, the muffins will rise very high but once they're ready, they will fall flat. Don't panic! They're supposed to fall.

Make in advance: Also, ricotta and cranberry muffins are often tastier the next day. I recommend making them a day in advance if you're entertaining guests or preparing them for a party.



Making fish family-friendly

Fish has many nutritional benefits that contribute to healthy bodies, including proteins and essential vitamins and minerals. But despite its nutritional value, kids often refuse to even try fish, often because of the “fishy” smell and taste. And for the ones who are willing to eat it, most of the time they’ll only eat fish that is fried; i.e. fish and chips, or in other versions that feel less like fish, like fish sticks.

It’s important to introduce non-fried fish to a child’s diet. The goal is to encourage kids to eat fish 1-2 times a week, substituting a serving of meat (or other high protein main course) with a serving of fish. Luckily, fish can be served in a wide variety of ways that kids will be willing to try: cooked, baked, fried, marinated, grilled, and with sauces—kids love sauces.

The nutritional value of fish

Fish is part of a healthy balanced diet. It’s a high-quality source of protein, easy to digest, and rich in nutritional benefits. It’s also rich in essential amino acids. Prepared fish (cooked or baked) contains 5-8 grams of protein per a 1oz (28g) serving size. One of the advantages of fish is the wide array of species; you can easily find a variety of naturally lean fish (white fish) that can be part of any diet, such as cod, halibut, tilapia, and more.

Is fish safe for kids?

As I said, fish is a great source of many essential minerals. However, in some cases, there’s a risk of eating too much and being exposed to a high concentration of some minerals. This could create a toxic situation with physical and mental side effects (ADHD, depression, sleep problems, mood swings, digestive problems, headaches, migraine, etc.). When we talk about children eating fish, there are specific guidelines about how much they are supposed to eat according to their body weight, to lower this toxic risk.

Mercury concerns

Mercury is a mineral of the metal group which can be found in many foods. Some kinds of fish may have a particularly high concentration of mercury. I’m talking particularly about wild fish from the ocean. The larger the fish, the higher the mercury concentration.

Why do wild ocean fish contain more mercury than farmed-raised fish? Well, mercury is used a variety of industries and in agriculture. It’s found in pesticides, fungicides, and fertilizers. When these materials wash from the fields and factories, they eventually flow into the sea. Wild fish absorb the mercury from wastewater and from sea pollution through the algae or plankton they feed on.

This does not mean that you or your child should avoid eating wild, sea-foraging fish. But it certainly means that it is important to pay attention to how much to eat. For example, canned tuna is the largest source of mercury in the U.S. diet—32% of that total, to be exact—and it’s found in every grocery store.

It’s a major source of mercury exposure for children. In 2012, the Mercury Policy Project Published an official document with guidelines on how much canned tuna children could eat:

- Children over 55 lb: 1-2 servings a month (170 g)
- Children under 55 lb: 1 servings a month (85 g)

Family-safe fish

High levels of mercury aren’t as common in fish which were grown on farms. That’s because the water they are grown in doesn’t contain high amounts of mercury. Therefore, in terms of mercury values, there’s less fear of excessive consumption when eating farm fish.

But let’s be honest: I guess this can all sound a little bit scary and you might want to give up eating fish all together. But don’t be afraid! There are fish that are safe for the whole family to eat. According to the FDA, kid-safe fish and seafood includes:

- Salmon (Atlantic, Chinook, Coho, Pink, Sockeye)
- Tilapia
- Pollock (Atlantic, Walleye)
- Flounder
- Haddock
- Catfish
- Clams
- Oysters (Pacific)
- Shrimp
- Scallops (Bay, Sea)

To read more about the safety of eating fish, search online for the FDA’s full document, “Fish: What Pregnant Women and Parents Should Know.”

The importance of selenium

Despite the high presence of mercury in some fish, it’s important to know that there’s a nutritional component that can maintain our health when eating fish, even with high concentrations of mercury. Selenium is a mineral that has a very high antioxidant capacity. Many fish contain a very high amount of selenium (e.g. tuna). One of the important functions of selenium is the prevention of the high mercury impact on our body. Therefore, fish are generally considered safe to eat because of the combination of the antioxidant effect of selenium—but, that being said, even as an adult, you should eat fish in moderation (1-2 times a week).

Tilapia: The starter fish for kids

If your kids are wary of eating fish for all those reasons I mentioned above you can start with something light, like tilapia. This is a great fish for children and adults as part of a weekly menu. First, it’s rich in protein, low in fat, and, as it’s a farmed fish, mercury is not a concern. Tilapia is a good source of protein, niacin, phosphorus, and selenium and it is low in sodium. But most importantly, Tilapia has a delicate flavor, without a strong fishy smell or taste. It easily absorbs other flavors according to how it’s cooked or seasoned. And as a bonus, its fillet is boneless, making it easier for kids’ meals.

Nutritional value for serving of 1oz (28 g) of tilapia: Calories: 35, Total fat: 0.7 g, Cholesterol: 16 mg, Total carbs: 0 g, Protein: 7.3 g

Tilapia in traditional Egyptian red sauce 🌱

🍴 4-5 servings

The first time we tried this dish was at a friend's house for a holiday dinner. I was so surprised; my kids loved the fish and asked for seconds. I had to ask my friend for the recipe to make it at home. He told me it was his grandmother's recipe from Egypt. When he moved to the U.S., he took pictures of her recipe notebook so he could make her meals for his kids.

He texted me the pictures of the recipe in her own handwriting and I had the honor of making it the same way she has made it for years. In time, I added a few small changes to fit to my family's tastes (we added in more veggies), but I did so without damaging the original flavor of this traditional Egyptian recipe.

This recipe is now my kids' favorite way to eat fish and it's our family's main dish almost every Friday night.

Preparation:

In a sauté pan (a pan with tall, vertical sides) over high heat, sauté the chopped garlic with the oil. Once garlic is aromatic, add the cilantro and the salt, cumin, paprika, turmeric, and black pepper. Stir occasionally for 2 minutes.

In a separate pot (or tea kettle), bring the water to boil.

Add the sliced bell pepper, tomato, and garbanzo beans and give it another 5 minutes over high heat, stirring occasionally.

Stir in the tomato paste. Then, add the boiling water.

Add the lemon juice.

Gently lower tilapia into the pan and make sure the fillets are covered with the sauce.

Bring the mixture to a boil, then cover and cook at med-high heat for 30-40 minutes.

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 5 large cloves garlic, chopped
- A large handful of cilantro, finely chopped
- 4 large tilapia fillets
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric
- ¼ teaspoon sweet paprika
- Juice from half a lemon
- 1 cup soft cooked garbanzo beans or 15.5oz/439g can of organic garbanzo beans
- 1 bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1 tomato, diced
- ¾ cup tomato paste or can of tomato paste (6oz/170g)
- 2-3 cups boiling water

My tip:

Picky eaters: For kids who love the sauce "without the chunks," you can prepare this recipe without adding the beans and vegetables.

A note about tilapia: Because tilapia is so lean, it's important to make sure it doesn't dry out while you prepare it. Therefore, a great way to enjoy tilapia is to cook it in a rich sauce. Be sure that the fish is completely covered in sauce throughout the cook time.



Encouraging kids to eat more vegetables

Vegetables are a very important food group in our daily diet. They contain essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber. Although we all agree vegetables are an essential part of a child's diet, many parents still struggle with the question, "How do I get my child to eat more of them?"

On one end of the spectrum, there are some children who aren't willing to even taste a vegetable, while others will only eat a few varieties. Others enjoy eating vegetables, but don't eat them regularly (i.e. every day). How can we encourage our children to eat more veggies? How can we combine them into meals, and what are the most important rules for encouraging children to try them and eat more of them?

As parents, it's obvious that explaining and pushing your child to eat vegetables won't necessarily do the job. We need to come at this from a different angle: less talk and more visibility, accessibility, and examples—and I'm talking about your personal example!

How does this work in everyday life?

Let me share with you my five top tips to encourage children to eat more vegetables:

1 Visibility: Kids typically won't reach for a vegetable that isn't visible and ready to eat. They won't search for it if it's still packed in a produce bag or stashed deep in a refrigerator drawer. If you want your children to choose to eat more vegetables, you need to place them at eye-level where they can easily see them whenever they opens the fridge door.

2 Accessibility: If vegetables are washed and sliced in a bowl, the chances are greater that your child will grab some as an afternoon snack, even if they didn't plan on eating them before opening the fridge or walking past them in the kitchen. The more accessible vegetables are to the child, the better.

3 Exposure to the senses: Many children are tactile and love to carefully examine the foods they eat! As such, your child should be able to see, smell, and touch the vegetables you want them to eat. The more senses stimulated, the better. For example, try putting roasted, seasoned vegetables on a plate in the fridge or on the kitchen table during mealtime; not only should they look appealing (and be easy to pick up and examine), but they should smell yummy, too. The ability to investigate the food will help the child fear it less and will help their appetite grow.

4 Variety: Don't serve the same foods in the same way all the time! Vary the shape and form of the vegetables you serve. For instance, cut cucumber into sticks sometimes and round disks at others. You can serve vegetables cut into thin strips or cubes, in a salad, or even as veggies skewers (kids love them!). Vegetables can be used to scoop hummus, guacamole, cottage cheese, and more.

5 Fun presentation: Try to think outside the box and be creative about the way you serve vegetables to your child. Remember: Kids (and adults!) love fun food. Making the food friendly—and even a little bit silly—could work miracles! With a few additions and creative slicing, you can create something entirely new.

Here are two examples of fun presentations using tomatoes:

- Colorful necklace: Using a flexible wire, thread cherry tomatoes to create a beautiful and colorful (and edible!) necklace. Use different colors of cherry tomatoes (red, yellow, orange, and more) as kids love creating different and exciting patterns. (No wire? No problem! A skewer can also be fun!)
- Ladybugs: Cut tomatoes into half and lay them face them down, with the round side up. Put teeny pieces of olive on top to make it look like ladybug spots. Also, if you want, you can add googly eyes by using small pieces of cheese and olives. You can do the same with cherry tomatoes and say these ones are ladybug babies!

6 Personal example: Children learn by imitation! They need to see parents eating vegetables as part of their meals to establish this as an eating habit. It may give children the opposite message if they have to listen to parents go on about how important it is to eat vegetables without actually seeing the parents eat them. Make sure to include vegetables in most of your family meals, and offer them as part of a snack between meals. And, of course, eat the vegetables yourself rather than just expecting your children to eat them.

Mshir: Fresh Tunisian pickles



 5-6 servings

The first time I visited my husband's family for dinner, I was surprised to see all the children (happily!) eating vegetables. On the kitchen table was a huge, colorful bowl of sliced vegetables—peppers, cucumbers, carrots, cauliflower, cabbage—and even before dinner was served, it was almost empty! I watched from the kitchen doorway as the kids grabbed a few vegetables in their small hands and ate them, lightning fast, before going back again. It wasn't until I tasted them myself that I realized that they were pickles! These weren't the soggy, overly briny pickles found in the supermarket but freshly pickled vegetables that still had a snap to them.

Years later, my mother-in-law kindly shared her secret recipe with me. When these special Tunisian pickles make an appearance on our kitchen table, the bowl still doesn't stay full for very long, either. Few things make me happier than seeing my children good-naturedly "fight" over a chunk of carrot or a slice of cucumber.

Preparation:

Thoroughly wash and cut the vegetables. Place vegetables in a large plastic or glass bowl and add oil, vinegar, salt, and lemon. Mix together and cover bowl.

Chill vegetables in refrigerator for at least five hours, gently mixing every 2-3 hours. The first time you do this, taste one of the veggies to check the flavor. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt and/or 1-2 tablespoons vinegar if you want a stronger flavor.

Refrigerate uneaten pickles; they'll be good for up to three days.

Ingredients:

- 2 Persian cucumbers, unpeeled and thinly sliced
- 2 large carrots, peeled and cut into matchsticks or circles
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into strips
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into strips
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cabbage, cut into wide strips
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup distilled white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice (optional)

My tip:

*For the best flavor:
Make pickles the day before
you'd like to serve them—or at
least five hours.*

*Be adventurous: Try different
vegetables, like yellow and orange
bell peppers, cauliflower cut
into bite-size florets, kohlrabi
cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch slices, radishes,
or fennel.*



The importance of iron

Iron is a very important mineral in our nutrition, especially during childhood, as the body needs iron to enable healthy growth, brain development (IQ potential), create social skills, and more. This mineral plays a key role in the function of many organs and affects our bodies in many ways:

- **Brain function:** The amount of iron in our body can directly affect the memory, thinking ability, concentration, educational achievements, changes in mood, and more.
- **Blood cells:** Iron is essential to producing hemoglobin and red blood cells.
- **Muscles:** The amount of iron in the body can influence muscle functions, including strength, power, aerobic capacity, and overall muscle activity.

Iron and growth

Iron is especially important for growth. As a child enters various growth stages, their body needs a high supply of iron from food to meet the body's needs. Experiencing iron deficiency at those stages can have a significant influence on growth velocity, preventing the child from achieving their highest growth potential. Other side effects of iron deficiency include headaches, dizziness, changes in mood (depressed/upset), pale skin, changes in appetite, and reduced ability to function during the day due to fatigue or weakness.

How much iron does your child need per day?

Age	Boy	Girl
1-3	mg 7	mg 7
4-8	mg 10	mg 10
9-13	mg 8	mg 8
14-18	mg 11	mg 15

How to detect iron deficiency during growth stages

While a child is growing taller and developing quickly, it's especially important to include a regular combination of iron-rich foods sources in their diet. If the child looks pale, tired, has changes in appetite (increased hunger or lack of it), and is perhaps also more upset/moody, it is recommended to check for iron deficiency, which is a condition called anemia.

Share these symptoms and your concerns with your child's pediatrician or family doctor. Ask about doing a blood test to check their blood counts (red blood cells and hemoglobin). It's also recommended to test for ferritin, which will check the levels of iron in the body's reservoirs.

Iron sources in food

The best sources of iron are found in animal products. These foods contain a compound called heme, which contains iron. Further, our bodies can more efficiently absorb iron from them. Foods rich in heme include red meat, organs (like liver and kidneys), turkey (the dark meat), and duck. There's also iron in other poultry, fish, and in eggs, but in a smaller amount compared to red meat.

- **Red meat:** A meat's red color indicates a high presence of iron, especially in beef and organs. This is because the iron mineral has naturally red color, which makes our blood appear red! To choose meats rich in iron, we can study the meat's color. You chose right if it has a strong red color (before cooking). For example, meatballs, steak, bologna, burgers (choose lean beef), etc.
- **Iron from plants:** Iron can also be obtained from plant sources, but the amount will be lower and its absorption is less effective. Iron-rich plant sources include leafy greens, legumes, tahini, whole sesame seeds, almonds and other nuts, dried fruits, and more.

Tip for better iron absorption from plant sources: To increase iron absorption from plant sources, combine them with foods rich in vitamin C, at the same meal. For example, add lemon juice to your lettuce salad or your tahini. This way if your child decides to be vegetarian or go vegan, they can still get enough iron from their food. However, you need to pay more attention to integrate these iron-rich foods in their daily menu. Yes, it's your responsibility, as a parent, to help them to get enough iron from the diet they choose, and it's their responsibility to eat the iron-rich foods to stay strong and healthy.

My tip:

A great iron-rich dish for kids: Meatballs is one of the most popular children's dishes. In countries all over the world, you can find different version of meatballs; in addition to spaghetti and meatballs, most countries offer a version of meatballs cooked in a rich sauce.

A great option for kids is to serve them straight out of the pan, letting the kids eat them by themselves; just stick a fork in them and eat!

Meatballs with oats in traditional tomato sauce

 4 servings

My kids love the Tunisian meatballs that their grandmother makes when she visits. It's the same type of food that I grew up with, and I love that my mother-in-law is sharing this with my children, too.

When these meatballs, known as *kifta* in Arabic, are made in the traditional way, they include so many steps it could take most of the day! Since most of us (including me) don't have that kind of time these days, I've updated the recipe. And, by using oat bran instead of breadcrumbs, there's much more fiber, which is great for your digestive system and can reduce your cholesterol. It's a bit more modern, but you still get the true flavor that would make my mother-in-law proud.

Preparation:

Sauce

In a sauce pan, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat, then add the onion and cook until golden. Add the garlic and cook for one minute.

In a separate pot (or tea kettle), bring the water to boil.

Next, add the tomatoes, celery, and parsley to the sauce and stir gently for 2-3 minutes. Mix in the tomato paste and salt, pepper, cumin and paprika, stirring gently for one minute.

Add the boiling water to the sauce pan and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down to low and let simmer, covered, for 20-30 minutes.

Ingredients:

Sauce

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 medium tomatoes, diced
(or 1 14.5oz/411g can crushed tomatoes)
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
- ½ bunch flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 1½ cups of boiling water
- ½ teaspoon sweet paprika
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt

Meatballs

- 2 tablespoons olive oil (for the pan)
- 1 lb. lean beef (7-10% fat)
- 1 large onion, thinly diced or grated
- ½ bunch flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons oat bran
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon sweet paprika

My tip:

*Make in advance:
While these meatballs are
delicious any time, the flavor
really improves when eaten the
next day. Waiting lets all the
flavors marinate together.
So, if you're having guests for
dinner, make the meatballs the
day before (which is also
a time-saver!).*



Meatballs

Mix all the ingredients together in a bowl and, using your hands, form balls (roughly the size of ping-pong balls).

Heat oil in a large, nonstick frying pan over medium heat. Once the pan is hot enough, add the meatballs. Cook for one minute, or until golden brown, then roll them over and cook the other side until also golden. You want to cook the meatballs for only a short time, but make sure they are cooked on both sides. If not browning after a minute or two, then turn up the heat—but be careful; you don't want to burn them!

Once cooked, transfer meatballs to the pot with the tomato sauce. Make sure that each meatball is covered by the sauce so it doesn't dry out. Bring to a boil.

Once boiling, turn the heat down to low and let simmer, covered, for 90 minutes.

My tip:

For some children, eating beef in a ball shape is much more appealing—and less threatening—than a big steak or other forms of beef. The fun, round shape is already familiar to kids from toys or games. They're also easily portioned, allowing you to serve two meatballs to a young child, and four or five meatballs to their older sibling. In this way, the same dish can suit the whole family.

And, you can form the meatball size according to the child's age and appetite, making them even more accessible, even to small children. In short, children love this dish and parents can count on it to supply the iron and high-quality protein that growing bodies need.



What's next?

Go beyond the book and implement the concepts in a fun way your children will enjoy!

Thank you so much for reading **Raising Healthy Eaters**. Now, it's time to take it one step further and put it all into practice!

Recently I saw an opportunity to use technology to bring this same message of healthy eating directly to kids, using a platform that they're already very familiar with. In early 2017, I was excited to co-found a company called Habitz. We developed a healthy lifestyle app which uses rewards and education to motivate and encourage kids to learn healthy habits, and stick with them for life.

While I knew in my heart that the Habitz app could make a huge impact for kids, I was ecstatic when I actually got to see my own kids ask to start using the app every day. When friends started using the app too, and their kids also loved using Habitz, that's really when I knew it would be a success.

So, I'm bringing this incredibly interactive and potentially life changing app to you as a thank you for your incredible support!

Download it today and create memories and relationships which will instill a lifelong healthy eating mindset!



**HEALTHY HABITS
START NOW!**

Eat healthier -
more veggies, less sweets

Get excited about
physical activity

...and much more

Download on the
App Store

Look for Habitz: Kids Learn Good Habits

MY HABITZ SCORECARD

STAMINA 1/4 ENERGY 1/4 FOCUS 1/4 MATHS 1/4

Today's Challenges (1/12)

- Avoid sweet snacks
Look in nutrients
- Eat vegetables
Great for healthy digestion
- Drink a cup of milk
Helps build strong bones
- Daily workout
Build strong bones

Learn more at : www.Habitz.com



**IF YOU'D LIKE TO DOWNLOAD A COPY OF RAISING HEALTHY EATERS, VISIT:
WWW.YAELDROR.COM**