



# *Breast to Bib*

*Modern Alternative Mama's Guide to  
Nourishing Your Growing Family*

*By: Kate Tietje*

*"Breast to Bib"* is a cookbook in the In the Kitchen collection from Modern Alternative Mama.

### Other books in this collection:

*Real Food Basics*

*Healthy Pregnancy Super Foods*

*Against the Grain: Delicious Recipes for Whole Food and Grain-Free Diet*

*Treat Yourself: Real Food Desserts*

*Wholesome Comfort: Whole Foods to Warm and Nourish Your Family*

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# *Praise for Breast to Bib*

Okay, I am in total love with your book. I have never been so happy with a book written about baby foods! I jumped on the "AP" bandwagon eight years ago, and have been immersed in all things AP since. I agree whole-heartedly with your breastfeeding advice, when to introduce what foods to toddlers, and your advice about supplements. Your recipes are easy to make and wholesome foods the whole family can enjoy!

--Lea Harris, [www.nourishingtreasures.com](http://www.nourishingtreasures.com)

Breast to Bib is a fantastic resource, especially for new-to-the-game real food parents, full of practical advice and delicious sounding recipes. As the mother of a nine month old, I appreciate the time and effort Kate put into researching the topics addressed in this e-book and look forward to implementing her advice as my husband and I seek to raise a real food kid.

-- Faith Storms, *Storms Stories*

I couldn't help but get excited as I read this book for the first time. Kate has covered all the bases when it comes to giving your child the best nutritional start in life. From breastfeeding to toddlerhood, her explanations, advice, research and recipes have got you covered! I am constantly getting questions from mothers curious about appropriate first foods or baby food recipes, and I am thrilled to be able to point them to this resource from now on!

--Jill Winger, [www.theprairiehomestead.com](http://www.theprairiehomestead.com)

Knowing what and when to feed your baby can be a daunting task. With Breast to Bib, all your questions are answered. This book walks you through your babies eating development from breastfeeding in the very beginning to picky toddlers toward the end. In addition to the wealth of knowledge about how to go about feeding your child, there are many great recipes to help you present creative yet nutritious foods for your child. I highly recommend this book!

--Brittany, [www.thepistachioproject.blogspot.com](http://www.thepistachioproject.blogspot.com)

# *Praise for Breast to Bib*

With a two-year-old and an almost ten-month-old, feeding babies is something I've thought about often in the last couple of years. Breast to Bib is full of great information regarding the all-important question of how and what babies should eat. And while when starting solids, our family's general philosophy is to just feed the baby what we're eating, the recipes included for babies and toddlers offer great inspiration and ideas to fall back on when what's on the table isn't the best for the littlest ones. I would recommend this book to any new mom!

--Jessica Telian, *Something Simple*, <https://jessicatelian.wordpress.com>

I am a stay-at-home mom of two toddlers. I was single until the age of 37, so getting used to life as a married woman with children has been quite an adjustment! There are a few things that I struggle with as a new mom, and meal planning and nutrition would be near the top of my list! I have been very encouraged by most of Kate's blog and the few books that I have gotten from her thus far! This book (Breast to Bib) is WONDERFUL!! Basic tips on feeding babies and toddlers, as well as some amazing recipes that I can be confident are healthier for our children. I am very thankful for the time that Kate takes to do research as well as experiment with new recipes, and that she is willing to share what she learns with so many others!

--Renee Cole, *Tester*

Breast to Bib is a book every expectant or new parent should read. It boldly stands up against conventional "wisdom" and reinforces what maternal instinct has been telling us for years. Well-meaning family, friends, strangers, and pediatricians are ripe with not only unscientific, but unhealthy advice about nursing, scheduling, weaning, and what to feed our babies. Breast to Bib offers the discerning parent a scientifically sound, natural approach to helping little ones thrive in an increasingly unnatural world. Whether you are expecting, already have babies and toddlers, or simply want to know why many of us parents won't feed our children puffed rice and graham crackers, read this book. And if you ever feed my children, please read this book! It is smart, to the point, and spot on. The recipes are the icing on the cake.

--Christy Bagasao, [www.TheSimpleHomemaker.com](http://www.TheSimpleHomemaker.com)



# *Praise for Breast to Bib*

Kate has done it again! *Breast to Bib* is THE book that every expecting and new mother simply must read! Kate clears up some of the misinformation floating around about breastfeeding, supplementing, weaning, and milk supply in a manner that even the most sleep deprived new mama can digest. She is supportive and practical giving the reader just enough information while not leaving out anything pertinent. Kate has also created a collection of recipes both for the newest eaters as well as those more preferential toddlers. These recipes are simple, use wholesome ingredients that any mama can easily obtain, and are appealing to the youngest of eaters. She mixes up tastes and textures without compromising quality. This book is long overdue and I am thrilled that Kate has been able to put together such a valuable resource.

--Jennifer, [www.Hybrid Rasta Mama.com](http://www.HybridRastaMama.com)

I wish I had this book when my first child was born! *Breast to Bib* is full of knowledgeable, non-judgmental advice on breastfeeding, introducing solids and solving food allergy problems. Not only does Kate offer plenty of delicious recipes (that the whole family can eat) but, more importantly, she explains the why behind it all. This is the perfect resource for parents who want to be intentional about nourishing their little ones in the best way possible.

-- Nina Nelson, <http://www.shalom mama.com>

Three years ago, pregnant with my first child and handling two Army moves in 6 months, I flung myself into every bit of research I could find about baby nutrition. Believing myself to be a "healthy eater", I was tremendously confused by information that was contradictory and downright confusing. Today's mamas can avoid that confusion by utilizing Kate Tietje's e-book *Breast to Bib: Modern Alternative Mama's Guide to Nourishing Your Growing Family*. Filled with easy to understand explanations of nutritional science and practical recipes, *Breast to Bib* offers moms the knowledge they need to provide their babies with the best possible start. Both factual information and personal reflection is delivered in an approachable, lets-have-coffee-and-chat manner that makes a touchy, highly individual topic easier to process.

# *Praise for Breast to Bib*

As the mama of a toddler with a sensitive gut, I found Tietje's information to be a comforting reassurance that it was ok to deviate from the "norm" based on my child's specific needs. The recipes are a wonderful bonus. Perfect as a gift for an expecting friend or to expand your own knowledge, From Breast to Bib is the new must-have addition to every mama's resource library!

--Kristen Smith, [www.klsmithphotography.com](http://www.klsmithphotography.com)

As a mom of a 10 year old boy and a 16 month old girl and an in home child care provider, I cannot say enough good things about this book! The facts about breastfeeding are wonderful. I especially love the helpful tips for moms who are dealing with low supply (not an issue that I have personally dealt with, but a friend of mine currently is). I love that the book emphasizes breastfeeding UNTIL AGE TWO! This is so seriously important that moms read. I cannot wait to try out the recipes not only with my own family but also the children that I provide care for. I am truly excited that the recipes are real food based. I have been working hard are slowly bringing our entire menu towards real foods. I can't wait to put the baby's first foods part into play with some babies I provide care for.

--Becky Borgia, <http://growingupnaturallyinhomechildcare.blogspot.com/>

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# *Section I:* *Feeding Young* *Infants*

# Breastfeeding

A book about feeding babies and toddlers just wouldn't be complete without a section on breastfeeding. It is, medically, the best way to feed a baby – and that's one point that everyone agrees upon, regardless of their other beliefs about health and wellness.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation flying around out there now about breastfeeding. There are some who say babies should be on schedules (no) or given time limits at the breast or per side (no) or that they ought to be curtailing night feedings by 6 weeks and giving them up entirely by 3 months or so (no). All of this well-meaning advice can put a real damper on a breastfeeding relationship.

Without saying too much about parenting philosophies here, as that's not the point of this book, the best way to establish a solid milk supply is to put your baby to the breast as often as s/he wants, for as long as s/he wants. Some babies are born wanting to feed for 5 – 10 minutes, every 2 – 3 hours (two of mine were). Some babies want to feed for 5 – 10 minutes every 30 – 40 minutes (one of mine was). Some want to feed for 30 – 40 minutes every 2 hours (some of my friends' babies were). The point is – they all vary greatly, and all are normal.

Demand feeding ensures that your baby gets adequate milk, and you get started producing a good supply that is neither too little nor too much for your baby. If you interrupt demand feeding by supplementing because someone says "you don't have enough milk" (commonly said when your baby is fussing and demanding to eat more often than usual – which is normal behavior during their many and frequent growth spurts in the early weeks), you throw off this supply-and-demand cycle and will never be able to make enough milk. I know – I supplemented for the first 6 weeks with my first baby, until I made the decision that I was just going to stop and nurse her as often as I had to. Within days my supply caught up.

In the early days, your only goal is to get to know your baby and his/her routines and preferences. Stay in bed if you have to (ideally, stay in bed! You need rest to recover from pregnancy anyway) and nurse your baby all day and night. Yes, co-sleep if you need to do that, too

(just do it safely: make sure your bed isn't too soft, no fluffy blankets or pillows, ideally a mattress on the floor and not high up, or choose to use a "co-sleeper" that is attached to your bed; no drugs or alcohol of any kind by anyone in the bed, and do not co-sleep if you are overly tired and may not be sleeping lightly enough to be aware of your baby at all times).

If you are struggling with breastfeeding, please contact an IBCLC or other knowledgeable breastfeeding expert in your area to come in and solve your particular issue. Poor latch, poor positioning and other individual issues can prevent you from breastfeeding successfully. The La Leche League (LLL) is also a great resource.



# *Why is Breastfeeding Important?*

Why is breastmilk so amazing, anyway? Breastmilk contains a lot of substances, so many that we don't even know what they all are. It's not really "just a food," it's a living substance that, in a way, "magically" helps babies grow. (Clearly it's science and not really magic, but it's a substance that absolutely cannot be created or replicated in a lab, so that's kind of magical.)

Breastmilk contains IgA, which is incredibly important (immunoglobulin A). This is a substance which helps the baby's gut to mature. It bathes and coats the baby's intestines, which are open at birth, and will be for at least 18 weeks (maturity varies and can take 6 months or more, especially if baby is introduced to anything other than breastmilk too young; in certain cases, if baby's fed repeatedly when young, the gut may never mature properly). Anything the baby consumes can go right through the intestinal walls and into the bloodstream, which can cause sensitization and allergies. The IgA from a healthy mother protects against this possibility (in most cases; see the section on babies and allergies for exceptions). It also helps to actually develop and close the gut when the time comes.

Ideally a baby should have nothing by mouth except breastmilk for at least 18 weeks. No supplemental formula, no vitamin supplements, and no food. Gut health is a huge and underestimated issue in our current time, and breastmilk is the only substance that fully promotes optimal gut health.

In a healthy mother, her body fully breaks down all her food before she makes milk, and all the proteins are completely digested when they get to the baby, making them very gentle on the baby's system. This is important, as it is undigested or partially digested proteins which can cause sensitivities and lead to allergies. This is why a mother's gut health is critical. (A topic for another book!)

Additionally, breastmilk contains several immunities, white blood cells,

growth factors, and even stem cells! These help the baby's body and brain to develop, and protect the baby against illness. We don't know the function of the stem cells or all these other components yet, but they're clearly there for a reason.

When there is an illness going around, if baby is exposed to it but mom isn't, baby will pass the bacteria (or whatever is causing the illness) to the mom via saliva absorbed into her skin while nursing. The mom's body will then produce antibodies against that illness, which will get to the baby during subsequent feedings, protecting the baby from the illness (or reducing its severity and duration). The mom's body and the milk it produces actually functions as an immune system for a baby whose own system isn't yet developed!

The composition of breastmilk is important, too. From a healthy mother, 50 – 60% of the calories in the milk come from fat, most of it saturated. A lot of the fat is a medium-chain fatty acid called lauric acid, which has prominent immune system functions. Breastmilk is high in cholesterol, too (over 5 mg/oz on average). Saturated fat and cholesterol help develop the brain and nervous system, and also regulate hormones (in conjunction with other things), so they are key to proper development. This is why breastmilk is so rich in them!

Carbohydrates make up 30 – 40% of the milk, mainly in the form of lactose. The breastmilk contains an enzyme (lactase) that helps break it down, and the probiotic bacteria (found in breastmilk and the gut) called lactobacillus also helps in this process.

Protein levels are high at the beginning but drop lower as the baby ages. By the time the baby is a year old, protein levels in the mother's milk are no longer adequate for the growing baby, and supplementary food is necessary. This point is reached sometime after 6 months for all babies, and exactly when it occurs varies.

Breastmilk contains optimal levels of all the vitamins and minerals that baby needs to grow, assuming that mom is not deficient herself. These levels are "low" sometimes compared to what doctors believe babies need, which may be from deficiency in mom, or because high levels are not needed since what is there is so well absorbed. Synthetic nutrients are poorly absorbed (which is why larger doses are needed) and can

cause stomach discomfort; these are not issues with naturally-occurring nutrients in breastmilk.

Some note that vitamin D is low in breastmilk. This is for two reasons. One is because most moms are severely deficient in vitamin D these days, so their milk is, too. The second reason is that babies are intended to get some sunlight. Taking your baby out in the sun with arms and legs exposed if the weather allows it for 5 – 10 minutes each day is a good idea. To boost her vitamin D levels, a mother should be taking fermented cod liver oil each day – at least two teaspoons, and up to two tablespoons if she is very deficient.

When facing any vitamin deficiency, mothers should always supplement themselves, not their babies, at least before six months of age. The same goes for immune-boosting foods, like coconut oil, elderberry, and garlic. Always make sure the mother takes these, and don't offer anything to baby directly in the early months.

Breastfeeding is an amazing food and a living substance, and should, ideally, be offered to every baby to help them thrive.

#### Sources:

<http://www.kellymom.com/nutrition/milk/bmilk-composition.html>

<http://www.askdrsears.com/topics/breastfeeding/why-breast-best/comparison-human-milk-and-formula>

<http://www.bcbabyfriendly.ca/whatsinbreastmilkposter.pdf>

<http://www.health-e-learning.com/articles/JustOneBottle.pdf>



# *Does “Low Milk Supply” Really Exist?*

This is a huge issue among women, sadly. There is a large minority who claim that they tried as hard as they could but simply “could not” breastfeed due to low milk supply. On the other side are the so-called “lactivists,” who fire back, “If so many people truly could not breastfeed, the human race would not have survived,” which serves to make those mothers who tried so hard feel guilty, as if it just wasn’t enough and they “failed their baby.”

Aside from the fact that this debate gets us absolutely nowhere – it humiliates and angers mothers who truly need support and understanding – it turns out that actually, both sides are right. It’s true that historically, 95% or more of women could and did breastfeed, out of necessity (there was, however, the use of wet nurses and even raw goat’s milk in the cases where a mother could not breastfeed, but it certainly wasn’t as common as today, where the majority of women don’t breastfeed past 6 weeks).

In modern society, barring the women who simply don’t want to breastfeed and don’t even initiate, there is a large body of women who try and fail. Why? Common reasons include:

- It hurts
- Too demanding (no one else can feed the baby)
- Lack of sleep
- Low milk supply

The first three can all be remedied by proper support – loving friends and family members who can take the baby in between feedings so the mother can nap; people to give her a pep talk when she’s struggling; an IBCLC who can teach her the proper way to latch the baby so it doesn’t hurt. In certain cases, milk supply can be fixed this way, too (encouraging increased nursing and proper latching often fixes low milk supply).

There still remain some women who do all this...and still don't make enough milk for their babies. These are the women caught between a rock and a hard place, because many desperately want to breastfeed, have called all the experts, have read all the books, taken all the supplements, and somehow find themselves in the position of defending themselves constantly against the judgment of strangers.

Yes. Low milk supply does exist, and it is far more common these days than it was 50 or 100 years ago.

Look around us. We have a very poor food supply, in general. It's high in soy, which is known to increase estrogen. Then there are plastics and the chemicals in them, like BPA – again, more estrogen. Then there are pharmaceuticals that people take (knowingly or which are contaminating our water). Don't forget air and water pollution! Plus, of course, the very unhealthy low-fat diet.

This all combines to raise a woman's estrogen level through the roof, and suppress other hormones needed to produce milk, like prolactin and oxytocin. High estrogen leads to low milk supply!

The types of chemicals that are endocrine-disrupting didn't exist in our environment 50 or 100 years ago. They are a major cause of women who can't breastfeed or who need to supplement.

This is good news and bad. Good news because women need to understand that it is not their fault that they "failed" at breastfeeding, and it is not just "in their heads" that they had low supply (probably – remember that a poor support system can cause low supply, too). These women, no matter what normal advice they took, would not be able to increase their supply enough to provide for their babies. That's the bad news.

The good news is that if you suspect that your hormones are out of balance, you can visit a doctor (preferably a naturopath) who can check your hormone levels to see what's going on, so that you can then make an attempt to balance them again. Here are some good places to start:

- Stop using any form of hormonal birth control

- Avoid animal products that use artificial growth hormones (rBST or rBGH)
- Avoid plastics, especially those containing BPA (minimize or eliminate other plastics, too)
- Never heat plastic in the microwave, if you do use it, and never put hot or acidic or fatty food into it (this causes it to leach chemicals)
- Avoid aluminum cans, which are lined with BPA
- Avoid soy (very high in estrogen – and it can change the way babies' brains develop in utero if mom is consuming high levels)
- Consume plenty of natural saturated fats from pastured animals
- Take fermented cod liver oil to raise your vitamin D levels

With these changes and individualized care from a medical professional to re-balance your hormones, you may be able to successfully breastfeed future babies!

There are some herbs you can try as well, to balance hormones and boost milk supply. These include:

- Milk thistle
- Fenugreek
- Nettle
- Oatstraw
- Red raspberry leaf

These herbs can be taken in tea form or capsules, depending on what dose you need. Seek the advice of a trained herbalist or naturopath on how best to use these herbs in your particular circumstances.

It's not an easy process. There are no quick fixes. But there are things that you can do. Ask your doctor for a blood test to check all your hormone levels (insulin, estrogen, thyroid hormones, progesterone, oxytocin, prolactin, and others). Consider testing your blood sugar yourself multiple times a day (low points in the morning and around 3 pm indicate a dysfunction related to your adrenal glands). With the help of a medical professional (which I am not, just an enthusiast!), you can solve the problem!



# *What If I Need to Supplement?*

If you find yourself in the 'need to supplement' category for some reason (lack of supply, going back to work, etc.) you may wonder what the healthiest option is.

There are several commercial formulas available, but I can't recommend any of them. They're highly processed and don't even resemble food anymore. As I've read more and more about how formulas are made and what they contain, I just can't believe they're considered acceptable to feed to babies. A lot of formulas are low in cholesterol or even contain no cholesterol. These formulas are, strictly, compositions of fat, carbs, protein, and synthetic vitamins and minerals. But they're not naturally occurring, synergistic foods. Someone once said, and I agree, "Infants fed breastmilk thrive. Infants fed formula survive."

Ideally, if you cannot feed your baby breastmilk, another natural food would be ideal. After all, you want your child to truly thrive even if perfect feeding is not possible! If I were unable to breastfeed, I would choose to use a homemade formula.

Homemade formulas are based off of raw cow or goat milk, coconut milk, or chicken stock. Other ingredients are added to make them as close to the nutritional composition of breastmilk as possible, like lactose, gelatin, whey, and extra cream. The homemade formula is based off real, unprocessed foods, and is healthier for baby.

Babies who are supplemented should also be fed from glass bottles (covered in silicone sleeves so they don't break) to avoid issues with BPA and other problems. They should also receive small doses of fermented cod liver oil and probiotics daily. This is crucial to help boost their immune system and properly colonize their guts when breastmilk can't.

Finally, if it is available, donor breastmilk (preferably from a personal friend with a healthy diet who will provide raw breastmilk) is ideal, but it is difficult to obtain.

Here is a link to the raw milk formula recipe:

<http://www.westonaprice.org/childrens-health/recipes-for-homemade-baby-formula>

I would choose to make it with raw goat's milk and add a small amount (perhaps 1 T. in each batch) of raw beef liver (goat's milk is more similar to human milk, but it lacks B12. Liver makes up for this).

Do your research; there are other recipes out there too. Choose what will work best for your baby, and trust your instincts.

# *What If My Baby Has Allergies?*

Somewhere around my daughter's first birthday, I remember feeling so smug that my child was extremely healthy and didn't have any allergies. With all the kids today suffering more and more, I was sure that I was doing better than usual.

And then I found out, only days later, that some of the unusual (but typical) things I'd seen in her for months were...signs of allergies! Thus began a very long journey towards discovering what they were (a lot – dairy, soy, gluten, legumes, nuts, seeds, pineapple...) and doing something about it. I became more knowledgeable about allergies than I had ever wanted to be. Luckily with some dietary interventions, namely GAPS (see my book *Against the Grain* for more), we've moved past that, and I can share my knowledge with you.

A lot of kids today have signs and symptoms that parents write off as simply typical and treat by trying to suppress the symptoms – eczema being the most common (yes, that is a sign of allergy. My daughter had terrible eczema from about 3 months until 27 months, especially horrible around 18 months. It would cover her entire body and she would wake at night, screaming and scratching, and no cream would touch it. When we solved the allergy puzzle and eliminated the foods that were causing the problem, it would subside. And once we had done GAPS, the eczema went away and didn't come back. It's been two years).

How do you know if your baby has allergies? To what? And what do you do next?

These are some signs to look for:

- Eczema
- Chronic diaper rash
- Frequent diarrhea
- Screaming/tantrums
- Arching back during/after feedings
- Gassiness (even if baby is not bothered by it)

- “Colic”
- Red ring around the anus
- Red, itchy ring around the mouth
- Red, itchy palms
- Frequent spitting up
- Vomiting
- Ammonia-smelling urine
- Foul-smelling poop or gas (even if not “diarrhea” and baby is not bothered)

That’s a lot to deal with. But, it’s better to acknowledge that your baby has an issue, instead of dealing with constant crying and misery when you don’t have to!

If you suspect an allergy, the first step is to try to figure out what the culprit is. These are the most common allergies:

- Dairy/milk
- Soy
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Fish
- Wheat/gluten
- Eggs

However, allergies can be to anything. It could be a particular fruit or vegetable, or even meat (which is not common at all, but possible). Caffeine, onions, garlic, tomatoes (and other nightshades), chocolate, and other acidic foods bother some babies too. Eliminate whatever you believe is bothering your baby from your diet and wait 2 – 3 days for it to clear your system. If your baby seems better, stick with it. It can take several weeks for the allergen to completely clear your system and your baby’s so the symptoms may not entirely disappear until after this time.

If there’s no change, or only some change, eliminate other foods until you find all the culprits. For now, you will have to stay on this elimination diet.

I noted, after several weeks, that my third baby was allergic to soy,



and later corn. They weren't something I regularly consumed. In fact, he was primarily getting soy as a tiny amount of soy lecithin in chocolate chips, which I baked with on occasion. It was enough. He was a bit fussy and impatient (not typical for him), gassy (though it didn't bother him) and his diapers stank (unusual in a breastfed baby). His bottom would also get very red after he pooped. Within a few days of eliminating soy, all of this went away. It was subtle, but it was clearly a problem. Corn caused similar issues – as did any unsoaked grain. Soaked grains were fine, but corn has a high phytic acid level that is difficult to reduce through normal soaking. Plus, most corn I did consume was a purchased product, like organic chips.

Allergies in a breastfed baby generally mean that mom has gut damage. That is, she's missing the appropriate bacteria in her gut, and partially digested food is leaking through her gut walls and into her bloodstream, which is then getting into her milk. These partially digested food particles are getting to the baby and into the baby's bloodstream through his immature gut, and causing sensitivities and allergies. It can also mean, even if mom's gut is fairly healthy, that she herself is allergic to these foods and is causing gut damage as she's consuming them.

If you have a baby with minor issues, simply avoiding the foods is fine. If you have a baby with more severe issues, though, it's a sign that your gut health is really in trouble and so, by extension, is your baby's (since his gut development is dependent on your gut).

In this case, a healing diet like GAPS will address the issues. Don't start your baby on solids until you are well into GAPS, in order to give your baby time to heal and develop good gut flora as yours improves. Especially important to you are probiotics and plenty of healing stock. If you must supplement your baby while you are on GAPS, choose the chicken stock-based homemade formula. [www.gapsdiet.com](http://www.gapsdiet.com) is a good resource if you think you may be in this position. It's absolutely best to address issues head-on, so that you can prevent problems in the future.

Babies whose gut issues are addressed as young as possible, and who are breastfed while their mothers go through GAPS, or who themselves go through GAPS in their early years can often expect to eliminate their allergies entirely. Babies whose issues are not addressed until they are

older are at risk for continuing to experience issues throughout life.

Some theorize that once a baby's gut is colonized improperly, it can never be fixed completely (which largely means that consuming probiotic foods with every meal will be necessary throughout life). I believe it is possible to fix the gut of an exclusively breastfed baby via the mother doing GAPS. Since so much of the immune system is rooted in the gut, this is not a matter to take lightly!

Please understand that the mainstream does not believe allergies can ever be eliminated. They also do not believe that many of the symptoms I addressed above are a sign of any real problem. This is false. If you are unsure of your baby's situation, please seek the help of a qualified naturopath or other doctor who is familiar with the GAPS protocol and ask him or her to assess your baby and provide medical advice.

# Supplements and Babies

I get this question a lot – “When should I start giving my baby supplements, and which ones should I choose? Does my baby need vitamins?”

Most people take supplements today because our diets are so deficient that they believe they “need” these supplements in order to be healthy. They need increased levels of vitamins and minerals, but I wouldn’t say supplements are the answer! I have read before (via an expert from [www.trilighthealth.com](http://www.trilighthealth.com)) that only about 6% of synthetic nutrients are absorbed...while 98% of naturally-occurring nutrients in food or herbs are absorbed! Since most vitamin supplements are comprised of synthetic nutrients, they’re not worth it.

A healthy, nutrient-dense diet is the best answer to meeting baby’s nutritional needs. That means that mom needs to eat an excellent diet while breastfeeding, or baby needs a properly balanced homemade formula. It’s best not to give baby anything else by mouth before 18 weeks due to gut development. If you feel baby needs anything, take it yourself if you are breastfeeding.

That said, there are two things that I do recommend:

**Probiotic** – A high quality probiotic, which should be taken by the mother (or she should consume a large amount of probiotic food, which is my preference). This can be introduced directly to baby around 6 months of age, or whenever s/he starts solids. It should be added to homemade formula if that is baby’s source of nutrition from birth or start of formula use. Klaire Labs Infant Therabiotic is a good brand. (Klaire Labs makes other good options too.)

**Fermented cod liver oil** – Mom should be taking this throughout pregnancy and nursing, 1 ½ to 3 teaspoons (1 tablespoon) per day. It can be introduced directly to baby at 4 – 6 months (past 18 weeks), or whenever baby starts solid. It should be added to the formula if that is baby’s main source of nutrition. If baby won’t take it, rub a small amount (1/8 tsp.) on baby’s bottom and allow it to absorb through the skin. Green Pastures is the best brand, and FCLO/butter oil blend is the best option.

Beyond these, there is no need for any regular supplements in babies. An excellent maternal diet (or carefully prepared homemade formula) is all that is needed.

# *Section II:* *Baby-Led* *Weaning*



# *What Is Baby-Led Weaning?*

Baby-led weaning isn't my favorite term, but it's how most people commonly refer to the method. I prefer "baby-led solids," because it suggests adding new foods, while "weaning" suggests replacing the breast or bottle. That shouldn't be your intention for awhile yet! Babies will begin tasting foods long before they are actually anywhere near ready to approach weaning (maybe even a couple years before).

Baby-led solids is an approach to starting babies on new foods that doesn't use a spoon. Parents don't feed the baby, and don't decide when baby is ready or how much or what baby should eat (exactly). Parents offer the baby appropriate food by placing it on a tray in front of the baby, and allowing the baby to feed him/herself as desired. Baby may choose to play with the food or eat it – it's up to him/her.

The advantages to this method are that the baby only eats if s/he really wants to. Sometimes babies will eat from a spoon when they aren't very hungry because their parents are coaching them to eat, or even "tricking" them into eating. Babies are often pressed to "just finish these last couple bites!" as parents wield a well-meaning spoon. This sort of behavior can set babies up for overeating. Babies naturally regulate their food intake, eating only what they need. We mess it up when we start to push food on them or give them a required number of bites they have to take.

Instead, babies who get to feed themselves will take in only what they need. They will play with the food, and they will sample it from their hands. Babies fed in this method are usually excited about food and truly enjoy the experience of eating (and mess making!). They typically are not picky eaters and are very open to trying anything. They feel a sense of control over their environment and are autonomous in their eating behavior (which leads to less fits and fussing).

Yes, babies allowed to feed themselves make quite a mess. But that's to be expected from new eaters, no matter what! Relax and enjoy. Your baby's at a new stage!

# *When Do We Start Solids?*

There's a whole lot of arguing over "when" to start solids now. I've heard everything from 2 weeks (yes, really) to 12 months. Most say 4 – 6 months. Let's explore this topic further.

Some prefer to start solids early (6 weeks to 4 months) because they believe that feeding babies solids will help to fill their tummies better and make them sleep longer. Rice cereal is usually suggested as a good "first food" and is also often suggested to thicken formula and reduce reflux and promote long sleep. Rice is the choice because it is supposedly "hypo-allergenic." More and more babies are actually allergic to rice now because of this practice.

This completely ignores biological norms. Babies aren't supposed to sleep deeply and for long periods of time when they are so young; doing so can be dangerous to them. They need to wake every 2 – 4 hours to eat until at least 4 months, in many cases (which is the age at which they begin to adopt more adult sleeping patterns and first develop the ability to sleep in longer stretches. There are exceptions to this, but it is very common).

Deep sleep can lead to apnea episodes, where babies stop breathing, and in some cases, can lead to SIDS. Waking to eat isn't a "bad habit" or an annoyance, it is a true biological need for babies, often for the first year and sometimes beyond. (My own babies night weaned at 22 months and 18 months, respectively, and I've known babies that didn't night wean until past 2 years. This is much more normal.)

"Reflux" is usually a sign of allergies (see the previous section) and a change in diet will often stop the problems. Rice cereal in particular is an indigestible fiber – babies don't make amylase, the enzyme needed to digest grains in a full adult amount until their 2-year-molars show up between 24 and 30 months – and the cereal simply slows digestion since the baby's body can't handle it. It doesn't actually nourish them. Giving rice cereal could potentially even be dangerous, because it sensitizes the body to rice when the immature gut tries to digest it, and it fills the stomach with a non-nourishing substance in place of the very nourishing breastmilk they should be receiving.

As babies require a large amount of true nourishment to grow, staying on breastmilk alone as long as possible is a good idea.

However, babies' needs begin to change in the second half of the first year. They require additional iron and magnesium, which they won't get from breastmilk. Traditionally, babies would begin crawling around 6 months and would be playing outside in the dirt – which they would lick off their fingers. Soil is usually rich in these very nutrients.

Many parents today are afraid to let their children play in the dirt, much less eat it. Dirt is beneficial for a number of reasons, including that it is full of microbes, which provides an immune challenge for them. Don't be afraid to let your kids play in the dirt! However, since modern soil is depleted and not all babies are crawling at this age, some babies will be ready for solids instead.

Most babies will begin showing signs that they are ready to eat solids. These signs include:

- Sitting without support
- The appearance of teeth
- An interest in food (watching you eat, trying to grab)
- The pincer grip is developed
- The loss of the tongue-thrust reflex\*
- No food reactions upon introduction (undigested food in their bowel movements, gas, stomach pain are all signs they are not ready)

\*I am not convinced this is a reflex. I have placed small objects at the front of Jacob's mouth on several occasions. He licks it and tries to suck on it, and only after trying it does he choose to continue sucking or push it out with his tongue. It seems deliberate – he pushes it out because he does not want it, not because it is a reflex to do so. Either way, though, if your baby is pushing things out with his tongue, he doesn't want it and isn't ready for it. It is also possible that what is sometimes observed as a "tongue thrust reflex" is actually the baby's attempt to latch on and begin to suckle (which involves sticking the tongue out and curling around the object), but if the object isn't suitable for suckling (i.e. a spoon and not a breast), the baby ends up pushing it out instead.

Ideally babies will start solids between 6 and 10 months. They will sit up in chairs for their first meals and be presented with small bits of finger food and allowed to feed themselves as desired. Some babies will play with the food, but not actually eat it – they are not yet ready.

Some babies will not be interested in solids, or not be very interested in solids until they are at or past a year. This is an individual variation but a normal one. After 6 months, offer food every so often and see if they take it, but continue to breastfeed on demand. When they are ready for solids, they will take it. There is no need to ever force a child to eat. Some babies, even well past a year, are still mainly breastfeeding for their nutrition. The baby's body knows what is right (unless we mess with it by forcing), so listen to your baby and his cues.

What about babies who seem ready earlier? Some parents claim their babies are “always hungry” or seem eager to eat food by 4 or 5 months. The WHO recommends waiting at least six months before introducing foods and I can't disagree with that. Although it is possible that a small number of babies may be ready sooner, what most parents are observing is a growth spurt, teething, or other reasons for increased nursing and interrupted sleep.

Babies frequently seem to become much more aware of the world around them between 3 and 4 months and seem to get more frustrated, wake up a bit more often, and watch everything you do very intently. This is normal behavior and not a sign that they need to eat solid food.

Growth spurts at 3, 4, and 6 months can lead to quite a lot of interrupted nights and irritability. They can include a baby who is constantly nursing and seems frustrated with the lack of milk. Some babies can even get so angry that they will refuse to even try to nurse, despite being hungry! As frustrating as this is for both mom and baby, solids aren't the answer. This is temporary, lasting a few days to a week, and then baby will settle back down. Nurse as frequently as possible. If needed, take the baby into a bath or do other skin-to-skin contact to encourage increased nursing. Again, this is normal and not a sign that baby needs solid foods. Jacob (my third) was an extremely fussy, difficult baby during growth spurts, yet he still was clearly not ready for food even at 6 months.

My first baby seemed to want more and woke more often, and I offered her rice cereal at 4 months. She later had terrible allergies. My second baby did this and if I even let him chew on apple slices to teethe at 6 months, he'd get terrible diaper rash. By 8 months even well-cooked veggies came out whole. He'd been "ready" by most signs by 5 months but his gut wasn't ready to digest the foods. Jacob, at 6.5 months (as of this writing) already watches and occasionally tries to grab foods (and everything else he can reach), but refuses to put food in his mouth. Anything that makes it in gets spit out. He is past the "normal" age of readiness, but is clearly not ready.

I think this is the case for many babies parents think are "ready" early – they are simply exploring their worlds, but their digestive systems are not developed enough to handle actually eating food. Wait, continue to nurse on demand. Eating food changes their gut flora, which needs to be well-established to set the path for a healthy life. They will get there, and be better for having waited.



# *Which Foods First and Why?*

The most common “first food” in the U.S. is rice cereal. It is recommended because it is iron-fortified (and breastmilk tends to be lower in iron in the second half of the year, and no longer provide the baby with enough iron, leading to minor anemia in many 9 – 12 month olds), and because rice was a “low allergy” food (not many babies were allergic to it). Since it was introduced in the 50s, it’s been purported to have many different benefits, like helping babies sleep longer, reducing reflux (which is a sign of allergy), and being “super nutritious.” (Never mind that most of the nutritional “benefits” to rice cereal are actually fortified, not naturally occurring, and as I noted in a previous section, synthetic nutrients have a very, very low absorption rate.)

Rice cereal is not the answer.

Babies produce very few digestive enzymes when they are very young. Typically they produce what is needed to digest whey and lactose, which are the two largest components of breastmilk. They begin to produce the enzymes needed to digest protein around the middle of the first year. They begin to produce very small amounts of amylase (needed to digest grains and carbs) around 8 – 9 months, but this production isn’t “full scale” until their 2-year-molars are in, somewhere between 24 and 30 months. Babies should have few, if any, grains until this point in time.

Additionally, cereals in a baby’s diet lead to poor absorption of calcium, zinc, magnesium, and iron – all minerals that baby will start to require from sources other than breastmilk. Therefore, offering grains is counter-intuitive! (Phytic acid is responsible for binding with these nutrients, which is why when grains are introduced, they should be soaked, soured, or sprouted.)

If we exclude rice and other grains as a “first food” option, then we have to deal with two other theories about what to feed babies.

Theory 1 says that food is just an experiment for the rest of the first year; babies shouldn’t derive any real nutrients or calories from it. They should be getting all their calories from breastmilk or homemade

formula. Therefore, proponents of this theory recommend that babies be given low-calorie fruits and veggies. This is so they don't displace the calories of the breastmilk, but they still get the "experience" of eating.

Theory 2 says that any food a baby eats is going to "replace" some of his breastmilk or homemade formula because he still has a very tiny stomach and it all has to go somewhere. Therefore, the answer is extremely fatty, nutrient-dense foods like meat, cheese, yogurt, and avocado.

I absolutely believe in the second theory, especially after noting that it took until well past 1 year of age for my children to be able to digest the carb-and-fiber heavy fruits and veggies. Remember that amylase is needed for these foods, too!

Not to mention that most parents do start solids (and babies want/are ready for solids) because baby needs "something more" than milk. Ask most doctors or look at research and it shows that as a baby ages, breastmilk no longer provides 100% of the nutrients a baby needs. It's still incredibly nourishing and shouldn't be stopped, but baby needs "a little something else" to go along with his milk. That is, extra calories and nourishment. That's not going to come from fruits and vegetables, at least not at this stage, when baby's stomach is still very tiny.

Babies require fat, cholesterol, and iron to continue their development. The best first foods are these:

- Soft-cooked egg yolk with grated raw liver (6 months+)\*
- Cooked ground grass-fed beef
- Chunks of avocado
- Chunks of grass-fed butter (yes, plain)
- Plain yogurt
- Chunks of partially frozen, raw liver

\*Some babies really react badly to egg yolk (many), especially if it is introduced early. Although WAPF recommends beginning egg yolk at 4 months, I don't, because of the large number of poor reactions. Try it at 6 – 8 months and it should be fine. Offer only a teaspoon or two during initial feedings, because it is so rich. Small amounts will also prevent a poor reaction.

Okay, these obviously aren't "typical" first foods. Butter? Liver? Yes. These are nutrient-dense, full of iron, B12, vitamin A, saturated fat, cholesterol, and other much-needed nutrients. Plus, they are gentle on baby's still immature digestive system. A baby's body is set up to digest fats most easily (remember, that's the biggest part of breastmilk) and protein next most easily. Carbs are hardest.

When offering foods, start with a small amount and place it on the tray with the baby. Let the baby feed himself – or play with the food, if he prefers. First meals are usually messy. It is important that the baby feed himself because then whatever he manages to eat, you can guarantee that he wants. It is okay to spoon feed yogurt or other foods that are typically eaten with a spoon anyway, but try to avoid feeding your baby if you can.

### What About Purees?

Most people start babies on "baby food." There's nothing especially wrong with this if your baby is otherwise ready. However, it's not necessary. Especially if you are making your own, it's a lot of extra work to prepare the food, puree it, and freeze it. I did this for my first baby and it was somewhat annoying at times. I never made a single bit of baby food for my second baby and he ate just fine, and to this day eats almost anything put before him.

Purees may be used for convenience when you will be away from home and will need to feed baby. If possible you can bring cut up bits of finger food, but sometimes you just need to feed the baby as quickly and neatly as possible. For this reason, I'm including some recipes for purees in this book, but you don't have to puree them – you can serve them cut into small pieces, too.

In my opinion, babies should be sitting in high chairs (with toys) and joining the family at meals as soon as they can sit up with support, around 4 months. This should naturally progress into being offered small bits of food when they are old enough to eat. If baby shows no food reactions, by 10 – 12 months, baby can be offered whatever the family is eating that night, minus grains and any strong spices. Introduce spices around age 1 year, because babies will learn to like

what they are served! (My second, who was fed this way, loves things like spicy mustard, hot sauce, and other “unusual” foods.)

### What About Vegetables?

Wait until your baby is close to a year before introducing vegetables, just in case there will be an issue with digestion (avocado, which is naturally very fatty, is an exception). When you do serve vegetables, mix them with butter, coconut oil, or cream – some type of fat. Mashed squash with butter is a good first vegetable. Sweet potato with fat is good, too. Whatever you serve, add lots of fat and a pinch of sea salt too it. Another way is to cook vegetables in homemade stock and mash them gently in the stock itself for serving. You may choose to both cook in stock and add extra butter.

Avoid very fibrous vegetables, like celery and the stalks of broccoli until the baby is older. These are very hard for the baby to digest.

Despite warnings not to give babies salt, a small pinch of real sea salt is a good thing. Real sea salt is mostly sodium chloride, but it also contains a decent percentage of trace minerals. In contrast, table salt is almost entirely sodium chloride with a tiny bit of added iodine. It's also been purified, deodorized, and otherwise highly processed. Skip it. Use the real sea salt for the trace minerals. (This answers those who like to say “salt is salt is salt, it's all sodium chloride.” Yes, but not exclusively. It's the “other stuff” in it – the trace minerals – that separates the good sea salt from ordinary table salt.)

### What About Fruit?

A lot of parents are worried because they don't want their children to prefer sweet foods. To some extent, it is normal to enjoy sweet foods. Breastmilk is sweet. It is not a problem if your baby enjoys fruit. It is only a problem if your baby begins to avoid all other foods and only eats fruit and, when introduced, grains (we'll talk about that in the 'picky toddlers' section).

Serve fruit lightly cooked and mixed with butter, cream, or coconut oil, as with vegetables. Many vitamins and minerals can't be properly absorbed without fat. Fat will also slow down the rate at which the sugar is absorbed.

Juices should never be offered to young children (under 2), even fresh squeezed. Plain juice can spike their blood sugar and cause gut damage, because it feeds yeast. Yeast is and should be in the gut, but too much sugar will cause it overgrow. Gut damage is not something you want to mess with!

On the whole, begin slowly and start with nutrient-dense organ meats, yogurt, and other animal-based foods. Avocados are one good plant-based food to start early on as well. Move at baby's pace and offer, ultimately, a wide range of options, not sticking with any pre-conceived notions about what baby "ought" to like. I was convinced my babies wouldn't like bananas or avocados because I don't, but they love them!

Source: <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/129/7/1434.full.pdf+html>



# *Ideal Feeding Schedules*

When should babies eat? How often? Does it matter? A lot of moms worry about it.

Typically, offer your baby food once per day when starting out. In the morning is a good idea, because if baby does have a reaction to the food, he'll be feeling better by late afternoon and it won't keep you both up all night!

It's important to always nurse or bottle feed baby first when starting out, so that they fill up on nourishing milk, then eat bits of food. Especially in the early months, solids are for trying out grabbing, chewing, and tasting – not serious nourishment. It's only close to a year that solids become any significant portion (no more than 30%, ideally) of your baby's diet.

Once your baby hits six months, you can try to offer a few bites when the rest of the family is eating a few times a week. If baby is enthusiastic, you can offer more. If baby doesn't care, try again in a week. When our third baby hit six months, this is what we did, and found that he occasionally liked to taste some food, but mostly wasn't interested yet.

One meal a day will remain sufficient for most babies until 8 or 9 months (possibly longer, for those who are not interested in food until 7 or 8 months!). After that, offering small tastes of food at breakfast and dinner times is a good idea. Don't serve baby a "meal," just provide small bits of whatever you are eating. If baby only wants to play with the food, that's fine. Don't make baby eat it.

Around a year, you can offer three small meals a day. However, this varies widely. There will be babies at a year who are simply not interested in food and eat very few, if any, solids. Despite what some pediatricians say, this is fine. Do not force baby to eat. (If, however, when you offer food, baby gags or vomits or seems to really struggle, consult a baby feeding expert.)

Other babies at a year will be extremely into food, preferring it to milk,

and wanting to eat three real meals and some snacks per day. As long as (ideally) milk remains a large portion of the baby's diet, it's fine to offer food more frequently. Just make sure it's equally nourishing! The cereals and puffs and fruit snacks many parents offer are not sufficient nutrition. Baby should be offered avocado, vegetables cooked in stock and coated with butter, chunks of soft cheese, ground meats, etc.

Many babies will fall in the middle, wanting to eat once or twice a day, and picking at the food other times. If baby doesn't want to eat, he can still join you for meals in his highchair, with toys on his tray. (We start this at 4 months or so!)

Ultimately, when you feed your baby is dependent on his needs and desires. Feed him once a day and gradually increase as he seems to desire more, always offering milk first. Offer food when it is most convenient for you, and don't worry about the "right" times.

# *Babies and Finger Foods*

Parents love to give babies finger foods. And why not? They're actually an incredibly important part of baby-led solids, as well as most babies' diets. Babies should be encouraged to feed themselves as soon as they can, which, for at least several months, means they use their fingers. It's great for their dexterity, and also for their ability to regulate their food intake.

Some parents are confused about what to give babies are finger foods, though. They are unsure what is appropriate. This is further compounded for parents who wish to feed baby traditionally, because many of the "common" finger foods are out.

What are some good options?

- Freeze-dried veggies/fruit
- Tiny bits of partially-frozen raw liver
- Ground beef or other ground meats
- Frozen fruit slices (in a mesh teether or cut into small bits)
- Hard cheese cubes (cheddar, mozzarella, etc.)
- Small chunks of butter
- Bits of soft-cooked egg yolk (and later, scrambled whole eggs)
- Small bits of banana or avocado
- Small bits of fresh fruit (peaches, cut up grapes, etc.)
- Small pieces of fermented pickles or other fermented foods

Fermented foods are especially excellent to offer baby. Raw cheeses and bits of fermented fruit or vegetables are great options. Baby should be encouraged to have a tiny amount each time he eats (a teaspoon is fine), a practice that the entire family should adopt as well.

You may notice several things are "missing" from this list. The following snacks should be avoided for babies under a year:

- Any type of cereal (including the popular "O" cereal)
- Crackers of any variety
- Rice
- Puffs

- Hot dogs or other cured meats
- Peas (choking hazard)

Babies only begin to produce the enzyme to digest grains when their first molars appears, between 8 and 12 months. They don't produce it at full adult levels until their 2-year molars appear, sometime after the second birthday. Grains are not as nutritious as the foods listed above and can be hard on their digestive systems. Therefore, these common snacks should be avoided.

When traveling, choose freeze-dried fruits and vegetables as a good, non-messy alternative to crackers and cereals. Hard cheeses can fill this void nicely, too. And of course, on the go, nothing beats breastfeeding!

# Supplements and Older Babies

It's true that when your baby is older that his needs change, nutritionally. This includes an increased need for iron and zinc, which, at some point, breastmilk no longer provides.

This is why baby should be offered meat and liver as weaning foods – they provide what baby is missing. Another option is to allow babies to play outside. The dirt they will get on their hands and lick off also provides these needed nutrients.

Looking for “natural” sources of nutrients vs. choosing a supplement is important. But is there something baby should be taking?

**Fermented cod liver oil** – Once baby is eating a reasonable amount of solids (daily meals, managing to actually eat at least 20% of calories from “real food”), ¼ tsp. FCLO should be offered to the baby on a spoon. Let the baby lick it and suck it himself.

**Probiotic** – May or may not be necessary, if baby is taking fermented foods. If so, don't worry about it. If not, offer a probiotic powder mixed into a small amount of preferred food, or still on your finger if baby prefers.

**Herbal Multivitamin** – If there is concern that baby is unable or unwilling to eat solids, and tests show that he is anemic, you may choose to use an herbal multivitamin instead. This is a vitamin that you create at home from adaptogenic herbs in a glycerin tincture. It will provide baby with what he needs in a safe and whole-foods manner. Please see a tutorial here: <http://www.modernalternativemama.com/blog/2012/01/23/monday-health-wellness-herbal-multivitamin-tincture/>

Beyond this, baby doesn't need any supplements. If you go for a well check at 9 months and baby is anemic, consider the herbal multivitamin. Traditional iron supplements (ferrous sulfate) are very hard on baby's stomach and can cause nausea and vomiting. They also aren't well absorbed. Black-strap molasses are another good source of iron, which you can mix into milk for baby if needed.



# *Baby Food Recipes*

# *Recipes Introduction*

Here, you'll find simple recipes that you can use to feed babies who are six months to one year (and older, if desired!). These are nutrient-dense recipes that are good for younger babies. In some recipes, you will find additions to the recipe that are just for older babies. Don't add them for babies under 9 months, but older babies may well enjoy them.

Also, since this is real food...feel free to try and enjoy some of these yourself!

# Guacamole

This is a simpler, less spicy version of a classic. For a baby that is just beginning solids, you may start with plain avocado before trying this recipe. One tester said, "It was amazing...better than my favorite Mexican restaurant!"

## Ingredients:

*1 medium avocado, ripe*

*½ lime, juiced*

*¼ tsp. sea salt*

*1/8 tsp. chili powder (increase for an older baby)*

*¼ tsp. garlic powder*

*1 tbsp. minced onion (optional)*

*1 tbsp. diced tomatoes (optional)*

## Directions:

Mash everything together in a bowl, adding onion and tomato at the end if desired. Serve it to baby on a tray and let him get messy!



Photo By: *Sheridan Eksteen*

**Makes 3 – 4 servings.**

**Serving Suggestion:** Eat as is, or try dipping soaked and cooked beans into it.

# *Pate*

This is best made with chicken or pork liver, which is milder in flavor than beef liver.

## Ingredients:

*¼ lb. liver*

*2 tbsp. bacon grease or lard*

*1 tbsp. minced onion*

*½ tsp. sea salt*

## Directions:

Slice the liver thinly and gently sauté it with onions in the lard or bacon grease. When cooked, pour the leftover grease and the lard into a blender or food processor and process until smooth. Add sea salt to taste.

## Makes 3 – 4 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Let baby eat it as is, or try dipping soft-cooked carrot into it.

# Yogurt

Yogurt is best served plain, at least when introducing it. When I offered it this way to my second baby, he loved it – and he still does, at 2 ½. Many babies will enjoy the tart flavor if that is how it is first introduced. You may choose to buy yogurt that does not contain any pectin or other additives if you prefer.

## Ingredients:

*2 c. milk*

*1 tbsp. yogurt culture (yogurt from a previous batch, or store-bought plain)*

## Directions:

Heat the milk gently until it is just steaming and forms a skin. Allow the milk to cool to warm, around 80 degrees. Mix in the yogurt or culture. Put this in a glass jar and allow it stand in a warm place (a cooler filled with hot water, a dehydrator on 115, an oven on warm), no more than 115 degrees, for 6 – 8 hours. Place it into the fridge and allow to cool completely before stirring (whey will separate if you stir while warm).

## Additions:

*\*Blend ½ c. yogurt and 3 – 4 strawberries*

*\*Blend ½ c. yogurt and 2 – 3 peach slices*

*\*Blend ½ c. yogurt and 2 tbsp. blueberries*

*\*Combine fruits for your baby's favorite flavor!*

## Makes 4 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Pair with Scrambled Eggs for an easy breakfast.

# Scrambled Eggs

If there is no history of egg allergy in your family, introducing whole eggs at 8 – 10 months is fine. Most of the “test babies” enjoyed this new food!

## Ingredients:

1 egg (or egg yolk)

1 tbsp. cream

¼ tsp. sea salt

## Directions:

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and beat until combined. Pour into a buttered pan and cook on medium heat, stirring gently until eggs are cooked through. Cut into small bites and serve.

## Makes 1 – 2 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Finish with Baby Custard for a creamy, delicious meal.



Photo By: *Veronica Trejo*



# *Veggies and Meat Dinner*

Baby will enjoy eating this because it is flavorful and delicious, yet not as messy as a soup. It's also very healthy!

## Ingredients:

*1 tbsp. onion, minced*

*1 tbsp. butter*

*4 oz. ground beef*

*1 c. beef stock*

*2 tbsp. peas*

*2 tbsp. diced carrots*

*2 tbsp. cut green beans*

## Directions:

Saute the onion in butter until soft. Add the ground beef and brown it, breaking it up into small pieces. Add the stock and veggies and cook for 10 – 15 min. until the veggies are soft. If desired, cook until the stock is mostly absorbed into the veggies or evaporated. Add a bit of sea salt to taste.

## Option:

\*Substitute 1 chicken breast, chopped into small pieces for ground beef, and chicken stock for beef stock, for a chicken-and-veggies version.

## Makes 2 – 3 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Finish with Apple-Pear Sauce for a lovely, healthy meal.

# Apple-Pear Sauce

This is so delicious that when we were making it for our first baby, my husband kept wanting to eat it himself! It can be frozen in ice cube trays and kept in bags in the freezer, and it travels well.

## Ingredients:

*1 medium apple, peeled, sliced, and cored*

*1 medium pear, peeled, sliced, and cored*

*Water*

## Directions:

Place apple and pear slices into a small saucepan with a tiny amount of water, about 2 tbsp. Cook on low-medium heat, covered, for 10 – 15 minutes, until the fruit is soft. For an older baby, mash the fruit with a potato masher and leave it chunky. Or, if desired, puree it in a food mill or blender until smooth.

## Makes about 1 cup.

*Serving Suggestion:* Add some fresh berries to give it some texture and a unique flavor, if baby is old enough.



Photo By: *Kaila Dawson*

# Apple-Peach Sauce

This is a delicious taste of fall and spring mixed together, for a sweet-tart treat!

## Ingredients:

*1 medium apple, cored, peeled, and chopped*

*1 medium peach, pit removed, peeled, chopped*

*Water*

## Directions:

Place apple and water (about 1 tbsp.) in a medium saucepan. Cook over low-medium heat for about 10 minutes, until steamed and almost soft. Add peach and cook an additional 5 minutes, until soft. Remove from heat and puree until smooth.

## Makes about 1 cup.

*Serving Suggestion:* Give baby a spoon and let him make a mess!



Photo By: *Sheridan Eksteen*

# Chocolate “Pudding”

It’s not really pudding, but it’s filled with healthy fats, and it’s sweet!

## Ingredients:

*1 avocado, ripe*

*1 tbsp. cocoa powder*

*2 tbsp. honey or maple syrup*

## Directions:

Slice the avocado in half and remove the pit. Score the surface (make vertical and horizontal cuts to form cubes) and remove avocado from its skin. Mash the avocado into a paste—you may need to use a blender. Add the cocoa powder and honey and mix thoroughly.

## Makes 2 – 4 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Top with a little real whipped cream for an extra special treat.



Photo By: *Heidi Meythaler*

# *Baby Custard*

This is an incredibly rich, satisfying dish that will make baby and mommy happy!

## Ingredients:

*½ c. whole milk*

*2 egg yolks*

*1 tbsp. maple syrup*

*1 tsp. vanilla*

## Directions:

Mix the milk and maple syrup together in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat until steaming and scalded. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs yolks until light yellow. Slowly pour the warm milk mixture into the egg yolks, stirring constantly. Return the entire mixture to the pot and stir until thickened. Add the vanilla, stir, and remove from the heat. Pour into a small glass bowl and refrigerate until serving.

## Makes about 1 cup.

*Serving Suggestion:* Top with some fresh berries for a delicious treat.



Photo By: *Heather Hampton*



# *Feeding Toddlers*



# *A Note About Full-Term Breastfeeding*

In our culture right now, the “ideal” breastfeeding length is one year. Very few women make it this far. According to the CDC, about 75% of women initiate breastfeeding, but only 15% are still exclusively breastfeeding at 6 months, and only 24% are breastfeeding at all by 12 months. This is abysmal.

Many women consider “normal” breastfeeding anywhere from 6 weeks to 6 months, and possibly up to 12 months. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that two years is the goal, and “as long thereafter as mom and baby desire.”

True, full-term breastfeeding lasts a minimum of two years. Many children will wean between two and three years, but a few outliers are still nursing at three, four, five years old. No studies have been done on the emotional or health benefits of breastfeeding beyond two years (which is why you may see the claim “There is no evidence that breastfeeding is beneficial beyond two years” – they simply haven’t asked the question).

However, as any mom who has breastfed a child full-term can tell you, it proves to be an invaluable tool. It sees children through picky eating phases, ensuring that even if they don’t eat much food, they are still getting excellent nutrition at the breast (which is excellent because breastmilk actually contains even more fat in the second year than the first, which children need as they enter a stage of rapid cognitive development). It can see children through illnesses, often being the only food or drink they desire or can keep down. It also is a wonderful parenting tool, used for redirecting inappropriate behavior or soothing hurt.

Although everyone grows up and weans eventually, there is no substitute for the perfect food that breastmilk is, and there should be no hurry to wean a baby. Breastmilk should drop from at least 70% of the baby's diet at their first birthday, to 25 – 50% by the second birthday. By the third birthday, if the child has not weaned, breastmilk makes up a minimal part of the diet (perhaps 5 – 10%) and is mostly for comfort. The drop off continues until the child weans. Older children may naturally nurse once per day or a couple of times a week, usually for only a few minutes. The ridiculous stereotypes of children taking a break from the playground at age 4 or 5 to breastfeed is almost always unfounded.

There's quite a lot more to be said on the subject, but that's another book in and of itself.

One final point: yes, breastfeeding can often continue throughout a pregnancy and the mother can choose to tandem nurse (breastfeeding children of two different ages at the same time). That, too, is another subject in and of itself, but it is certainly possible. (I've done it...twice!)

The only caution here is that if a mother is at risk for miscarriage or preterm labor and has been advised to avoid any sort of sexual stimulation, breastfeeding may need to stop too. Breastfeeding produces oxytocin, which, in sensitive women, can cause contractions and potentially lead to problems. In the vast majority of women, there is not enough oxytocin produced to trigger anything with the pregnancy (while tandem nursing, I carried my third baby to 40 weeks).

If you were never breastfeeding or stopped early on, homemade formula can be continued for 18 months to 2 years.

**Sources:** <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/2011BreastfeedingReportCard.pdf>, <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/129/7/1434.full.pdf+html>

# *Why is My Toddler Picky?*

Many parents believe – as I did – that if they just offer their toddler a wide variety of foods, they will never be picky. That's both right and wrong.

It's normal for toddlers, no matter how well they're fed, to go through a picky phase, and to refuse some previously enjoyed foods. It should be fairly minor and ignored. Continue to offer them a variety of healthy foods and they'll eat something, even if they're not eating "as well" as you'd prefer. It's also normal for them to gorge on one food one day, and a different food another day. (Some days my kids like only meat...other days they ignore the meat in favor of veggies...still other days they only eat bread. It always changes, so it doesn't matter.)

It's not normal, or expected, for toddlers to only like "kid food," like hot dogs, chicken nuggets, and fries. If this is what you always feed them, or if you default to feeding them this if they don't like what's being served that day, that is what they will come to prefer and expect. They can be trained "into" this or "out of" this quickly and easily.

For example: if we are staying with family and they have juice on hand (something we don't buy), my children will come to expect it each time they ask for a drink, and will get upset and refuse to drink water if offered. But when we are home, and they know juice is not an option, they ask for water and have no problem with it. Set up the expectation that they will eat something out of the options you have, and they will, even if it is not what you would prefer or the most well-balanced choice. Any part of a healthy meal is still healthy food!

However, there are certain circumstances where pickiness is not so normal. We frequently hear about toddlers who will only eat cheese, bread, and fruit. They ignore most or all vegetables, and most or all meat. They crave sweet foods, foods which contain some form of sugar (which milk does, lactose). If this is an ongoing problem, lasting several weeks, and they simply will not eat anything else, this is not okay.

Refusing any but sweet foods is a sign of gut imbalance. You may notice this occurs in children who struggled with thrush while breastfeeding. That is a sign of systemic yeast overgrowth. In this case, immediately limit sweet foods, eliminate grains (they shouldn't have them so young anyway) and begin introducing more natural fats and stock. Also, add or increase probiotic foods in their diets to combat this problem, and consider a probiotic supplement.

If this doesn't help, or some pickiness remains, see a doctor. The child may be anemic or have a zinc deficiency. The doctor can do appropriate tests to determine what is going on and suggest supplementation if needed that is tailored to your child.

Bottom line: brief picky phases are okay, changing one's mind about what is "acceptable" day to day is fine – self-limiting the diet to only sweet foods is not fine.

# *When Can My Toddler Eat...?*

A lot of parents wonder and worry when their toddler can eat a wide range of foods. So many are considered “off limits” until a certain age. What’s the concern? When can you really introduce it? This section will go through several of those foods and explain what’s up with all of that.

## Honey

A lot of parents are told that honey must wait until one year of age. Typically, this is the correct answer. Honey may contain small spores that could cause infant botulism, a type of food poisoning. Older babies and children with more developed immune systems are not at risk. With that said, there are few circumstances where honey may be allowed by 8 months, medicinally, if it is raw and comes from a source that you trust. Consult a health professional if you believe your baby could benefit from honey. Also, honey that is cooked in various dishes is safe.

## Wheat

The concern is usually allergies, and most say that introducing wheat is okay between 8 and 10 months. However, due to the digestion issue, I don’t agree. Babies cannot digest grains without the enzyme amylase, which they only begin to produce between 8 and 12 months. Production isn’t sufficient until around 2 years. Wheat should be skipped until around age 2, ideally, and then should be soaked or sprouted (more on that in the recipes section).

## Milk

Whole milk, ideally raw, as a drink, can be introduced around one year. There is no reason to do so, though. Babies should, ideally, continue to be breastfed or to receive homemade formula until age 2, which takes care of their milk needs. After that they

can drink 1 – 2 cups of milk per day, if they desire. Children get plenty of milk through cheese, yogurt, etc. though, and calcium is not a concern on a traditional diet. Babies can have yogurt and cheese around 8 – 10 months.

### Juice

Ideally, juice is never introduced. It should certainly never replace water or breastmilk as a healthy drink. Realistically, an occasionally fresh-squeezed juice treat is okay after age 1. Fresh-squeezed lemon juice mixed with a small amount of honey is an ideal juice treat. Children just don't need the added sugar.

### Rice

Mainstream sources say 4 months. But in traditional eating, rice should be introduced no earlier than 15 months, and should be soaked or sprouted and well-cooked. Rice was only introduced early because it was supposedly "hypo-allergenic" (which isn't even true; more and more babies are allergic to it now, perhaps because we feed it so young). Because of the concern for digesting grains, and replacing nourishing foods with indigestible foods, rice should be skipped until later.

### Corn

Corn is a grain, not a vegetable, and increasing numbers of children are allergic to it. It's also a grain that is extremely high in phytic acid, and it is extremely difficult to reduce this phytic acid. In fact, it's one of the most difficult to prepare grains. It should ideally be held off as long as possible or skipped entirely, due to its difficulty in preparation.

### Peanuts

Peanut allergies are on the rise. Also, peanuts can carry a type of mold called aspergillus, which is not unique to the peanut, but can be found on any nut that is improperly harvested or stored. It is invisible to the naked eye so there is no way to know if a nut is contaminated or not. Peanuts should be skipped until at least



age 1, and then should be sourced very carefully and prepared by soaking in salt water and dehydrating. Whole peanuts shouldn't be served to children until they have all their molars, around age 2.

### Tree nuts

The same issue exists with tree nuts as with peanuts, and the same logic applies. Skip until at least age 1, then source carefully and prepare by soaking and drying. They can be held off longer if family allergies are a concern, or skipped indefinitely.

### Fish

Fish is on the top 8 allergy list, and certain types can contain mercury from the ocean. It's important to source fish from clean, safe places and choose low-mercury varieties. If there are no family allergies, babies can have fish at 8 – 10 months with no problems.

### Hot dogs (pastured)

Hot dogs are usually skipped due to a choking hazard, but this is sort of silly. Cut up the hot dog into small pieces and the child won't choke on it. Normal hot dogs that are cured with nitrites should never be offered. Pastured, uncured hot dogs can be offered around a year, if cut up.

### Grapes

Grapes, too, are a choking hazard. Once baby can safely eat other fresh fruit (which is 8 – 10 months for some babies, and not until 15+ for others), simply cut them up into smaller pieces and let baby try.

### Dried fruits

Due to choking hazard, babies shouldn't get dried fruits (like raisins) until they have at least their first set of molars. Watch carefully for any reaction, though: if they come out whole in the diaper and cause a bit of a rash, skip them. Some children don't do well with them even past age 2.

# *Transitioning to Table Food*

The excellent part about baby-led weaning is that right from the get-go, babies are eating normal table food. They don't ever start with purees, so there is no transition to do.

However, many parents are unsure when toddlers really begin to be "normal" eaters – sitting down and serving meals without any special preparation. Many times spices are withheld from babies' food. Spices that aren't "hot" do not need to be withheld past 8 months or so; babies often enjoy the flavors.

Truthfully babies transition into more "normal" eaters between 15 and 21 months. By the time they are 2, they should be sitting down to meals with everyone else, and eating whatever is served that night (that they like!). Most toddlers also learn to use a spoon during this time, and by the time they are 2, can feed themselves pretty well with utensils.

18 months or so is a good time to start offering yogurt and apple-sauce and other foods that everyone normally eats with a spoon, and give baby a spoon to see how he does. Most babies will dip the spoon in and then lick it off, not really understanding how to "scoop" the food. By participating in family meals, though, they'll pick up on it around age 2. Soups can still be served during this time, but with little to no broth (give the meat and veggies cooked in the broth alone).

In general, table foods are simple for the baby-led weaning approach: that's what they start with, and that's what they're used to!

# *Finger Foods and Snack Foods*

At this age, just about anything can be offered as a finger food or snack food – although ideally grains will be minimized or still avoided, until the 2-year molars show up. Plenty of other things are available now, though!

Here are some snack ideas:

- Any fresh fruit, cut up (try real whipped cream to dip)
- Fruit sauces
- Fresh veggies, cut up (ideally with a homemade dip)
- Crispy nuts\*
- Crispy nut butter
- Soaked, cooked beans+
- Dried fruits (w/o added sugar or sulfides)
- Plain yogurt
- Cheese cubes
- Home-canned fruits, or commercial fruit packed in 100% juice
- Leftovers
- Mini-meatballs

All of these things are simple and easy! See the links referenced below for help in how to make crispy nuts or properly soak and cook beans. The beans can be spiced simply, or not at all – some kids just enjoy plain cooked beans! (Mine do!)

\* <http://www.modernalternativemama.com/blog/2011/12/1/recipe-collection-how-to-make-crispy-nuts.html>

+ <http://www.modernalternativemama.com/blog/2011/12/15/how-to-soak-and-cook-beans.html>

# *Toddler- Friendly Recipes*

# *Pita Pizzas*

These are a favorite of my kids. Remember that grains should be withheld until around age 2, but these are an excellent quick lunch after that! The testers loved them too.

## Ingredients:

*1 soaked pita (see recipe note below)*

*2 tbsp. tomato sauce*

*2 oz. mozzarella*

*1 tsp. olive oil (optional)*

*Toppings – 1 mushroom, 1 oz. sausage, etc. as desired*

## Directions:

Preheat oven to 350. Lay the pita on a baking tray. Spread tomato sauce and, if desired, olive oil onto the pita. Top with mozzarella and any other desired toppings. Bake for 15 minutes. Allow to cool for a couple minutes before cutting and serving.

## Makes 1 serving.

*Serving Suggestion:* Add veggies and Veggie Dip for a perfect meal.

**Pita recipe:** <http://www.modernalternativemama.com/blog/2011/10/6/recipe-collection-soaked-pita-bread.html>



# *Quesadillas*

These are a super simple lunch, and delicious. My kids love them, and they are so versatile! Testers enjoyed the tortillas a lot.

## Ingredients:

Tortillas

*2 c. freshly ground white*

*whole wheat flour*

*Juice of 1 lemon*

*½ c. coconut oil, melted*

*½ c. filtered water*

*2 tsp. sea salt*

*2 tsp. baking powder*



Photo By: *Brandy Trammell*

Quesadilla

*2 tortillas*

*4 oz. shredded cheese (mix of  
mild and sharp cheddar)*

## Options (mix and match):

*2 oz. shredded, cooked chicken*

*1 strip cooked, crumbled bacon*

*1 tbsp. chopped green onions*

*1 tbsp. diced green pepper*

*1 tbsp. diced tomatoes*

*1 tbsp. sautéed mushrooms*

## Directions:

### For the tortillas:

Combine flour, water, lemon juice, and coconut oil in a bowl. Stir to form a soft dough. Cover with a warm, damp cloth and place in a warm place overnight.

In the morning, mix in sea salt and baking powder until smooth



and well incorporated. Divide dough into 12 small balls. Roll each ball into a tortilla, or use a press. Heat a cast iron pan on medium high heat and add some coconut oil. Fry each tortilla for 20 – 30 seconds on each side, until lightly browned. Remove to a plate to cool.

For the quesadillas:

Place one tortilla in a frying pan. Cover with cheese and add any other toppings, as desired. If using additional toppings, save some cheese for the top (it helps the tortilla “stick” on both sides). Place the other tortilla on top. Cook on medium-high heat for about 5 minutes per side, watching for the cheese to melt but the tortilla not to burn.

Makes 2 toddler servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Finish with fruit and Fruit Dip for a well-balanced meal.

# Popcorn

My kids love popcorn as a snack, but microwave popcorn or store-bought pre-popped isn't good – full of chemicals and rancid vegetable oils. Instead, as a rare treat, we pop healthy popcorn at home.

## Ingredients:

*2 tbsp. coconut oil*

*¼ c. popcorn*

*Sea salt to taste*

*2 tbsp. melted butter*

## Directions:

Melt coconut oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the popcorn and cover the pan. Shake it constantly as the popcorn heats up. It will begin to steam, then pop. Keep shaking until all the popcorn is popped. Remove it from the heat. If you want to flavor the popcorn, adding the seasonings after popping. It's best to pour melted butter over the popcorn, then immediately add the seasonings so they stick well.



Photo By: *Heidi Meythaler*

## Flavor variations:

*\*Add 1 tbsp. sucanat and 1 tsp. cinnamon for cinnamon-sugar popcorn*

*\*Add 1 tbsp. freshly grated Romano cheese for cheese popcorn*

*\*Add 2 tsp. garlic powder and ½ tsp. parsley for garlic-herb popcorn*

# ***Toast with Apple Butter***

This is a quick, delicious, sweet snack that's also nutritionally awesome.

## **Ingredients:**

*1 sliced sprouted, soaked, or sourdough bread*

*1 tbsp. butter*

*2 tbsp. unsweetened apple butter (look at your local health food store)*

## **Directions:**

Toast the bread until it's lightly browned. Cover immediately in butter and let it melt. Top with apple butter. Cut and serve.

## **Makes 1 serving.**

***Serving Suggestion:*** Pair with Fruit Dip and fresh fruit chunks for a simple snack.

# Chicken Nuggets

These are a favorite lunch around here, or snack! They're extra wonderful because you can freeze them uncooked, and fry them up very quickly when you need them – no mess from breading every time you want some!

## Ingredients:

1 lb. of chicken  
1 c. sprouted flour or almond flour  
1 tsp. sea salt  
1 tsp. onion powder  
1/2 tsp. paprika  
1/2 tsp. ground mustard  
1/4 tsp. black pepper  
1 egg  
1/2 c. cream or buttermilk



Photo By: *Vanessa Hecker*

## Directions:

In a medium bowl, combine flour and spices. In another, egg and cream (well-beaten).

Cut the chicken into bite-sized pieces. Dip them into the flour mix, then the egg mix, then back into the flour mix. At this point, you can place them on a cookie sheet in a single layer and freeze them (transfer to a bag after they're completely frozen), or fry them in lard, beef tallow, or coconut oil. Frying takes 3 – 4 minutes per side when thawed; a bit longer when frozen. Watch them carefully because they do go quickly.

**Makes 4 – 5 servings.**

**Serving Suggestion:** Serve with Barbecue Sauce and veggies with Veggie Dip for a perfect meal.

# Barbecue Sauce

Most kids love dipping sauces – like barbecue sauce! Most versions from the store contain HFCS and other junk. Most recipes for barbecue sauce call for ketchup. This version doesn't. Using tomato sauce (which you can make at home very simply) and a few other ingredients, this simple barbecue sauce is delicious. Dip chicken nuggets or popcorn chicken in it, or use it to make pulled pork or even Sloppy Joes!

## Ingredients:

*1/3 c. diced onion*  
*2 tbsp. olive oil*  
*1 ½ c. tomato sauce*  
*1 tbsp. liquid smoke*  
*2 tbsp. red wine vinegar*  
*¼ c. honey*  
*2 tsp. sea salt*



Photo By: *Brandy Trammell*

## Directions:

In a 2-quart saucepan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients and cook for 10 – 15 min. until flavors are blended, stirring occasionally. When the sauce is done, you may puree if desired (there will be small onion bits remaining in the sauce, which some like and some don't). Use immediately, or chill if desired. Store in a glass dish or mason jar in the fridge. It will last up to 2 weeks.

Makes about 2 cups.

Serving Suggestion: Serve with Chicken Nuggets or Popcorn Chicken for dipping.

# *Pigs in a Blanket*

This was an instant hit when I first made them. The best part? If you're not a huge fan, you can use the dough recipe by itself for dinner rolls or anything else, in place of the canned "crescent" rolls! These also freeze well, pre-baked, so when you're ready you can just heat them.

## Ingredients:

*3 c. freshly ground sprouted wheat flour*

*Juice of 1 lemon*

*½ c. butter, melted*

*½ c. honey*

*¼ c. water*

*2 tsp. sea salt*

*3 tsp. yeast*

*1 egg*

## Directions:

Mix the flour, lemon juice, honey, butter, and water together. Let this mixture sit overnight, covered with a damp towel.

The next day, mix in the yeast, sea salt, and egg (no need to proof the yeast). Knead the dough for about 10 minutes, until smooth and elastic. Set it in a warm place to rise for about an hour, or until doubled.

Punch the dough down and separate into 2 pieces. Roll each piece out into a large circle and cut into 12 pieces. Roll each piece around ½ a hot dog (or, simply roll it up if you're using it for dinner rolls). Set them on an ungreased tray to rise for another hour. Continue this process until all the dough has been used.

Preheat the oven to 400. Bake the pigs in blankets for 10 – 15 minutes, until golden brown.



Makes 24.

*Serving Suggestion:* Finish with Chocolate Pudding for a delicious meal.

# Mini-Meatballs

These are so versatile. Offer them for a snack on the go (they're not messy!), serve them as a meal by themselves, or add them to soups. Make them into tiny, bite-sized pieces for maximum fun and ease of eating. Testers noted that these were versatile and could be made egg and gluten-free easily by using flax seed or rice in place of eggs or breadcrumbs, and they were still excellent.

## Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef

1 c. breadcrumbs (homemade, preferably)

1 egg

1 tsp. parsley

1 c. beef stock

1 tsp. onion powder

1 tsp. garlic powder

1 tsp. sea salt

¼ tsp. black pepper

½ tsp. basil

## Directions:

Place meat, egg, and spices to a large glass bowl and stir together. Dump in the breadcrumbs and stir; mixture will be dry. Add stock a little at a time until desired consistency is achieved (if your stock is cold and gelatin-like, warm it up first. Using cold stock will likely result in adding too much). The mix should be moist but not too wet. Shape the mixture into bite-sized meatballs – get the kids to help! Bake at 350 for 15 – 20 minutes (up to 30 minutes for 2" meatballs, if you make larger ones). When the meat is completely brown, they're done.



Photo By: *Annie Laurie*

Store them in a glass container in the fridge and use as desired. They will keep 3 – 5 days in the fridge, and several weeks in the freezer (they're a great make-ahead meal!).

Makes 8 – 10 toddler servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Top with Cheese Sauce and serve with noodles for homemade meatball mac'n'cheese!

# Easy Chocolate Pudding

This is a real chocolate pudding, made with milk. It's also the absolute simplest pudding you could ever make, no harder than a box of cook-and-stir! It's creamy and delicious, and a treat you don't have to feel bad about serving to your children.

## Ingredients:

*2 c. whole milk*

*2 tbsp. cocoa powder*

*2 tbsp. unbleached flour*

*¼ c. maple syrup*

*2 egg yolks*

*2 tsp. vanilla extract*

## Directions:

Stir all the ingredients together in a 2-quart saucepan. Whisk the mixture to incorporate the egg yolks and the flour so that the mixture won't become lumpy as it's heated. Continue to whisk constantly over medium heat, turning up the heat slowly until it begins to boil and thickens. Remove from heat and pour into a glass dish (or individual serving dishes) and refrigerate until cold.

## Makes 4 – 6 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Make this as dessert after Chicken Nuggets for a perfect kid-friendly meal!



Photo By: *Vanessa Hecker*

# Chicken and Bacon Salad

I know, it's strange – salad in a kids' book? But this salad has so much yummy stuff that kids practically won't even notice the lettuce. It's one salad I can get my kids to eat – and ask for seconds and thirds, too. One tester said everyone loved it, and it will become a staple in their home.

## Ingredients:

*1 small head Romaine lettuce*  
*1 large chicken breast, cut into strips*  
*4 strips of bacon*  
*4 oz. shredded cheddar cheese*  
*1 recipe Simple Salad Dressing (see below)*

## Dressing

*2 cloves garlic, grated on a microplane (basically like pulp; or minced)*  
*1/2 tsp. basil*  
*1/2 tsp. thyme*  
*1/2 tsp. sea salt*  
*1/4 c. raw red wine vinegar*  
*1/2 c. extra virgin olive oil*



Photo By: *Sheridan Eksteen*

## Directions:

Heat a frying pan on medium high heat. Add the bacon and cook until nearly done (crispy). Add the chicken strips and cook them in the bacon grease until cooked through. Add sea salt to taste and remove from the pan.

Prepare each bowl about ½ full of torn and washed lettuce leaves. Top with crumbled bacon and chicken strips, and add about 1 oz. shredded cheddar cheese. Drizzle with salad dressing, if desired.

Makes 4 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Pair with Chocolate-Hazelnut Balls for a healthy and delicious treat.



# Popcorn Chicken

This is a favorite because it's just so much fun! It's a lot of work, too, unless you make it ahead and freeze it. But it's delicious and great for a fun night's dinner. You need a lot of breading for these since they are such tiny pieces! This was a star recipe among testers. One even noted she hopes that those without young toddlers don't miss out on this recipe because it so excellent! Another said other popcorn chicken recipes have failed for her before, but this one was perfect.

## Ingredients:

*1 lb. chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces*

*2 c. sprouted flour, or unbleached flour*

*2 tsp. onion powder*

*2 tsp. sea salt*

*1 tsp. parsley*

*2 eggs*

*1 c. milk*

*Oil for frying (coconut oil or lard)*



Photo By: *Heather Hampton*

## Directions:

Mix the eggs and milk in a small bowl; beat well. In another bowl, mix the flour and all the spices. Dip the chicken pieces into the flour, then the milk mixture, then back into the flour, for a double coating. Heat the oil in a large frying pan on medium-high heat until a piece of chicken dropped in sizzles immediately (but not so hard that it burns quickly). Fry all of the chicken in the oil in batches until golden brown. Remove the cooked chicken and place it on a towel-lined plate.

Makes 4 – 6 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Pair with some steamed veggies with Cheese Sauce and Apple-Pear Sauce.

# Cheese Sauce

What better way to get picky kids to eat their veggies than with cheese sauce? It can go over broccoli, on baked potatoes, as a dipping sauce for chicken nuggets or chips! Testers enjoyed how smooth and creamy this sauce is.

## Ingredients:

*4 tbsp. butter*

*2 tbsp. arrowroot powder (or 4 tbsp. unbleached flour)*

*1 c. whole milk*

*½ c. mild cheddar*

*½ c. sharp cheddar*

*Sea salt to taste*

## Directions:

In a medium saucepan (2 quart), melt the butter over low heat. Stir in the arrowroot powder or flour, and the milk. Whisk the mixture to make sure there are no lumps. Cook and stir over medium heat until thickened and smooth (don't stop stirring or the arrowroot powder can congeal in lumps rather than making a smooth sauce – flour can be whisked mostly smooth even if it clumps, but arrowroot powder can't). Remove from the heat. Add the cheddars and stir until they are melted and the sauce is smooth.

Makes about 2 cups.

Serving Suggestion:

Serve over steamed broccoli alongside Popcorn Chicken.



Photo By: Joy Briggs

# ***Peanut Butter-Chocolate Chip Granola Bars***

These are a favorite of our kids. There is just something so satisfying about the combination of peanut butter and chocolate! These were a favorite among testers.

## **Ingredients:**

*½ c. butter*  
*½ c. peanut butter*  
*½ c. honey*  
*1 tsp. vanilla*  
*½ tsp. sea salt*  
*½ c. sprouted flour*  
*3 c. oats*  
*½ c. chocolate chips*



*Photo By: Renee Cole*

## **Directions:**

Preheat the oven to 350. In a large saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter, peanut butter, and honey together. Stir until smooth. Add the vanilla, sea salt, and flour and stir again. Add the oats 1 c. at a time until the mixture is thick and the oats are well-coated. Stir in the chocolate chips right at the end so they don't melt.

Put the mixture into an 11x7 or 8x8 pan and press it in firmly and evenly. Bake for 20 – 25 minutes, until the edges are golden brown. Allow it cool completely before cutting into bars, or it will fall apart.

**Makes about 12 bars.**

***Serving Suggestion:*** Pair with Chicken Nuggets for a fast, delicious lunch.

# Grilled Cheese Roll-Ups

This is a super simple lunch and basically a “to go” version of quesadillas. Kids love them because they’re fun!

## Ingredients:

*1 tortilla (see recipe earlier in book)*

*2 oz. shredded cheddar cheese*

*2 oz. shredded chicken (optional)*

## Directions:

Lay a tortilla in a frying pan. Sprinkle cheese on about ½ the tortilla. Sprinkle chicken over top, if you’re using it. Turn the pan on low heat, until the cheese just starts to melt. Then, starting with the cheese side, slowly roll up the tortilla into a tube (use a spatula and pot holder to help you, so you don’t burn yourself). Heat for another minute or two, until the cheese is fully melted. If desired, cut the tube into 2 – 3 smaller pieces for serving.

## Makes 1 – 2 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Pair with some veggies and dip for a simple lunch on the go!



Photo By: *Brandy Trammell*

# Chocolate-Hazelnut Balls

Chocolate and hazelnut is one of my obsessions. I love it. I made these and my kids ate them up quickly – couldn't stop! It's a great sweet snack without any sugar, and it's delicious.

## Ingredients:

*1 c. pitted dates*

*1 ½ tbsp. cocoa powder*

*3 tbsp. hazelnuts*

## Directions:

Put the dates into a blender or food processor and process on low until mashed up. Add cocoa powder and hazelnuts and continue to process until the mixture forms a ball. Remove and roll into small balls.

Makes about 18 ½" balls.

*Serving Suggestion:* Pair with Quesadillas for a healthy and delicious lunch.



Photo By: Gina Peak



# Fruit Dip

When I was a kid, my mom used to make a fruit dip out of marshmallow crème and cream cheese. Yummy, but definitely not real food. This is my attempt to replicate that. It's lighter and fluffier since it uses plain whipped egg whites instead of "real" marshmallow. Use pastured eggs, not store-bought, to ensure that the raw egg whites are safe to consume. One tester called it "perfect."

## Ingredients:

*2 egg whites*

*8 oz. cream cheese, softened*

*5 tbsp. maple syrup*

*1/8 tsp. cream of tartar*

## Directions:

In a medium bowl, mix egg whites (at room temperature), cream of tartar, and 1 tbsp. maple syrup. Beat with a mixer until soft peaks form; set aside.



Photo By: *Heather Hampton*

In another bowl, beat the remaining maple syrup with the cream cheese until smooth and fluffy. Use a spoon to add the egg whites to the cream cheese mixture and stir together. Serve immediately, or keep chilled until ready to serve. Will last 3 – 4 days in the fridge.

Makes 8 – 10 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Serve with fresh apple slices, orange sections, grapes, strawberries, pineapple chunks or whatever you like!

# Veggie Dip

My son loves to dip anything into anything else. So, I came up with a delicious, creamy veggie dip for him. Vegetables are best eaten with fat because the fat helps the body to absorb key nutrients. Enjoy your dip! Try offering carrot sticks, celery sticks, cherry tomatoes, broccoli or cauliflower spears, zucchini sticks, or whatever you like for dipping.

## Ingredients:

*½ c. sour cream*

*½ tsp. dried onion*

*½ tsp. sea salt or to taste*

*1 tsp. parsley*

*1 tsp. fresh dill, chopped*

## Directions:

Mix all ingredients together in a medium glass bowl. Serve immediately or put in a glass dish with a lid and keep chilled until serving. Keeps for about a week.

## Makes 1 – 2 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Pair with Popcorn Chicken for a delicious lunch.



Photo By: *Annie Ferrer*

# ***Fruit Juice Popsicles***

These are a yummy, sweet treat in the summer without any added sugar! They're also extremely simple. My kids love them. They can be frozen in ice cube trays instead of popsicle molds if you prefer; it will make about 2 trays.

## Ingredients:

*3 c. fruit juice or combinations (see below)*

## Directions:

Pour juice into popsicle molds. Add a popsicle stick to each. Sometimes, the sticks will turn sideways or come up; check on the popsicles after they have been in the freezer for 30 minutes to re-position the sticks if necessary. If you don't have a popsicle mold, ice cube trays or even small plastic cups can be used instead. Place plastic cups on a tray to keep them all in one place and freeze flat. Popsicles should freeze for at least 3 hours.

## Juice combinations:

*\*9 oranges, juiced*

*\*6 oranges + 1 c. coconut milk*

*\*6 oranges + 1 c. strawberries (blended)*

*\*3 oranges + 2 lemons + 2 limes + 1 c. strawberries*

*\*3 c. grape juice*

*\*3 c. apple juice*

*\*1 ½ c. apple juice + 1 ½ c. grape juice*

*\*1 c. apple juice + 1 c. grape juice + 1 c. cranberry juice*

*\*3 lemons + ¼ c. honey + 2 c. water*

## Makes about 8 servings.

*Serving Suggestion:* Serve with Chicken and Bacon Salad for a fresh meal on a hot day.