

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

Culturally Inspired Holiday Meals

With the holidays upon us, now is a great time to incorporate fun, festive menu items from the various cultural backgrounds and communities the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) serves. Celebrations from around the globe and the country can serve as inspiration! Including culturally appropriate menu items validates differences, creates a welcoming environment, and introduces new foods to children's diets. This Mealtime Memo highlights a few multicultural holiday recipes supporting ChooseMyPlate and the nutritional meal guidelines, along with some fun activities for children.

Festival of Lights

Hanukkah (Chanukah) is the Jewish wintertime festival of lights. Celebrations include lighting the menorah, reciting special prayers, and preparing and sharing specialty foods. Latkes, potato pancakes, are a popular, traditional Hanukkah dish. [Try this](#) delicious latke recipe and fun, printable Hanukkah craft.

Christmas Around the World

Christmas is a major religious holiday for Christians, but it is an important secular holiday as well. Celebrations occur in more than 160 countries. Many Americans decorate their homes, attend special religious services, and give gifts. Sharing different dishes is a holiday favorite, like this [Meatball Madness](#) recipe from ICN's [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#), which adds mashed potatoes on top for a fun, nutritious twist.

Las Posadas, the traditional Christmas celebration in Mexico, begins on December 16. People celebrate by attending nightly parties, displaying nativity scenes, and serving traditional dishes like tamales, chicken mole, and menudo. Try this [beef and bean tamale pie](#) that combines meats/meat alternates, grains, and vegetables.



In the Ukraine, Germany, and other European countries, baked apples are a tasty holiday treat. Serve a quick and easy version of baked apples using this [microwaved baked apple](#) recipe.

A Newer Tradition

Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of African American culture that takes place from December 26 through January 1. The seven-day celebration includes activities such as candle lighting, sharing beverages to represent unity, and a culminating feast with gift giving. Kwanzaa is an excellent time to incorporate soul food, Creole recipes, or any dish with African origins or that represents African American culture. Warm spices like cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg can add a holiday twist to this [whipped sweet potato](#) recipe. Reduce (or remove) the hot pepper in this [Jamaican jerk chicken](#) recipe to have a flavorful protein choice for Kwanzaa.



Celebrations from Asia

Millions around the world celebrate the Indian holiday [Diwali](#), also known as the festival of lights. Celebrations include attending family gatherings, hanging colorful lanterns, wearing new clothes, lighting fireworks, and preparing unique dishes. Pulao is an Indian rice pilaf cooked in broth and seasoned with onions and a mix of spices. Consider introducing children to Indian food with this easy [pulao](#) recipe.

[Chinese New Year](#) rounds out the winter celebrations. This festival celebrates the last of the cold weather and takes place between January and February. Celebrate by treating children to this flavorful [sesame Asian noodle salad](#) and fun, [Chinese New Year craft](#).



Spread Holiday Cheer!

The holidays provide a fantastic opportunity to add cultural awareness to your menu. No matter the traditional food culture, it is always important to choose healthy options. Try preparing and serving these healthy, delicious, and culture-conscious recipes from around the world. Have a safe and happy holiday season!

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