Module 4 – Food taste and intercultural eating skills

Food is a characteristic way human beings discovered to get in touch, know each other, exchange opinions. Kindergartens are typical places where families with young children meet and where their eating habits, religious background and rituals could be shown without offending neither the children, nor the parents. To do that, kindergarten staff needs basic knowledge about how food could help them to manage relationship with families of migrants and refugees.



What is the goal of this module?

1. how to realize that there are many factors that affect child´s eating behaviour.
2. how is possible to realize a suitable and not traumatic weaning.
3. how to have resort to Season Festivals to increase kinder awareness about their relationship with them self and with their own living community.

After finishing this module I will have learnt:

How to improve child´s eating behaviour through the role of teachers, peers and ambience

Unit 1 – Food socialisation in kindergartens: Role of teachers, peers and ambience

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. better understand child´s sense of taste
2. cooperate with children and motivate them for a new taste
3. use the role of peers and ambience to increase their capacity of trying new dishes

Introduction into the topic:

You may be surprised, but taste is genetically determined. Some children are more prone to certain tastes (especially sweet) than others. Accepting new tastes and new foods is a learning process which takes time. On this journey are especially important roles of: parents, teachers and peers. Children eat in their own manner, very different from adults,

because we shouldn´t forget: eating is for them learning.

Chapter 1 – First thing first: How children sense the taste

The sense of taste importantly influences child´s food choices. Taste is genetically determined and variation in taste genes might relate to the taste likes and dislikes of children and parents. In addition to genes, age and culture also contribute to taste preferences, at times overriding the influence of genetics. Mother and child can be from different taste planets; so if child says food tastes bitter to him, he may be right, even though his mother doesn´t sense it that way. (Monell Chemical Senses Center)

Obese kids have less sensitive taste-buds than kids of normal weight, indicates research published online in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. (British Medical Journal, 2012)

Dr. Mennella a scientist at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia: *"Babies are born with the ability to detect sweetness, which is the predominant taste of human milk. The taste of sugar also is a signal that a food has calories and, therefore, nutrition. Between periods of maximal growth, children may be attracted to sugar because it's a signal to the body of energy and salt because it's a signal for minerals. Bitter is a taste signal for poisons. "*

Since flavor and taste learning occurs so early in mammals, mothers who eat more fruits and vegetables during pregnancy have children who are more accepting of those foods, research has indicated. (Banotai A., Taste&Flavour Preferences in Children, 2010)



Avoid drinks with added sugar. They represent risk for obesity, caries, high blood sugar, higher blood lipids, cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes type2, osteoporosis ... Sweet soft drinks stimulate sweet taste in later children´s life. Children who are not accustomed to drink water, are complaining if not given soft drinks for thirst. (Prehrana.si).

Chapter 2 – Role of teachers

Parents are children first role models, but when child comes to kindergarten, teachers become equally important. Family/parents opinion is still very important, for example: when parents are model for healthy eating, children express greater interest in healthy food.

Teachers and caregivers become role models by engaging with children at mealtime and sitting down and eating with them. This practice is often called family-style dining.

Developing positive eating behaviour

Teachers can help children develop positive early eating behaviours with decreasing food fears (neophobia), positive

experience with engagement of teachers, and with enjoyable and fun atmosphere.

The acceptance of new foods is a slow process. Particularly through the ages 2 to 5, persistence is essential (Birch 1999; Satter 2008). It is very important that teacher praise the child when she is good and call her by the name. It can´t be too much of praising. Teacher is creating warm, acceptable atmosphere which is very important for adopting a new knowledge.

Food restriction and food pressuring

Restricting or forbidding unhealthy foods doesn´t decrease children's preference for them, but the opposite is true (Satter 2008). Pressuring a child to eat one type of food (such as fruit or vegetables) leads to resistance.

Emphasis on having a "clean plate" may hinder children's recognition of the internal cues of hunger and satiety and contribute to overeating (Satter 2008). That´s why respecting child's expression of food preference and fullness (particularly if the child tastes a food) is very important!



Sometimes how to eat is more important than what to eat

Pre-schoolers have two common preferences. Firstly, they prefer routine in daily life. Most children need some structure and routine to their day. Generally, they prefer meals and snacks at regular times, as governed by the family's lifestyle.

Secondly, they prefer simplicity. Many children may like simply prepared, mild tasting foods that they can easily identify. They prefer foods they can manage, for example, cut-up vegetables they can eat with their fingers and soups they can drink from a cup (Sigman-Grant M. 1992). It is estimated that children eat more fruit or vegetable, if it is cut into pieces, because is more comfortable. Use vegetables in other forms: as a sauce, in muffins, as cream soup ... and increase the possibility of eating it. (http://prehrana.si/moja-prehrana/predsolski-otroci)



Children prefer:

- raw, coloured vegetable of bright colours better than cooked vegetable. Red colour is especially appealing to children (if possible, add a piece of red food).
- warm food better than hot food
- mild tastes
- soup without legume skin
- funny meals: little tables, sandwiches of geometric shapes with funny names, everything eaten in a company of their friends
- cooperating at composing the menus and preparing meals
- only one or two new dishes at once, which should be offered often and always when child is hungry, at the beginning of meal or after play

(based on Rady Rolfes S., Pinna K.,Whitney E.)

Chapter 3 – Role of peers

Peers have important influence on children from early years on, although: older is the child - stronger is the influence of peers, especially with teenagers.

Copying of other people´s behaviour starts very early. You may be surprised, but even infants look to other people for guidance in food selection.

If children watch other people eat, they prefer food which is eaten by people with positive over negative expressions, foods being eaten by child over adults, and foods being eaten by child of the same gender as themselves. These characteristics can help us to affect children's willingness to try new foods (Frazier, Brandy N. et al., Developmental Science, 2012). So, the winning combination for child to try new foods could be to watch peer of the same gender who is eating these foods. This knowledge is very well used in commercial industry.

But the most effective situation for child to try new foods is, when he/she has rotated opportunities to eat with a peer or peers who already consume this new food.



Chapter 4 – Role of ambience

Before the meal children must calm down, teachers can use different quiet activities, for example reading the story. In this case, they can "hear their inner voice", which is usually right about the amount of food they should eat. (Kast-Zahn, Morgenroth, 2012). While children eat, they should not listen to radio, use picture books or toys - focus should be on food. (Dolar Bahovič, Bregar Golobič, 2004)

If we force a child to eat food, table will become mine field. When he doesn´t want to eat, good answer is: "Don´t worry about this. Just sit here with us and let´s enjoy each other´s company." After the age of 4 they are old enough to understand that all children should leave the table together and wait for the ones who are still eating. (Kast-Zahn, Morgenroth, 2012)

Eating environments

Dinning environment must encourage relaxing atmosphere, where child can focus on food, but with no pressure. Interesting and engaging mealtime conversations create greater food enjoyment (Hughes et al. 2007).

Eating environments that make food fun, offer new foods and a variety, and encourage children to taste and choose the foods they want, let children develop food attitudes and dietary practices that ultimately support good health (Campbell & Crawford 2001).

Simple, creative lunches with variety in colour, texture, and taste are appealing to children.



Guide through dinning environments

Relaxing and acceptable atmosphere with the focus on food is the most important part in good dinning. If teachers are aware of this, they could easily distinguish between what is good and bad for dining experience.

Effect of sound at dinning: noise is very disturbing, it is estimated that is lowering food consumption. While eating it is the best solution silence or quiet relaxing music, accompanied with nice conversation about themes children like (creating relaxing and acceptable atmosphere).

Effect of scent: strong scents even if they come from food, disturb appetite. Don´t open pots with food and deliver it right in front of children´s faces. Scents not connected with food are even more disturbing (flowers, cleaners ...)

Effect of light: there should be enough lightening, the best is daylight. Too little lightening reduces food consuming. Children like food they recognize and see well.

Effect of colours: although children like colours, there shouldn´t be too much, because

children can get distracted by them. Wansink, B., Van Ittersum K.,2012, found out that bright lights, loud noises and yellow and red colours create a hectic atmosphere that may cause individuals to eat quickly.

Where to set the tables: if possible, set them in separate place only for eating, which is clean, with low sound levels to avoid loud voices, echo. Tables and chairs should be together but with enough space to allow teacher to walk and that are not disturbing for children. (Šintler, Domicelj, 1997)

Decorations of eating environments help at creating better atmosphere and children enjoy in decorating the table, but unfortunately in kindergartens this is not possible every day.

Teacher can do this at special occasions: birthdays of children, meetings of parents ... Use seasonal themes (flowers, plants).

Organise your meals well, this is important. In the case of bad organisation teacher will have to leave the table to get extra amount of food, cutlery and so on. This is disturbing and children will imitate you. So, prepare everything you need in a hand cart. (Dolar Bahovič, Bregar Golobič, 2004)

10 steps to positive eating behaviour (on basis of Erik K. Eliassen)

1. Provide a variety of foods at meals and snacks, especially whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.
2. Offer repeated opportunities to taste new foods - a least 15 - 20 repetitions are needed to become familiar with certain food.
3. Share with families' nutrition resources, such as lists of foods (by category) to guide their food selections and offer new ideas for meals sent from home.
4. Apply the same guidelines to food selections in teachers' lunches brought from home.
5. Sit with children at meals, and enjoy conversation. Talk about the taste, texture, appearance, and healthful aspects of foods. But: don´t talk just about food, it may become annoying. Include topics that all children like: family, family trips and activities, animals.
6. Plan adequate time for all children to finish eating.
7. Respect a child's expression of satiety or sense of being full.

8. Develop a routine for serving snacks, applying the same rules whether offering carrots, crackers, or cookies.
9. Wash hands before snack and mealtime; encourage touching and smelling a food as a step toward tasting.
10. Find alternatives to using food as a reward or serving foods high in fat, sugar, or salt as part of a celebration.

Other learning tools

http://solskilonec.si/

http://prehrana.si/moja-prehrana/predsolski-otroci

http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/index.php

https://www.monell.org/research/nutrition_and_appetite

Erin K. Eliassen,The Impact of Teachers and Families on Young Children's Eating Behaviors

Unit 2 – Matter of Taste: taste, smell, sight, touch, and hearing. Hands on nutrition pedagogic starting form taste events to cooking classes in kindergarten.

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. observe and understand the sensitive nature of children
2. realize healthy and savory menu in the phase of the weaning
3. organize activity which stimulate the development of senses in the children and their awareness of these

Introduction into the topic:

In kindergarten, among the main experiences to be seen as opportunities for cognitive, physical, affective development of children, we have the sensorial experience: in early childhood, actually, senses (taste, smell, hearing, sight and touch) are the first and the best way to get self-knowledge and to become aware of the surrounding world.

At the same time, food is the main immediate connection with the outside, while satisfying the primary needs of children. So, when children enter kindergarten, their first challenge is the weaning, i.e. passing from mother or formula milk into several, diversified food flavors and smells. For that reason, the teachers organize specific activities focused on using "jelly", so that children become able to test some new flavors and smells, at the same time developing their skills in playing.

Chapter 1 – Kids and five senses

According to some prenatal psychology scholars, the human being begins to develop his sensory abilities since the first weeks of gestation.

Touch before birth

Touch sensitivity appears early, first in the area around the mouth towards the 7th week, then expends to the face and the genitals (10th week), hands and feet (12th week). But four-dimensional ultrasound revealed that as early as the 9th week, if it touches the foot planks, the fetus folds his fingers or fan out them, drawing the leg to escape contact.

The child would above all can sense a series of vibrations through the amniotic fluid. Towards the 22nd week, nerve endings finish to develop the tips of the fingers and the baby begins to touch her body, umbilical cord and uterus walls.

Touch development after birth

At birth, the child's safety and protection needs lead him to look skin-to-skin contact for with his mother. This will calm him and, through a sort of extension of uterine life, will introduce him into the outside world. The newborn loves touch and heat from the earliest hours of life.

With growth, touch becomes an important tool for the child to know and explore himself and the world around him. Since the 4th month, the infant begins to discover himself and to touch his hands, feet, face, etc. By the 7th month, however, the child learns to grasp the objects and explore them.

Smell before birth

At the 11th week, the baby begins to swallow amniotic fluid and expel it with the first urine. Then the dissolved substances meet the vomeronasal organs, the smell receptors, which ripen around the 13th week.

The collection of these molecules, derived largely from ingested by the woman food, is for him the smell of mom and it will be immediately recognized after childbirth, at first contact with her skin. The smell, developed at birth, will carry him towards mother’s breast.

Smell development after birth

Studies have proved that children develop their smell long before the other 4 senses. In a couple of hours, the infant uses the smell to locate her mother. The infant also recognizes the smell of human milk and can distinguish it from the milk of a stranger.

There is also evidence that pleasant smells can effectively improve the immune system, reduce stress and induce sleep. Research has shown that a scent stimulates different receptors in the brain, which is also responsible for basic learning skills.

However, they are the most important scent receptors in the nasal cavity that have the capacity to differentiate over 9,000 several smells. Each receptor has a place where a scented molecule can form a bond with it so that the brain can smell it properly. Smell does not require air; it simply asks for a scented molecule.

However, the actual smell development happens during the weaning, when it comes into contact with the most varied scents.

Sight before birth

At the 8th week the optic nerve is formed, but the fetus begins to open his eyelids only to 26th. From this period onwards, if you move a strong light source on the surface of the womb, the little one follows her with the look.

Sight, compared to the other four, is still a "delayed" sense: at birth, the infant cannot focus more than 25 centimeters and distinguish a few colors. But it is exactly what it takes to attach the look of mom (for an innate mechanism recognizes a human face, though only drawn on a sheet) and locate the nipple for the first feeding.

Sight development after birth

At birth, the eyes and areas of the vision-oriented brain are immature, which explains why very young children cannot clearly see red, yellow and pastel colors. White and black branded models provide the strongest contrast. The faces are particularly appealing to young children, though the most exciting image after birth is the face of the mother.

The newborn looks for the pupil, which resembles the shape of the nipple. Objects can be seen at a distance of 20 to 25 centimeters, which corresponds to the size of the mother's mother when she nurses or embraces him. Routes that transmit information from the eye to the occipital lobe in the back of the brain develop quickly. From the age of two months, both eyes can focus in the same way and follow the movement of an object if it is not too far away. The colors become distinct with a preference shown first towards the red and yellow and then towards the green and the blue. From the age of three months, the child will follow an object for a full bow from right to left. At this stage, the child is particularly captivated by the lights movement, as long as they are not too strong. From the age of six months, pastel colors are recognized and remote objects can be identified from a distance.

Additionally, the child develops depth perception (three-dimensional view) and turns to an object put to a different perspective. Children watching television see images in two sizes and cannot determine the exact size, position, and shape of an object. At eight months, color vision is fully developed and the baby begins to see with much greater precision.

It will take 4 or 5 years for the child's vision to reach the level of an adult.

Taste before birth

The taste buds appear on the tongue towards the 12th week. When the fetus swallows the liquid in which it is immersed (from 2 to 4 centiliters per hour), the buds start experiencing their flavors and transmit their sensory information to their brain areas. So, it seems that once passed into amniotic fluid certain foods, if they are very much appreciated by Mom, are combined with a feeling of well-being, pre-disposing the brain of the unborn to appreciate them in the life of extrauterine.

Taste development after birth

The taste buds on the tongue can distinguish four qualities - bitter, sweet, salty, acidic: all other flavors are identified by the olfactory receptors in the nasal cavity. Evolutionary speaking, the obvious preference for sweetness ("taste of safety") can be explained by the fact that sweet taste is a source of energy (carbohydrates) that are not harmful and are safe to eat. Instead bitter taste warns us about toxic foods, an acid flavor can warn against spoiled foods for example, while a salty flavor may suggest the presence of minerals.

Babies are extremely able to differentiate a variety of tastes, which may be in breast milk, and then to develop their preferences. So, weaning is the moment of meeting the child's genetic tasting patrimony with a framework of adult preferences: this encounter will be crucial. In fact, it’s shown how eating behaviors achieved in the very first years of life are kept even in adulthood, underlining the importance of investing in this period to improve the quality of life of tomorrow's adults as well.

Hearing before birth

By monitoring the movements of the body and the heart rate, it has been observed that the fetus reacts to sounds from the 16th week, long before they develop hearing organs: baby According to some hypothesis, would be able to feel the vibrations through skin and skeletal structure.

After the 24th week it can normally hear, not only the physiological noises of the maternal (the heart, the breath, the blood circulation) body but, partly, also those outside. From half pregnancy in then, the baby can recognize the voice of his mother (if she affectionately speaks to him, he is excited and its cardiac rhythm changes) and also of his dad; it distinguishes some simple syllables and ago evolutions in the liquid amniotic to the rhythm of a music (what sweet must be, otherwise it kicks annoyed).

The hearing, therefore, is fundamental to create a sort of "family bond" anticipated. And sonorous stimuli compete to the cerebral development of his child engraving himself in its memory. After the birth, just reunited to his mother, the baby immediately recognizes "that" cardiac pulsation, "that voice." Not only. It is observed that a newborn knows how to distinguish, among the so many, a particular melody often felt in the prenatal period, and even a fable. But child also has an auditory perception of himself: if he makes him listen to a recording of his weeping he stays indifferent, while he is getting excited and he starts in turn to scream if it originates from other children.

Hearing after birth

A newborn with only few days of life feels all the noises and some of them can provoke in him a called reaction "reflected of Moor", open and described for the first one turned by the Austrian pediatrician Ernst Moro. It manifests him with a reaction suddenly accompanied from a sudden opening of the arms caused or from a sudden noise or when the supine newborn supports him in way some abrupt or rapid.

In these cases, the newborn has a bump, stretches arms widening hands and fingers and subsequently folds up her, then it normally follows the weeping.

- Just born, the newborns start in answer to a strong and sudden sound, sometimes turning the head in direction of

the noise.
- Around the 2 months: the hearing of the newborns is improved, he should be the degree to hear sounds of different tonality now.
- Around the 3-4 months: child is able of to gather and to understand the source of a voice or a noise for then to turn in the correct direction, starts besides to articulate some consonants and vowels.
- Around the 5-6 months: baby starts to understand that he can provoke some noises himself, as for instance when it will throw objects for earth for the taste to feel that it makes noise. The confused sounds that it sends forth look more and more like the words.
- Toward the 7 months: he will begin to stammer and to produce sounds to manifest the really state of mind, this ability of lallation will increase around the tenth month.
- Toward the 8-9 months: child starts to understand the relationship that ties the words to the gestures.
- Toward the 11-12 months: baby will turn him if called for name and he will be able to associate a name to an object. He should start to pronounce simple words as "Mother" or "it Eats up”.

In conclusion, especially in the first three years of life, until toward the seven years, child is completely organ of senses. In him there is no separation among body, soul and spirit and all of this that it operates to the outside he is internally reproduced. Child lives in how much he tastes everything how much he welcomes in itself.

Chapter 2 – Changing in the child feeding: from lactation to primary school.

As sustained by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the maternal milk it is enough to satisfy the nutritional demands of the greatest part of the babies at 6 months. The weaning should not be on its way before the 17a week of life, of it over the 26a (European Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition – ESPGHAN).

In the baby the requirement of lipids is great in comparison to the following ages: up to the first year of life, a fat contribution of the 40% of the daily calories recommends him, percentage that has decreased to 35-40% since 12 to 36 months thin to arrive, after the three years gradually to the recommended quota for the adults (from 20 to 35%).

In fact, the milk to the beginning of the feed is to contained lower part of fats and to tall content of lactose, sugar, proteins, vitamins, mineral and water. During the feed, the content of fats (50%) increases and that of sugars (7%) decreases. Such percentage allows the baby to take less risks than to become obese, since a possible correlation exists among elevated protein assumption in the first phases of the life and the risk increased to develop obesity and chronic-degenerative illnesses in the following periods of the life.

Besides maternal milk contains over 700 types of bacteria that help her child to develop the immune system and to build the intestinal bacterial flora.

Then maternal milk offers the good approach to his child to a healthy and rich life of affection: in fact, during the feed, his child lives an intimate relationship with his mother, which initially is no other from himself and then becomes the first representation of the world.

Although the maternal milk both a complex inimitable biological system, from 1915 the first prepared formula is had on industrial base beginning from bovine milk: today day the formulas of the artificial milk extend to draw near to that some maternal milk more and more, even if it needs to underline that in the artificial milk it increases the quantity of the consequential calories from proteins and that it needs to be careful to the qualities of the ingredients of the milk in dust.

Therefore, an assignment of the pediatrician is also that to prescribe a type of milk rather than another in base to the demands of the baby, explaining to his/her parents which are the characteristics of that determined artificial milk and because it is fitter for that newborn, making besides to understand to the people the differences of price among the different products, that could appear unjustified to an inexperienced eye.

According to the OMS indications, toward the sixth month it is necessary to begin the weaning because in this phase alone maternal (or of formula) milk is not enough to satisfy the increasing nutritional requirement of the baby, above all as it regards energy's contribution, proteins, iron, zinc and vitamins, so the feeding must be integrated with fit complementary foods. Besides, in general, the baby is ready to receive solid foods to six months. In fact, around this age "the intestinal maturation is completed and the neurological development allows to grab, to chew and to swallow in effective way”.

Specific ways and menu don't exist to begin the weaning: the proper timing for the introduction of the first different foods from the milk depends on numerous individual variables, among which the specific nutritional demands, the neuro-physiological and anatomical-functional development, the stature and ponderal growth, the relationship mother-child, the specific demands of mother and the partner-cultural context.

Following the lines drives for the weaning of the World Health Organization, it gradually needs to introduce in the diet of child seed-solid foods and then solid, in other words "complementary foods" that they don't forcedly have to replace the maternal milk but to integrate it: in fact, even though more exclusive, the nursing to the breast must also continue after the introduction of other foods, and it is desirable for the psycho-physical (a smaller incidence of certain typologies of tumor is ascertained as the childish leukemia, and of certain types of metabolic and autoimmune illnesses and a great intellectual development) comfort of child up to that such practice continues when child and mother desire it, also over one year of age.

The complementary foods can be classified in:

- Foods of transition (past, in purea, semisolid), belonging foods that is to specific categories but adapted for responding to the particular nutritional demands and physiological of the baby.
- Family foods, based on a various and balanced family diet, with some small adaptation.

Between the 6 and the 8 months these foods must be offered 2-3 times a day, increasing to 3-4 times after the 9 months and adding a nourishing snack 1 - 2 times a day after the 12 months, if child desires it. Then generally the weaning is begun with fruit and eat up of it, but "without forcing child, allowing him to touch food in the dish and to eat with the hands" (baby led approach) and "alternating different foods for color, taste and consistence.

Initially not approved food must have proposed him however with patience in following days, eventually prepared in different way. And then it is important that child eats sat with the erect back (preferably in the high chair) to avoid the risk of suffocation and to allow to actively participate him in the meal, touching and messing up with the food.

As it regards the nutritional demands of child from 1 to 3, the general energetic contribution must adequately be divided among the different macro-nourishing. According to the recent indications of the "Levels of Assumption of Reference and Energy for the population" (LARN), such contribution should derive for 50% from the carbohydrates, for 40% from the fats and only for around 10% from the proteins.

The carbohydrates include the flours and the sugars. They are naturally found in all of this that contains flour of whatever type (bread, pasta, laughed etc.) and in all of this that contains sugar (sweets, fruit, honey etc.).
The proteins are contained especially in every kind of meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, cereals and vegetables.

The fats: they are divided in saturated, present in the milk-cheese products, in fat meats and in certain vegetable (oil of palm and oil of coconut) oils, and in unsaturated, present especially in the vegetable (oil of olive) oils, walnut-trees, filberts, peaches, olives.

To underline it is the fact that, in comparison to the past years, the criterion of the progressive introduction of the foods is set aside according to the degree of allergic reaction, for a great attention to the character and the tastes of child. In fact, the weaning poses some practical problems, what the problem of the teaspoon, of the taste, of the consistence, of the tolerance that the educators can overcome trying to:

- to be reasonable, or to try to understand what’s the best moment to begin the weaning in accordance with the characteristics of your child;
- possession calm: to gradually introduce in the diet new foods, assuring himself that child is meanwhile adapted to those precedents;
- to be prudent: being very careful to as your child put up with every new food;
- possession patience: it is important that during the meals attention is paid to your child, encouraging him and not forcing him to eat, avoiding distractions around him, speaking to him and helping him with love.

In the menu processing, it is recommended to respect some principles:

- Little salt
- Few simple sugars
- No pepper or spicy seasonings
- Fruit and vegetable always present
- Few fat of animal (to prefer the thin meat) origin

- To offer white fish e/o yields of sea 2-3 times a week
- To offer an ample range of nourishing foods
- Threshold the quantity of fruit juices
- For a child not nursed to the breast, after the 12 months, 200-400 ml / die of whole bovine non-diluted milk are recommended if others foods of animal derivation are included in the diet, 300-500 ml / die if I am not it
- To avoid honey to 1 year
- To prefer the use of seasonal and biological foods
- To prefer the simple cooking as the steam cook.

Generally weaning is begun with "it eats up only", where all the ingredients are mixed together, for then to pass to some foods to thin (beginning with vegetable, cheese, fish and so on) to reach the meal to more courses. The "it eats up only" she realizes with the vegetable broth. Vegetable broth is prepared using fresh vegetables of season. With this broth the creams of cereals (rice, corn, oats, rye, mixed cereals) are melted getting used child step by step to a great consistence, and passing from the creams to the semolina, to the bows and finally to the pastina or to the well-cooked rice.

After the preparation of the it eats up, they are added parmesan cheese, oil virgin extra of olive and finally 2 - 3 teaspoons of past vegetable, the same one used for getting the vegetable broth.

Together the meat is added: it is begun with freeze-dried and homogenized of chicken, turkey, rabbit and lamb, less allergens, for then to also insert calf and steer.

Gradually other protein sources are fitted into the diet, as fish, vegetables, cheeses, reducing the daily contribution of meat to three times a week, the correct dose for a baby that has been growing then for the year in.
For the portions, for a 7-8 month-old child it can be used 50g of past of vegetable (potatoes, carrots, zucchini and lettuce) or 200 ml of vegetable broth, with addition of 14 g (2 table spoons) of pastina or 12 g (two table spoons) of cream (rice, fines cereals, corn and tapioca), a teaspoon of oil of olive. Like protein source, it can be chosen among: 40 g of homogenized meat or fish; 25 g of ricotta of cow; 5 g of meat lyophilizate or 12 g of dry (around 1 table spoon) lentils.

Between the 9 and the 12 months they are also added as protein sources the egg, the cooked or raw ham without fat (15g) or the ricotta of cow (25 g). Between the 12 and the 24 months they increase pasta's (28 g) portions, rice and semolina (25g) for first; meat or fish fresh (30g); dry vegetables (15g); fresh cheese (25g) for second course, to always serve with mixed (100 g meal) vegetables. Between the 24 and the 36 months the portion of pasta, rice or pastina reaches 45 g, with also a slight increase of the protein (20 g of affected and 40 g of fresh fish) quota.

Focus on babies' vegan / vegetarian diet

In front of the increasing number of individuals and families that the so-called alternative alimentary regimes choose, in the different kindergartens vegetarian/vegan menu has been introduced in the different kindergartens, in base to the "lines of national address for the scholastic food service" that they foresee suitable substitutions of foods correlated to reasons ethical - religious or cultural: who refuses the foods of animal origin for ethical motives, it does it not to cause sufferings to the animals and to have an inferior environmental impact on the ecosystem.

The vegetarian diet foresees the elimination of meat and fish, but it admits the consumption of all the other animal foods as eggs, milk and cheeses; instead the vegan diet excludes all the foods of animal origin, that is it foresees a feeding 100% vegetable: accordingly to replace the animal proteins, the vegan diet offers pasta, laughed and other cereals, vegetables and soups, fruit shoal, bread, pizza breads and salty cakes, algae, vegan variety of the typical dishes, through the use of the tofu (milk of soy) in substitution to the cheese and of the seitan (wheat's gluten) to the place of the meat.

To underline it is that still heated is the debate among the experts of health and feeding respect to the veganism, or if the vegan diet is proper for his/her/their children from a nutritional point of view: in fact the babies vegans are more exposed to deficiencies of vitamin B12, folic acid (vitamin B9), zinc, iron and kick and the assimilation of the essential substances for the organism it is around the triple one in the foods of animal origin in comparison to those vegetable (matter of the bioavailability of the nourishing ones).

Chapter 3 – Play as a sensorial food experience.

How it is possible to arouse interest in child for new foods? Through the game.

As recognized in the art. 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Infancy, the play is a right of child: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity”.

With the game children express themselves, they tell, they interpret and they combine in creative way the individual and social experiences. Child that plays gets himself occasions of growth, because the same game encourages affective maturation, active and it develops partner-cognitive skills (ability of decentralization, divergent thought, reflexive ability, development of the social language.). Above all, and in more general terms, it represents for child a meaningful and deep existential experience, that entirely involves him giving comfort and the sense of his being to the world.

So, the game is game when it is finalized to himself, free.

As we have previously seen, child up to the seven years is internally a sculptor: child has need of images that arouses in him impressions. In the game, as in whatever activity or object of the man, child doesn't look for the target, the profit but what in it he lives. If you try to put of forehead to a child a doll done of rags and a beautiful plastic all defined in her features doll, you will see that child will prefer the doll of rags because to this he can give his form, on this he can elaborates his idea of doll.

This example allows to realize the function that the game should have in the life of a child, or to draw from the images the sense of the things (symbolic value of the leisure activity). He behaves like an artist: the images become in him shaping strength.

Therefore, all of that is intellectual, that doesn't allow the child to create, to make alive and felt anything through the imagination, it is injurious to the child evolution: this should make to reflect on the intrusive role of the technological games that leaves little space to the imagination and the imagination more and more, well present instead in simple games as hide-and-seek, blind fly and so on.

So, considering philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and pedagogics theories on the role of the game in the process of evolution from the infancy to the adult age, it can be ascertained as in the last years that common mentality that viewed the leisure experience only as synonym of comfort / recreation has been given up, while it is being tried to show its phenomenal wealth and its multiplicity of expressions and articulations.

The game is educational for his nature end statute: in fact, through of it human learns to know the world, to experiment the value of the rules, to be with the others, to manage his/her own emotions, to discover new runs of autonomy and to experiment for attempts and errors the convictions on the things and on the others. It’s the background where the identity of child can develop and then consolidate. Besides, the game is privileged field of observation because, for his spontaneity, it constitutes a valid context in which it is possible to observe launchings and different individual styles, as well as connected peculiarity to every child. Then, it proves to be a valued ally for the adult, parent or teacher, to inflict a more deepened knowledge of the child and to direct his more effectively educational-didactics and therapeutics action.

Now, how is possible to made leisure teaching?

Departing from the systematic observation of the single children and the daily life, those activities are individualized playful that is believed to promote the growth of cognitive, affective, social skills. Such activities are technically divided in:

Structured game (game): activity thanks to which the educator, prompts directly child and observes the experience that he is doing in the individual dimension, in social spaces and in a circumscribed context.

Free game (play): activity characterized by the free child’s choice that has a symbolic value because child lives more times both more difficult experiences for him and those more reassuring, through the game. In this type of game, the educator develops the role of "actor", every time that has involved in the game of his child.

Focusing on the game structured in preschool (0 - 6 years) age, nowadays the space is always great given to the artistic activities and manuals to feed the enthusiasm of the imagination, the curiosity, the creativeness, the communication of yourself and the world that we perceive: this happens although still artistic activities are not planned in the curricula for the first infancy and in that of the teacher training of many European countries (eg. Italy, France etc.).

Today we know that the perceptions come from the sensory input, present already in the intrauterine (then in a

precocious phase of our development) life they are the essential step to the development of the nervous system, of the emotions and of the conscience. Day after day, the impressions that we incessantly receive through the senses, from the environment and from the culture in which we are steeped, they define connections in our brain and in our memory, molding her.

So, the perceptions firstly are a personal matter.

How much the experiences and the stimuli are rich and diversified anymore, so much great it seems to be the possibility to develop a harmonious personality, able to orient with equilibrium in the complex world of the social relationships and the consumption. Besides differences and multiplicity of stimuli contribute to preserve the individual differences as collective patrimony.

The food is a sensorial experience beginning from the first months of life with the nursing, involving all five senses and for this it often introduced in educational paths that contemplate to the discovery of yourself and the world.

Here following they specifically intend some tied up activities to the food to encourage in child:

- the discovery, knowledge and use of the five senses
- the acquisition of perceptive skills
- the acquisition of the capacity to express feelings and emotions
- the creativeness development
- the perception of the scholastic environment as a family environment.

However, it is to remind that up to the 7-8 years children have a vision of the subjective, intuitive and global reality. So, they labor to separate the different sensorial area the one from the other, to face the trials in analytical way and to rationally examine the others point of view. In this phase, it is preferable therefore to make lever on the suggestions that spring from the occasions of the daily life. The family kitchen and school, the snack with friends, the visit in farm, in the garden or in the wood, the sequence of the seasons, represents solicitations to learn to distinguish the senses the one from the other and to intuitively associate them to the reality enriching it of imaginary and emotional aspects, that contribute in conclusive way to form the sensorial memory of kids defining tastes and habits.

At the end, they are described some examples of playful didactic activities:

- **The basket of treasures:** it is a game of sensorial exploration that offers the opportunity to learn to discover the relationships to child, the differences / equalities between objects and materials. They are set food in a closed box or in a non-transparent pouch, as for instance an apple, a banana, walnut-trees etc., and child touching them must guess what they are.
- **Manipulation:** we propose to our children make the dough. This practical test allows to observe how the consistence of dough change from a phase to the other of the workmanship. You can continue to prepare egg-pasta, bread, tortillas, short pastry. If the addition of butter or oil is planned, you try to verify what it happens with and without the addition of the fat. Does something change? What? It is important to come up to the realization of the ended product and to share the taste.
- **Look and not touch:** you locate children in front of three or more foods and you invite them to observe their aspect, that is the form, the tones of color etc. Then you propose them to realize a paper of identity of the observed foods, drawing them in a sheet and trying together to describe the most interesting characteristics.
- **The Sonorous Mime:** you organize a competition of sounds and noises food imitation. Who is the best to imitate the noise of a French fry? And the noise of a coffeepot while coffee is climbing?
- **The blindman's bluff of the scents:** you put a small quantity of the every select fragrant ingredients in two of the boxes. Leave you one of it open and you cover the second with a square of cloth, opportunely fixed with the help of an elastic or of the string. You mark the closed box with one it initials of recognition written on a label. Before beginning, you explain well whether to perceive to the best the smells needs to inhale more times to brief intervals. You introduce, one to the time, every of the aromatic grass, inviting each to observe it and to sniff it. Which grass does it have the prickliest odor? Which is it more delicate? To this point you proceed to the test of recognition to the blind one.
- **Olfactory walk:** you develop a walk in the country or in the city with children making him to pay attention to smells that feel, asking him what according to them is the source of the scent and to describe it to you.
- **Myths and Legends:** tell the children myths or legends where food is the element that from place to the narrative interlacement, as for instance the myth of the gold apple or the myth of the knob of the Esperidis, to arouse curiosity in children and to at the same time feed their imagination.
- **Transfers:** you prepare containers of different dimensions on a table and different consistence's food, liquids and

solid, granular and floury etc., and you get child to decant from a container to the other.

- **Food decorations:** often on the occasion of the national festivities to spruce up the place, decorations are realized using dried fruit or vegetables, as for instance making to insert some nails of carnation in the citrus fruit as oranges or mandarins, to get some happy and aromatic decorations to support to the center of the table or on an inside windowsill.
- **Garden preparing:** If you had an available external space, you turn it to garden and during the whole scholastic year, you accompany children in the different seasonal jobs as the preparation of the ground, the seeding, the elimination of the weeds, the harvest. And you do all this accompanying the practical activity with singing nursery rhyme in group and letting pay attention all the living beings that our garden lives.
- **Painting:** to develop above all the sight and the sense of smell, paintings can be realized on cardboards, sheets, plotted using colors realized with extracts of vegetable e/o it yields. You apparently submit to the attention of children boxes which contains tempers, but of which, already by the smell and by the unusual consistence, their vegetable nature is recognizable.
- **Collage:** using the peels of the fruit or the vegetable, children can glue them on a sheet / cardboard and then paint them, so creating some original collage.
- **Music with cookware:** to develop the sense of the hearing and the rhythm, you offer the dish to the children as orchestrate musical and you accompany their metallic sound with onomatopoeic compositions about food.
- **Water test:** children will experiment the various ways to transform the water with the addition of salt, sugar, juice of lemon, of orange, soluble tisane and with their relative taste.
- **Objects Realization with Foods:** you propose to child spin of cloth or string together with varied shapes of pasta and candies: then child can create fanciful necklaces or bracelets.
- **Tasting of dishes:** you make to taste small portions of the whole disposition foods. You invite to lend ear to the sonorities, generally different, that are freed during the first bites and subsequently, when the saliva has softened the food inducing a change of its consistence. You bandage the children. As turn, one of them the bandage will remove from him. Deliver him one of the foods previously tasted and ask to bite him/it to him and to chew him/it, possibly to open mouth so that to favor the diffusion of the sounds. In the meantime, the others, staying bandaged, they will try to guess the mysterious food.

Unit 3 – Seasonal Festivals in Kindergartens

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. Valorize Season Festivals as a development way for children in early childhood.
2. Use Season Festivals to enhance nutritional education among childrens.
3. Valorize Season Festivals as an integration way for children coming from cultural heritages other than ours, as in case of refugees and migrants.

Introduction into the topic:

Season Festivals are a meaningful way to increase child awareness about how they are a part of a living community marked by specific cultural heritage, at the same time able to integrate different cultures based on shared human values.

Chapter 1 – Season Festivals enriching children's identity and social life

Every human community is marked by a mix of natural environment, cultural values and human social organization. Schools and kindergartens are all established in a specific location, which provides them with a natural environment, a cultural framework, a social context, where teachers and children live in together.

Currently, festivals are only occasions for people to be on vacation: it is a leisure moment, allowing people to meet friends, spend time together, travel, enjoy food and different kinds of entertainment. The original, deeper meaning of festivals has been lost in modern societies. But, it was completely different in the so called ***traditional civilizations***.

Thomas Stearns Eliot, the great writer and poet of XX century, wrote that each of the great world cultures (Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Byzantine, Medieval, Islamic, Chinese, etc.) is the social and artistic expression of a ***religious worldview*** which is handed down through a specific cultural tradition.

So, we can define **tradition** as the social deployment by which the original religious worldview comes to permeate and imprint its stamp on the collective life of a civilization. Then, we could speak of “traditional civilizations” just when a society is entirely permeated by a religion, as in the case of the above cited great historical civilizations.

Consequently, the most relevant annual festivals all over the world every time stem from different traditions which historically characterize different societies. It is worth noting that traditional civilizations saw any annual festival as a step of an overall cosmic rhythm, influencing both nature and human lives as a whole. Festivals are a way for human beings to be actively involved by and be part of the life of visible and invisible spiritual forces operating all over the universe.

As every community has special times in his life, connected to the ancient cultural traditions and religion faiths, festivals become particularly relevant for children, allowing them to feel themselves as a part of an organic human society, together with their parents, friends and educators.

By this way, festivals contribute to design a **common identity** of a human community, through shared behaviors, habits and mindsets which children get in a more easy, direct and emotional way, in the same age when they are directly learning their mother tongue.

At the same time, festivals can mark and highlight the year course, throughout seasons, each one with its rhythms and its specific moods: following them, children become more and more aware of nature, empowering their inner individuality thanks to the idea that a wise order manages the world life as a whole, increasing their sense of security and their own positivity.

This is probably the best way to let children appreciate all the gifts nature provides to the human being, from flowers to earth products: this is an approach able to give children a well-balanced relationship with food, while learning to love and respect nature.

The idea that, like animals, trees and flowers, food is a gift nature can provide every year thanks to its wise season paces: but we can eat food only thanks to the human work employed in growing, picking and preparing them. This is maybe the best way by which children start feeling **gratitude** towards nature and human beings, all together operating in harmony around them.

Maybe, it is a first stimulus to the idea that **a society** is around him, supporting him and providing him with what he needs in every season, all along the year.

Season Nature Tables are a first practical suggestion to create the right feelings and to make children familiar with nature and seasons. Season Nature Table could be even a cupboard or a chest of drawers, arranged in the kindergarten, in the classroom or at home. It could be either very simple or very elaborate, as you could choose the solution best fitting the time you have and the natural environment you have access to.

In any case, two are the most relevant points, when you decide to prepare it:

- its **connection** with the current season and the upcoming festival or holiday;
- children **participation** both to its preparation and to take care of it.

These are the main aspects you must take into consideration to project and set it up:

1. The **Color Background.** You must pay attention to the colors related to the season, to create an appropriate atmosphere. So, blue could be the best choice for Christmas, fresh green to spring and Easter, yellow for summer, a radiant and warm red for the autumn.
2. The **Nature's Gifts**: you could use flowers, plants, fruits and stones belonging to the season time you are in, and children could be involved in searching for and disposing them in the Nature Table. Depending on the season, as a sample, you could use flowers like spring flowers, roses, sunflowers, autumn colorful leaves, etc.
3. **Pictures** on the Nature Table: in festive times, you could position a relevant picture or an art postcard there. You should have to choose images based on children's own impressions instead of adult perceptions and ideas. When Nature Table is prepared at home, you must take into consideration the needs of older siblings, if there are any, as well.

A little daily care for the Nature Table you have built is a good way to enhance children's attention and love for nature, increasing their awareness of it. That does not request too much time, but it might let children to be absorbed by these preparations and care small activities they usually love, able to increase their attitudes through attention and imitation.

Chapter 2 – Season Festivals activities and foods

In this chapter it will be taken into consideration what teachers and kindergartens, communities and families, all together, could manage to involve children in the most relevant season festivals belonging to the European cultural heritage.

European traditions are the result of a long history merging religious contributes together along many centuries: consequently, for instance, Christian festivals took the place both of Celtic rites in West Europe and of ancient Roman *ludi* in Southern Europe. In addition, when Christianity divided into Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant (a long process lasting quite seven centuries), some festivals changed while other ones have been added.

Due to so rich and diversified cultural traditions, it is really difficult to indicate a common approach about how to manage Season Festivals in kindergarten, as quite each region in each Country has its own specific habits to do that. Each educator in kindergarten could search for local specific traditions and habits about festivals, following a creative approach able to enrich children's experiences.

So far, we will give only some short information about Festivals, following the course of the year, to stimulate educators' and teachers' imagination.

Advent and Christmas

To create a solemn and quiet atmosphere approaching Christmas festive season, children could be involved in very simple and humble works, like to help you in cleaning the room where you will place the Christmas tree and the Nativity scene. After that, you could either read some short poetries, or listen to some short music pieces.

At the same time, children could work with paper and wood to create decorations inspired to the Christmas themes, they could paint them, maybe adding candies and sweets.

So, you have the possibility to develop a huge number of activities:

- Clear the room
- Create and paint decorations, better if made of paper, wood and wax
- Search for moss and pick it up
- Decorate walls and windows in the kindergarten
- Create Advent Calendar
- Prepare Advent wreaths
- Set up Christmas tree
- Prepare Nativity scene

Epiphany

Epiphany ends the Christmas Feast days, so it is quite a climax for children, especially if you will be able to motivate families to spent these twelve days between Christmas and the Epiphany with their children in a quiet and calm atmosphere at home – even if it is not so easy nowadays, as we said, because these days are normally employed to go away for travel on holidays.

The idea that Three Wise Men, represented as kings, are coming could stimulate children imaginations: Melchior, the red king offering gold (wisdom); Balthasar, the blue king offering frankincense (piety); Caspar, the green king, offering myrrh (vitality) – could give raise to many possible activities for our children.

- Update the Nativity scene with coming kings
- Create little plays with children, letting them act as the three kings (you could do it all along January)
- Read to the kids some short poetry and listen to music pieces

- Ask children for help to take down the Christmas tree and all the other decorations.

Carnival

The need to change our own role in our everyday life almost once every year is luckily and normally satisfied by children while playing. So, Carnival is a season festival which immediately could involve children.

In this case as well, you could try to do something useful to improve the child imaginative impulse, from one side giving them as a theme for their costumes gnomes, fairy tales, castles with queens and kings: but, on the other side, you could propose to your children to impersonate crafts and professions, so that they could establish both a connection with adult life, imagine ancient activities typical of your territory, and feel themselves got older.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- create several separate areas in your classroom, if possible divided by screens
- inside there, create different workplaces for different trades, like farmers, shoemakers, carpenters, painters, fishermen, bakers, etc.
- each trade could prepare its own tools and things, colors and materials
- children will prepare costumes related to festival
- each different workplace could be decorating just before Carnival, in the right way to identify the different trades
- on Carnival, children will arrive at kindergarten already dressed up and could "work" at his own workplace or could go and work anywhere, irrespective of their costumes
- you could add games and dances, involving families and friends.

In general, during **Winter time**, you could also refer to the traditional basic elements of nature to create simple activities:

- Earth and fire: to prepare little sheaves of dry sprigs to burn in the fireplace, to cut bark, to make earth, sand, mineral available for free games.
- Air: to play with the snow to hang light wool bows. To cook biscuits and to taste its warm aroma.
- Water: experiences with snow and ice, to make her/it loosen, to pick up in buckets.

Easter

It is not necessary here to highlight the relevance of Easter for Europe cultural heritage, neither is it necessary to explain the reasons by which Easter festival is strictly connected to the Spring and how much is it meaningful for children to have an inner perception of the mutual correspondence of "death and resurrection" in human being's life just like in the nature surrounding them.

As for Christmas, there are really hundreds of different ways to approach Easter in our European traditions, here we like better to give some ideas about activities you probably already do, maybe with some bigger or smaller differences: e.g., eggs, hares and lambs are common images we all share about Easter, so you will probably already familiar with the activities we are just going to suggest.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- preparing earth to sow seeds in your outdoor space or in some small vases in a room well illuminated could be an exciting experience for your children in the kindergarten.
- to follow as they sprout from the earth and they quickly grow in this time, it will surely be occasioned to involve children in the spring atmosphere.
- Easter hare
- Easter lambs
- preparing and painting Easter Eggs
- searching for hares and eggs
- creating Easter candles
- suggesting ideas for home Easter preparation

In general, during **Spring time**, you could also refer to the traditional basic elements of nature to create simple activities:

- Earth: to hoe, to clean the garden, games with the sand.
- Air: to hang aromatic grass to desiccate, to create and to hang wool birds, to blow the blowpipes of tarassaco to

play to ball.
- Fire: experience of the sun and the heat.
- Water: to walk under the rain to squirt in the puddles! Providing changes of clothes and explaining it to the children parents...

St. John’s and Summer Festival

Summer solstice and St. John's Festival combines with the beginning of summer, so that children could sense the turning point of the year, and normally it coincides with the end of schools and with the approach of summer break. They maybe fill themselves freer to being outdoors in the light, air and warmth, to play with water and sun.

Please, remember that all these intense outdoor activities ask for specific precautions, like wearing sunhat and sun cream, and to ensure that in any possible little summer trip there are places under trees, bushes or parasols.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- Observing busy life of insects and drawing them immediately afterwards.
- Searching for flowers, picking and collecting them (they could bring them at home at the end of the day).
- Dancing and singing outdoors, choosing pieces appropriate to summertime.
- St. John's fire. It is an exciting experience for children, when they see flames leaping up and sparks flying. It is however mandatory that teachers give children an example how to keep the necessary respect for fire: so children must stay at a convenient distance and pass pieces of wood or old brushes to be burn to the teacher, almost until flames gradually diminish.
- Create butterflies from colored wool.
- Create flower crowns.
- Make colored strings of bunting to create different game areas in the garden.
- Organize games with gifts in the garden, placing them in the area you had delimited just before: fishing-like game, obstacle courses, ship-pulling game, dancing circles, etc.

In general, during **Summer time**, you could also refer to the traditional basic elements of nature to create simple activities:

- Earth: water is added to earth and sand, to reap the wheat to beat the ears.
- Air: to make butterflies of paper valine, garlands.
- Fire: collect, dry and burn weeds.
- Water: mix water and earth in molds, inspired by foods.

Michaelmas

This is a festival which is getting increasing relevance in kindergartens, especially in Central and North Europe, while in South Europe it is quite forgotten, even if in Middle Ages Saint Michael, the Archangel has been one of the most remarkable figures of the medieval Catholic tradition.

We consider his festival (on 29th September) a very nice opportunity for children to start kindergarten new year with a festival and, at the same time, to enter Autumn season in the most proper way.

Michaelmas could be celebrated together with Harvest festival, especially if your kindergarten is close to agricultural areas: it depends on the connection you could have with farming in your location.

These festivals are particularly relevant to suggest to the children the right relationship with food, as they could experience how nature provides human beings with fruits just at the end of summer, giving men the possibility to survive and to get ready to the coming winter.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- As Saint Michael, the Archangel is the protagonist, you could put a traditional image of him in the kindergarten, inviting children to imitate it in their drawings.
- Children could prepare their little swords and red mantles, in the simplest way (two little sticks tied together with a piece of string are enough, and they are absolutely not dangerous!): they can add red mantles and golden helmets as well, to impersonate Saint Michael.

- Apples are the most important food of this festival, so that you could prepare them with children, choosing the most colored (especially in red) and shiny, putting them in little decorated baskets.
- Children could be gathered around a long table all together, and teachers will distribute red apples to each one.
- You could find a lot of nice poetries and songs about Saint Michael, focusing on the possibility for every human being to develop his best inner forces for the benefit of all the human beings.

Lantern time (Halloween, Martinmas)

The end of October and the first Days of November are another meaningful festival time in the European (and North American) traditions: on October 31, Halloween, stemming from the celebration of the ancient Celtic new year (Samhain), is getting increasing relevance as a “commercial” festivals, especially spreading out among youngest generations all over Europe. It is overcoming the more traditional All Saints' Day Christian Church celebration on November 1, even if this festival upholds its relevance in catholic Southern European Countries. On November 11, Martinmas, the Feast of Saint Martin, has a similar meaning, as all these festivals mark a transition point during the year: a sensitive point, where life and death are very close, both in nature and in human souls.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- carving pumpkin lanterns
- prepare costumes
- adults like “angel guides”

In general, during **Autumn time**, you could also refer to the traditional basic elements of nature to create simple activities:

- Earth: to make provision of fruit to prepare jams, to pick up vegetables, chestnuts, filberts; observe either where ants go or of how many forms and how many different colors leaves have.
- Air: to desiccate tomatoes, to make garlands of leaves, to make to fly kites, walks in the fog.
- Fire: experience the decrease of light and heat.
- Water: learn children how to protect from rain, wind and snow, as a game, suggesting to them how to create mantels, caps and overshoes.

An active relationship among Festivals and sustainable Food could be easily established as season festivals are clearly connected to the rhythms of nature. So, you could help children to pay attention to this connection, both letting them collect seasonal fruits and vegetables, for instance, and involving them in the food preparation.

To do that at best, you could find some specific recipe, getting it out of local cultural food heritage. To give you a sample for that, you could find here a traditional recipe from ***[put here a link to a .pdf file containing a season festival recipe from your Country/Region]***

Your approach will ensure:

- to involve children when choosing food raw material;
- to accustom children to handle food and observe its different characteristics;
- allow them to do basic operations during food preparation and cooking;
- invite them to take part in food and table preparation and presentation;
- ask them to collaborate in cleaning the table and tidy up rooms after meals.

Chapter 3 – Food in Season Festivals as an Integration Way

This chapter is devoted to individuating season festivals stemming from other cultures and traditions which could be employed as useful opportunities to ease the participation of young children from different native cultural heritages in the same kindergarten.

In this chapter, it will be described some samples about religious traditions from the most important world regions. Thus,

kindergartens could involve children families and communities of different cultures into common activities, giving people the opportunity to meet and to develop a mutual awareness about their traditions, at the same time promoting the exchange of opinions and experiences about children education.

Before starting this part, a good way to create the right mood for you as a teacher or educator is to have a look at this poem by Derek Walcott (1930-2017):

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was yourself.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

We will now have resort to some examples about how different religious cultural heritages connect season festivals with food.

Operators in kindergarten should carefully analyze the composition of their classes to get inspired from the different customs and traditions followed by the families of their children: not only to better interact with children but even to learn more about what they eat and how their typical dishes are prepared.

Basically, you could involve children in the preparation of the simplest foods for Christian traditional festivals, like paint eggs for Easter time, sweets for Carnival or Christmas ***[you could put here a link to some more specific recipes in your region/Country]***. But, if you will able to get friendly with children's families, you could even propose to share their traditional food preparation for Festival with all your children in the kindergarten.

Here you could find some ideas about possible starting points with different religious and food traditions of your children.

Chinese Traditions

A sample of ancient Asian Season Festivals is the Mid-Autumn Festival, falling on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, near the autumnal equinox (on a day between September 8 and October 7 in the Gregorian calendar). This is traditionally China's and Vietnam's harvest time, but this festival is present even in several other Asian Countries, like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Every family makes various delicious food and good wines to celebrate the festival. Over the centuries, the rich and colorful Mid-Autumn Festival diet customs were formed. The most popular Mid-Autumn Festival foods include mooncakes, pumpkin, river snails, taro, wine fermented with osmanthus flowers, duck and hairy crabs.

Mooncake is the most popular and important food eaten during the Mid-Autumn Festival: they are traditionally Chinese pastries which consist of a thin tender skin enveloping a sweet, dense filling. Mooncakes were used to be made at home, but very few people make them at home nowadays.

The traditional fillings include lotus seed paste, sweet bean paste and egg yolk: however, mooncakes with modern flavors such as ice cream mooncakes and chocolate mooncakes have appeared in recent years. Many other fillings are possible, like kernel and roast pork, seafood, red bean paste, fruit and vegetable, cream cheese.

Induism

This religion offers a quite different approach to food during festivals. Living the command of the *ahimsa* (it means “not to injure” and “compassion”), Induist believers undergo to an alimentary diet previewing a limited range of products.

Induists motivate their own choice of fasting in occasion of festivals because they consider this sacred time a privileged moment to dedicate exclusively to the divine and not to the material dimension of life: consequently, he will be able to feed itself only after the end of the festivity.

This alimentary norm, however, does not prevent him to manifest his joy also when eating. For example, the festivity in honor of **Ganesha** – son of Shiva, depositary of wisdom and science, usually represented with an elephant head – falls on the month of Bhadra (August-September) and it is the occasion to introduce typical dishes, serving mainly dishes based on milk and rice.

Islam

Just to give a sample about Islamic traditions, we could say something about the **Id-al-Fitr**, the celebration at the end of the practiced fasting period during the month of **Ramadan**: a tradition that marks in depth the Islamic food diet. It is worth underlining that a rich offer of foods exists in that month, intended to be consumed only in the allowed timeframes, or rather from after the sunset up to the dawn of the following day.

For instance, **Harira**, or Ramadan Soup, traditionally is a recipe considered as a breakfast, that is an interruption of the fasting: it has the characteristic of a unique dish, normally based on Mediterranean vegetables, able to reinvigorate the believers approaching to the table after many times of total abstinence.

Harira is usually served together with **Shebbakia**, a dessert composed by shreds of fried pasta with sesame seeds, toasted and then soaked in warm honey. Many other desserts are available in the Islamic tradition in order to celebrate their religious faith, between which: **Khushaf** (bagels), **Atayef** (a kind of white flour pancake and semolina, filled with stuffed cheese and syrup) and **Ataif**, really delicious fritters disposed to pyramid, decorated with syrup and whipped cream.

We can already imagine it is not too difficult to involve children in such a kind of food preparation!

Hebraism

It could be interesting to present a classic Jewish food tradition for **Pesach** (Easter), falling on the 14th of the Nisan month. In this solemn day, on every table, it is mandatory a tray containing: a lamb leg; a hard-boiled egg, singed on the flame and dipped in salt water; a compound of walnuts, shredded apples and honey; a celery stem, a small branch of parsley, some other vegetables, all dipped in salt water; bitter roots and herbs.

Shabbat Bescialach, a festive day that generally falls in January or February, is a further proof of the tie existing between religious festivities and culinary traditions. In this case, the Escape of Jewish people from Egypt and the vain attempt of the Pharao's army to force them to return is remembered in a dish, which obviously varies from region to region, the **Frisensàl**, “wheel of the Pharao”, made up by pasta layers with roasted meat, sausage of goose, raisin, pine nuts and noodles.

If you decided to try it, a last but very relevant and sensitive issue is about how to manage the participation of your children coming from different religious traditions to inter-cultural activities based on the preparation of traditional festival dishes.

The first step is to inform families about your idea and to ask them for their opinion, just to evaluate if they are willing to participate to such a kind of activity. It is possible that you must take time to meet parents, to explain your idea and to discuss it together: so, you must not be in a hurry for that, as this initiative must absolutely not sound like an obligation and its educative aims have to be clearly shared with and accepted by all the participant families, to get the requested pleasant atmosphere.

If you attain this result, you then must identify the right times during the year, to exactly decide which activities are easier

to be developed, to choose which recipes to adopt, to design the program of the festival day.

To do that, you will be obliged to carefully study many details, to search for further information, to talk with children and with their relatives. Our suggestion is to pay specific attention to:

- how to set up premises and ornaments in your kindergarten;
- how to welcome and have cordial greetings;
- how to prepare food together (you must take into consideration legal norms concerning the management of kindergarten's kitchen);
- when and how to serve dishes;
- when and how to meat it;
- to have time to some games children could play together, before or after eating.