Finger Foods for Your Famished Toddler

Got a baby starting on **finger foods**? Good news: You don't have to go broke over buying toddler Puffs®.

Babies and young toddlers don't have a lot of teeth. In fact, a full set of teeth does not come in until around two years of age. In the meantime, to help your new eater avoid choking, cut up food into tiny pieces. Now, sawing at food with a knife is not easy. Meet your new friend: the kitchen shears! For

perfect finger foods, use shears to snip food into ideal toddler bite-sized pieces.

Cut table food into bite-sized pieces smaller than a grape, or approximately Cheerio® sized, and place on a clean surface, such as the high chair tray. Plates are not necessary and often end up on the floor. Go ahead and give your toddler a fork but don't expect him to use it- most toddlers are eighteen months before they can master a fork or spoon. Always be present when he is eating in case he starts to choke. Toddlers tend to put a handful of food in their mouth at one time, so teach your child to eat pieces of food "one at a time."

Forget the toddler-food aisle, just grab your shears and cut away. Below are finger foods to help you get started. These foods are appropriate for babies who are able to finger-feed, starting anywhere between 7 to 9 months of age, even without teeth:

canned mandarin oranges
fruit cocktail (in juice, not syrup)
bananas
diced peaches
diced pears
diced mellon
diced berries, cut blueberries in half at first
diced cooked apples
raw tomato pieces
avocado
beef stew
liverwurst cut into small pieces
diced cooked meat
Cooked, diced chicken
Diced cooked fish (careful to discard any bones) click here for U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommendations
tofu (extra-firm is easiest to cut)
black beans, cooked or canned (rinse off the salty sauce they come in)

egg salad or hard-boiled egg pieces
bits of scrambled egg
soft cheese- such as American or Munster
vegetable soup (just scoop out the veggies and give them to your child. You can put the broth into a cup for him to drink)
diced cooked veggies such as peas, carrots, corn, broccoli, zucchini, etc.
diced cucumbers
cooked diced squash
cooked diced potatoes, sweet potatoes, or yams
rice (rinse the rice grains in cold water prior to cooking to wash away trace amounts of arsenic that can be found in rice, couscous, quinoa
noodles
pierogies
mini ravioli
macaroni and cheese
waffles
pancakes
french toast
crackers with cream cheese
toast with jelly
toast with nut-butter (soy, peanut, almond, sunflower, etc.)
stuffing
Cheerios®

If your baby still likes his cereal, you can continue to offer it (We both still like oatmeal- it's not just for babies!). Just be sure to vary the types of grain that you offer your baby.

Bon appetite!

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