

The Children's Journal

From the Editor

We should look for someone to eat and drink with before looking for something to eat and drink. - Epicurus

Are you an Iron Chef, Martha Stewart wannabe, or drive-through junkie? Your CCC pals are all of the above and then some. This issue takes you on a journey through Foodieville, pontificating on everything from lunch-packing and allergies to junk food. Whether you're tantalized by Twinkies or prefer probiotics, one thing's certain: you appreciate the value of food in teaching life lessons and creating bonds, with extended family and with your children.

Personally, I've taken my knocks going toe-to-toe with the culinarily clever Ina Garten, otherwise known as Barefoot Contessa. After my first son's birth, I was determined to prove I could bring home the bacon and fry it up but was left cursing her name after a whole day preparing her Chicken Stew With Biscuits – 549 steps including roasting a chicken and biscuits from scratch. However, last year, with two young kids, we did discover one thing in her cookbook simple enough for us to cook together. Roast Chicken with Garlic and Lemon, which the boys have since dubbed "Chicken with Garlic and Lemon Stuffed Up the [You-Know-What]." Together we revisit this recipe, the punch line still eliciting giggles from all the cooks. And it's quite clear that the Barefoot Contessa has never, ever been barefoot and pregnant.

So eat, drink and be merry these holidays as we get ready to embark on another year at the Concord Children's Center (I'd write more, but I just stepped on yet another Happy Meal toy – this one sings "I Like to Move It Move It" when you whack it on the coffee table). Cheers!

Lisa Liberty Becker, Main Street Parent, Children's Journal Editor, Board Member

Feasting on Community

HEWON HWANG, RIPLEY PARENT, BOARD CHAIR

One of the things my family loves about the CCC is the warm and welcoming community it fosters. There is a sense of being part of a wonderful community of families and teachers. The fact that our outstanding staff recognizes the socialization value of food is evident in the classroom, where even half days include a social lunch, and the numerous family-oriented social gatherings throughout the year.

At the start of the new school year, we eagerly look forward to the CCC picnic. There is something lovely and relaxing about hanging out by the playground at Ripley, sharing a picnic dinner and catching up with old friends, and making new ones while the kids frolic. Next is the Thanksgiving week "friendship feast." It is truly a feast with the turkey soup, various breads, vegetables, and fruits that the kids help prepare. The kids kick off the event singing "All I Really Need," making the event literally a song in my heart, food in my belly, and the love of my family.

There are many other social events, but the next that really stands out for me is the CCC Annual Auction. It is the Children's Center's biggest fundraiser, and great fun. You can literally have yourself a 12-course meal with your favorite drinks while browsing, bidding, and chatting. The decorations are Broadway-worthy and set the stage for the evening. It is phenomenal how many in our community step up with their creativity, energy, and goodwill to make this event a success. The auction team is just getting started and I hope everyone will find a way to get involved in and connected to this wonderful event.

The CCC Board Development Committee organizes other events throughout the year that build community and act as fundraisers. These fundraisers are one of the important ways of supporting the excellent care and education at CCC. Most recently, we are thankful for the



generous donation from the Concord Bookshop at the November fundraiser. We had many delicious baked goods donated by CCC families. Many shoppers stopped by our table to buy the baked goods and were delighted to find that they were complimentary! Many thanks to the families and friends who participated by purchasing books, bringing baked goods, and helping at the bookshop.

Lastly, our Annual Appeal is underway, providing an opportunity to donate before the end of the calendar year. As you go through your favorite nonprofits, please remember to include the Children's Center. I hope you find time this busy season to relax and connect with family and friends over something good to eat. Happy Holidays!

Growing Curiosity

PAT NELSON, M.ED., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CCC

Feeding our offspring is a basic expression of love – whether you are out stalking a gazelle to bring home to the cubs, or carefully assembling a plate so as not to draw too much attention to the fact that there are vegetables concealed within. Every parent takes the feeding of their children as serious business. One of the most freeing things I learned as a parent was that there was research indicating that if left on their own, with access to a wide selection of foods, most children would, over the course of a week, make good choices and consume the protein, carbohydrates and vitamins needed to develop a healthy body. As children practice making good choices, they are developing what we call self-regulation and executive function – essential building blocks for growth.

Believing that children, left to their own devices, will make good choices – and with guidance prosper – is at the core of our CCC teaching philosophy. When we talk about curriculum you will hear us use terms like “emergent” and “follow the child.” As in the food discussion, our teachers give children access to a wide variety of experiences and guide them through the process of learning about whatever ignites their curiosity. The story of the Star Room’s venture into the world of slugs is a case in point:

A month ago Taylor walked into the classroom with a large slimy slug his mother had found. The children and his teachers gathered to take a careful look at this great find! Within a day, the slug was named Geoff and the class did computer research to find out what kind of family Geoff came from and his diet. The next day children arrived with root vegetables and fruit for Geoff.

The class observed that Geoff prefers strawberries to leafy greens. Within days of Geoff's arrival, children discovered tiny white specks of “something” all over the leaves in Geoff's home. They also observed that Geoff left a trail of slime wherever he crawled. This observation became useful this week when the children found Geoff missing! Children, parents and teachers scoured the room until Zachary shouted that he found some slime. Diane and the children raced over to follow the path of slime and found Geoff the slug hiding on a shelf. The children remodeled Geoff's home so he wouldn't leave again.

*- Ann Doherty, Main Street Program Director,
CCC Newsletter, Nov. 2008*

Teaching young children is about helping them learn how to learn, how to ask questions and dig deeper into something that interests them. It is about creating the desire to learn and the ability to participate in the learning process. We are looking for what interests children and then teaching them how to explore these interests. The skills they gain through this exploration will enable them to learn throughout their lives.

There is a distinction between direct instruction and this “emergent” approach. Young children should not be force-fed knowledge before they are ready. A 2007 Harvard University report, “The Science of Early Childhood Development,” explores how the brain develops in the young child and reminds us of the importance of not placing a “disproportionate emphasis on didactic approaches.” The report stresses that building sturdy brain architecture is dependent upon providing young children with developmentally appropriate learning experiences, following their interests and valuing their choices.

Whether helping children pursue a curiosity about slugs or allowing them to put ice cream before dinner (occasionally) we are contributing to the development of healthy, self-regulating, inquisitive people.

A Word About the Annual Appeal

Concord Children's Center is an exceptional place for children. Fundraising plays an important role in assuring that we continue to hire and retain the best teachers, provide ongoing professional development and provide an experience for our families that will help their parental on-the-job training. This month you will receive an Annual Appeal letter and pledge card. I urge you to reflect on your experience at Concord Children's Center and consider a gift. If you would like more information about why we fundraise, I would be happy to talk with you:

978-369-3747 or executive@concordchildrenscenter.org.

All Around the Kitchen: Teaching Our Kids How to Cook

LINDA SKOLNIK, MAIN STREET PARENT

"I'm going to crack the eggs." "She already had a turn stirring." "He added the oil and I didn't get to add anything." Bickering is common when it comes to cooking in our home. Despite the grating back and forth game, sibling rivalry at its best, my son and daughter truly enjoy their time in the kitchen. Jonah and Zara not only like it for their edible creations, but also because they know they are learning new skills.

Teaching your kids to cook is an important life lesson. If young children can be taught reading and math, they can be taught cooking basics. Sure, your final product is one of life's essentials, like dinner or traditional holiday dishes, but it is what went into that preparation. Kids who cook use important skills. Some of these skills are very concrete, like reading to follow recipe directions, understanding fractions when measuring or knowing how to double a recipe. Then there are skills that are not as tangible, like sharing (We sure could use more of that!) and thinking

independently. Feeling comfortable in the kitchen, and being fluent in all aspects of cooking, helps prepare you eventually for life on your own.

My love of cooking, and my love of teaching kids to cook, began in the mid-1970's. I spent many a Wednesday afternoon in a Wellesley Community Education cooking class for 9-12-year-olds. My cooking teacher was our family friend and cooking expert, Judy Kostin. She guided us through recipes while giving us a strong background. Without her, I wouldn't know about separating eggs, measuring basics, oven handling, or cooking techniques such as folding, whipping dicing, pitting and more. We even gained notoriety when Better Homes and Gardens featured our kids' cooking class in its May 1978 edition! I still remember the excitement of being interviewed and photographed for the magazine. My recipe books from her class remain in my cookbook



collection. My family couldn't thrive without some of Judy Kostin's favorites: meatza pie, oven pancake, cranberry salad mold and chocolate marshmallow pie.

While my children only have their mom as a cooking instructor, I hope I am passing on the skills I learned in cooking school. Jonah and Zara know they love cooking. They probably do not know they are receiving one of the best gifts parents can give children – culinary creativity and independence.

Haikus

SUZIE KORNBLUM, MAIN STREET PARENT AND BOARD MEMBER, AND SONS DAVIS AND ALEX (RESPECTIVELY)

Organic foods are
what moms are supposed to buy
At what cost, Whole Foods?

My favorite food
is not what mom wants me to eat
Who likes sweets? I do!

Pizza is yummy
Tomato sauce and cheese, with
meat, yes - onions, no!

Junk Food Manifesto

JONATHAN CAMPBELL, ALUMNA PARENT, FORMER CHILDREN'S JOURNAL CO-EDITOR

Now that the Board has finally approved my parole and I am no longer an agent of the CCC, I feel a new freedom to speak out. Unchained by any notion of propriety and decorum, unfettered by the feeling that I might somehow be representing the institution, I write to you concerning an issue close to my heart. I confess that for years I have lived a lie, concealed from my peers a dark and double life. If the truth be known, I am an ardent supporter of junk food rights and I can no longer live without shouting my conviction from the rooftops. So with apologies to my tea-totaling and Brussels sprouts brethren (what was your name again?), I offer a most humble manifesto of the way things ought to be. And no, my family does not yet know.

Article 1

If it Feels Good, Eat it

Start eating junk food when you are feeling great. As everyone knows, junk food is filled with preservatives. Therefore, if you eat junk food when you are feeling good, it preserves your good health. Eating it when you are healthy also gives you that feeling of invincibility, which helps establish a craving for later on down the road when you think you know better.

Article 2

Brain Food

What do you suppose all those grad students eat to get their Big Ideas? Ramen noodles, that's what. And when the grant checks roll in, they splurge on beef jerky. So if you want to be smart like them, eat like them. It will help you think good and talk pretty. Thinking outside the box sometimes requires you to start eating the box as well.

Article 3

Remember the Past

When you think back to your own childhood, were you more excited about the first time you tried Pop Rocks or tofu? Lets face it – memories are made about the times the rules got broken, not about the walking the line.

Article 4

Listen to Your Inner Child

Have you ever tried to give away celery or organic bananas at Halloween? I have. You do not get near the reaction than if you give away a 1-pound bag of Skittles. If you can't listen to your own inner child, at least pay attention to the child on your doorstep every October 31st.

Article 5

Don't Believe the Hype

The supposed 'sugar crash' only happens when you STOP eating highly-sugared food products. A continuous ingestion of sugar can avoid this unwelcome effect. In dire circumstances, say if you find yourself at a vegan wedding reception, chewing on the plastic fork will release enough plastics into your system to fool your body into thinking it is eating actual junk food. Alternatively, eat the wrapper of any fruit or vegetable item. Remember to seek actual junk food as soon as possible to restore your body's natural level of petrochemicals.

Article 6

You Can Turn Back Time

Recently, an image of a reportedly 12-year-old MacDonald's hamburger has been circulating the Internet. If you've seen it, you know the burger has not aged a day! With proper (mal) nutrition you too can achieve such affects. Who would not like to turn back the clock and look 12 years younger? (That's enough out of you middle-schoolers: go read something else in your parents' mail pile.) The fountain of youth is actually a chocolate fountain discarded from the aforementioned vegan wedding.

Article 7

Go Ask Your Kids

We often credit our younger ones with great insight into the emotional and spiritual ways of the world. Let us extend to them the same courtesy when it comes to diet. You can't experience the transcendental joy of watching your buddy have grape soda pour out his nose unless you first drink the soda.

Simple Rules, Safe Kids

KRISTI DETWEILER, MAIN STREET PARENT

Before having my first child, I was barely aware that food allergies existed. However, my two children are among the 3 million of those under 18 in the US (3.9%) with reported food allergies, according to an October 2008 CDC report. This figure is staggering when considering it has risen 18% in the past 10 years. As a parent facing this situation, I have two primary goals: 1) keep my children safe; yet 2) minimize the impact this has on their ability to enjoy everyday things . . . seemingly competing goals.

I could devote pages to the challenges I face in the food choices I make based on reading ingredient labels. However, I will leave that to the FDA, which is now looking into allergen labeling practices. Instead, I will focus on a challenge that is more within my control – dealing with the food allergy-related policies of daycare and school caregivers.

I understand and appreciate the desire to keep my child safe and not be responsible for any sort of allergic reaction. But as a parent, it is hard to see the disappointment in my child's eyes when he comes home from school with a smashed cupcake he was not allowed to eat during a school celebration because the ingredient list was unknown. No matter how yummy the substitute (if there was one), the fact that he was not allowed to be a kid like everyone else pulls on my heartstrings. Awareness of the issue and pre-planning can prevent the situation from happening in most cases. Here are some suggestions:

Plan ahead. When sending out party invitations or planning a child-focused event, ask for a list of ingredients that should be avoided ("When RSVP'ing, please inform us of any food allergies..."). Then you can avoid disappointed children who cannot partake of a food item.

Always have ingredient lists. When bringing food into a group setting (either homemade or store-bought),

please also bring, or be knowledgeable about, the ingredient list. Do not leave until the person in charge has this information and assesses its safety for all participants. Even better, find out about any relevant food allergies in advance and avoid bringing in unsafe items.

Understand medications and instructions. If you are hosting an event and the parents will not be present, ensure that all medications (Epi-Pen, Benadryl, etc.) are left with you at drop-off with instructions on when/how to use them. Also collect contact information (cell number) in the event of an incident. It is also a good idea to run through food and drinks to be served as a final check.

These few simple steps go a long way toward ensuring a safe event in which every child can fully participate. The steps above require extra work, but it is worth the effort. I encourage you to not only follow these practices yourself, but lobby your daycare or school to simply not allow celebration foods into the classroom unless the ingredients are known and safe for all. On behalf of the growing number of families dealing with food allergies, thank you for your help!

For anyone wanting more information on food allergies, my family has found helpful the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN). A nominal annual membership fee provides access to a monthly newsletter with great tips, updates on legislation, allergy-friendly recipes, and much more. For more information, visit www.foodallergy.org.

How to Cook a Turkey

CIRCLE ROOM CHILDREN, MAIN STREET

"Turkey? How do I make a turkey?! Hum. I can't know." - Gemma

"You put it in a pot. Then you eat it." - Jack

"I flip it up in the air." - Oliver

"You put pepper on it. I like it with pepper on it." - Isabela

"A turkey? I'm not a turkey." - Andres

Food and Family

JENNINE GIAQUINTO LESSER, MAIN STREET TEACHER, MAIN STREET AND EMERSON PARENT

Food has played a big role in my Italian upbringing. Every meal was a family event. Preparations for dinner started early in the morning with my Mom and Nana, if not the night before. Grocery shopping was done specifically with the dinner menu for the week in mind. The dinner menu each night was most often predictable and I can remember feeling good about that routine and consistency as a child.

Talk about who would host an upcoming holiday, my mom or my aunt who lived two houses away, would begin weeks in advance. Everyone's favorite foods would be taken into account and you could always look forward to being recognized that way. Food was tradition and tradition was food.

Holidays were my favorite times as a child – not only for the typical reasons like getting presents and school vacation, but for special time spent helping Mom and Nana prepare food. I loved to watch Nana bake. She never used my Mom's electric mixer and she never followed a written recipe. She would tell stories while she worked and she would explain every step of the recipe to me. I always felt like she had chosen me out of all of my sisters to share her



knowledge with, and that not only made me proud but gave me a sense of responsibility.

Today, things are different. Holidays are spent with my family, my parents and my siblings and their families. I am the oldest of six so it's

not a small crowd, but it is a far cry from the house full of extended family that I grew up with. A lot of the change occurred when my Nana passed away. She was the driving force behind keeping everyone so "close." Though my family lost her years ago, every year I work to keep her spirit alive, especially during the holidays.

Each holiday season, I try to do exactly what Nana would do. Each fall, I use apples from our family apple picking trip to make Nana's simple apple cake. The cakes are shared with my parents and brothers and sisters so that they can reminisce with a little

taste of Nana. The Thanksgiving turkey is cooked in her old, worn-out pan. I remember opening the oven as a child and “checking” on the turkey while it sat in that same pan. Nana stuffed the turkey with a homemade rice stuffing. We still make that stuffing today, minus the giblets, seeing as though we always used to push them to the side of our plates. If she were here, she'd say it was a shame to waste them!

On Christmas Eve, which I host, I try to make everyone's favorites, just like Nana did. One of Nana's specialties was her pizzelle cookies, and she would make hundreds. I can see her sitting at the kitchen table day after day, cooking two at a time on her pizzelle iron. She would be surrounded by stacks of cookies in wax paper. Those cookies would be sprinkled with powdered sugar and delivered to family, friends, neighbors, her hair dresser, her bingo friends. Basically anyone who ever came in contact with her got a plate of holiday. I am now the proud owner of Nana's pizzele iron. Every year I look forward to carrying out her same tradition of giving. It is a small gesture from the heart that holds a lot of memories for me, one that best reflects the kind of person that she was and the kind I strive to be.

Now that I am a mom, I love sharing these traditions. Matthew, my 4-year-old, loves to bake with me and runs into the kitchen at the first sound of clanging pans. When we make a “Nana Recipe” I tell him all about her and how I would watch her bake when I was his age. My daughter Camryn, who is 1, is just starting to get in on the fun. She loves to watch and certainly loves touching anything messy. Sharing my childhood memories, and giving them memories of their own, is so important. They didn't know my Nana, but I want them to feel like they did, so I pass down these stories and traditions and they can learn the same lessons I learned as a child. Food has been a tool in passing these lessons on to my children.

Simple Delicacies

ESTELLE MENSE, RIPLEY PARENT

My husband and I enjoy cooking and dining out. We pride ourselves in raising our children to appreciate diverse cuisines beyond our French and German heritage. Our 5-year-old daughter favors sushi restaurants over more traditional family-friendly eateries. In our old New York City neighborhood, she attracted more than one smile ordering miso soup, dumplings, pink fish (salmon sashimi) and green tea ice cream when she was barely old enough to speak.

As with many families, our mothers pour their hearts and culinary skills in preparing memorable dishes for the holidays. Germans have this wonderful tradition of preparing a wide variety of bakery-quality cookies that we carefully pack in our suitcases to enjoy at home during the rest of winter. The traditional French Christmas dessert is the *Buche* that my mom prepares to fit everyone's preference and decorates with cute dwarf figurines. After last year's holiday visit, I could not wait to ask my daughter what was her most memorable dish. She had her answer ready. Very definitely her favorite holiday food was bread with butter. Needless to say, it was not what I expected and I felt her palette was ungrateful of her grandmothers' efforts. As we started discussing her



preference, I had to agree that freshly-baked bread with old-style butter really tastes good, even though I

stopped eating a long time ago the typical tartine for breakfast. I am thankful for this innocent reminder that the best food does not need to be elaborate.

Bread and butter have probably unjustly been categorized as foods to avoid by different diet fads. So as we are heading into a new holiday season I remind everyone - including myself - the best delicacies are often the simplest.

The Dreaded Word: Lunch

KATE DAMON, MAIN STREET AND EMERSON PARENT, BOARD MEMBER

Packing lunch is the bane of my existence. That may sound dramatic, but it's true. Not only do I have to remember who can have what at which school during which part of the day, but I have to keep track of what each child will maybe, possibly, once-in-a-blue-moon eat. I actually have to sit down for an hour – with a glass of wine – after the kids are in bed in order to gear up for packing lunch. Aauugggh!!!

When I finally get the energy (or more accurately, manage to force myself) to pack lunch, I begin my nightmare with a search through a terrifying cabinet full of containers and (ha-ha) matching lids. This is the cabinet you set aside for your 6-month-olds in order for them to feel free rein over something, namely Tupperware. Do you remember that cabinet? We never cleaned ours up. Every night, I proclaim to no one, “Where are all the lids?!” Nobody

ever answers, by the way. I actually know the answer to this ... they go to a mysterious, wonderful place to live with mismatched socks and barrettes.

After I manage to find enough PB-free plastic containers with matching lids, I begin the nightly ritual of raiding the kitchen. During this 5-10 minute debauchery of all things nut-free, free-range, organic, and 'all-natural' (whatever that means), I manage to scrape together enough food to be deemed acceptable to a determined, yet pretty flexible 2 ½-year-old and an extremely particular 5-year-old who is 100% resistant to food bribery. I actually waved a dollar bill in front of his face and said he could have it if he just tried one bite of salmon; he responded with a diehard shake of the head.

After 45 minutes, which includes rinsing toxin-free bottles and sniffing 'safe' vinyl lunchboxes for acceptable smellability, I conclude the nightmare with defiant snaps and zips. Since my kindergartner has repeatedly proclaimed that he will never buy lunch, it looks as though I am doomed to 120 more nights of torture at the hands of two small (yet admittedly cute and non-toxic) L.L. Bean lunchboxes.

Oh great, I just realized I've got about 15 more years of this. Maybe the future will bring universally-loved freeze-dried – yet healthy in every way – ready-made lunches. I'm going to cling to that hope.

Where the Cookies Are

ROBERT DRISKO, RIPLEY PARENT

My favorite childhood junk food was my mom's toll house cookies. I have fond memories of coming home from grade school to find the house filled with the smell of baking cookies. My mother knew I liked the cookies soft and made them that way. Hot from the oven, the chocolate chips pulled apart like chewy caramels. The warm cookies were always served with cold milk.

Sometimes when the cookies weren't a surprise, but I was "helping," I got to lick the beaters. I'm not sure which I liked better, the cookies or the batter. Today I'm not sure letting kids eat food with uncooked egg is considered safe. When I was a boy raw eggs were put in milkshakes.

The fact that my mom made them for me was what I liked the best. As I got older cookies changed to brownies (still soft and served with cold milk). When I came home from college or

visited after working, lasagna and brownies for dessert were always my first dinner. The smell of baking brownies and a good lasagna meal still remind me of my mother.

Sweet Memories

HEWON HWANG, RIPLEY PARENT, BOARD CHAIR

When I think of junk food from my childhood, I think of my grandmother. The two are inextricably linked in my mind and heart.

My grandmother took me on field trips when I was young. Afterwards she and I would go out for a treat. One of the treats was boong-uh pang, a gold fish-shaped pastry the size of your palm with sweet red bean paste inside. It is made on a small pan like a waffle iron with the fish shape carved out. Waiting for these to pop out from the mold while the aroma made your mouth water was part of the experience. They were made on demand and served in a newspaper wrap. I remember these outings were always times of excitement and sweet expectations – a very special time spent with my grandmother.

My grandmother passed away when I was 9 and we moved to the US while my father pursued his PHD. The food in New York was good but very different from my Korea comfort food. I realized how much I missed it years later when I travelled to Asia routinely on business. I remember walking out of my hotel in Seoul, going down a narrow alley behind the hotel, and finding a street vendor selling boong-uh pang. The taste brought back a rush of childhood memories and nostalgia. It is amazing how such powerful memories can be attached to a simple treat.

Attention Parents of CCC Alumni

CCC is a great place for your middle or high school child to volunteer. We love to have former students return to help in classrooms. It is a fun, fulfilling way to get Community Service hours. For more information, contact CCC Administrative Director Joanne Saideh: administrative@concordchildrenscenter.org or 978-369-6790.





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Food, Glorious Food!