

Dishing up Books for the Picky Eater

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“I do not like Green Eggs and Ham. I do not like them Sam I am!” Even Dr. Seuss knew when he wrote *Green Eggs and Ham* in 1960 that picky eaters are tough to feed well.

Although nutritionists tell us that children may need to be offered a new food 8 to 15 times before they decide it’s good to eat, parents and caregivers can feel frustrated by their children’s reluctance to try a variety of healthy foods.

Nutritionists with Community or Public Health have great ideas for feeding picky eaters. Interestingly, so does Dr. Seuss. Sharing books with children that feature food can affect how they think about food. New or strangely textured foods can suddenly seem more appealing. This is especially true if, through storytime, we help children think about how the story characters’ experiences with food are similar or different to their own.

Green Eggs and Ham by Dr Seuss is a classic, as is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. In Seuss’s book, the main character avoids food. In Carle’s book, the caterpillar eats everything in sight before transforming into a beautiful butterfly.

Well-loved folktales can soften picky eaters too. The most familiar version of *Stone Soup* tells the tale of a hungry traveller who asks villagers for food. The traveller cleverly makes vegetable soup with the villagers’ help and one big stone.

In *The Giant Carrot* everyone dreams of delicious carrot stew, carrot relish and more. But the carrot grows so big that no one can pull it from the ground. Little Isabelle saves the day. Little Isabelle’s Carrot Puddin’ is found at the back of this book for readers of the story to make and eat.

Eggbert, in Tom Ross’s *Eggbert the Slightly Cracked Egg*, is an artist. Who knew? Though he is not perfect (his shell is cracked), the other fruits and vegetables from the fridge recognize his talent and appreciate him just the way he is.

How Are You Peeling? by Saxon Freymann is a simple but creative story written in rhyme. The pictures portray a wide variety of emotions through facial expressions on fruits and vegetables.

Of course, there are less fanciful stories too. *Why is an Orange Called an Orange* by Cob Ladner explores why the fruit name and colour are the same for an orange but not other kinds of fruit.

Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z by Lois Elhert introduces children to some foods they may have never seen or tasted before.

Good Enough to Eat by Lizzy Rockwell explains to primary school-aged children how bodies digest and use nutrients to make them strong. *Good Enough to Eat* includes a few kid-friendly recipes to try too.

Sharing food-related books can spark children's curiosity and help them associate nutritious food with fun and pleasure. It's also possible that storytime may lead you and your child to crave green scrambled eggs with a slice of ham.