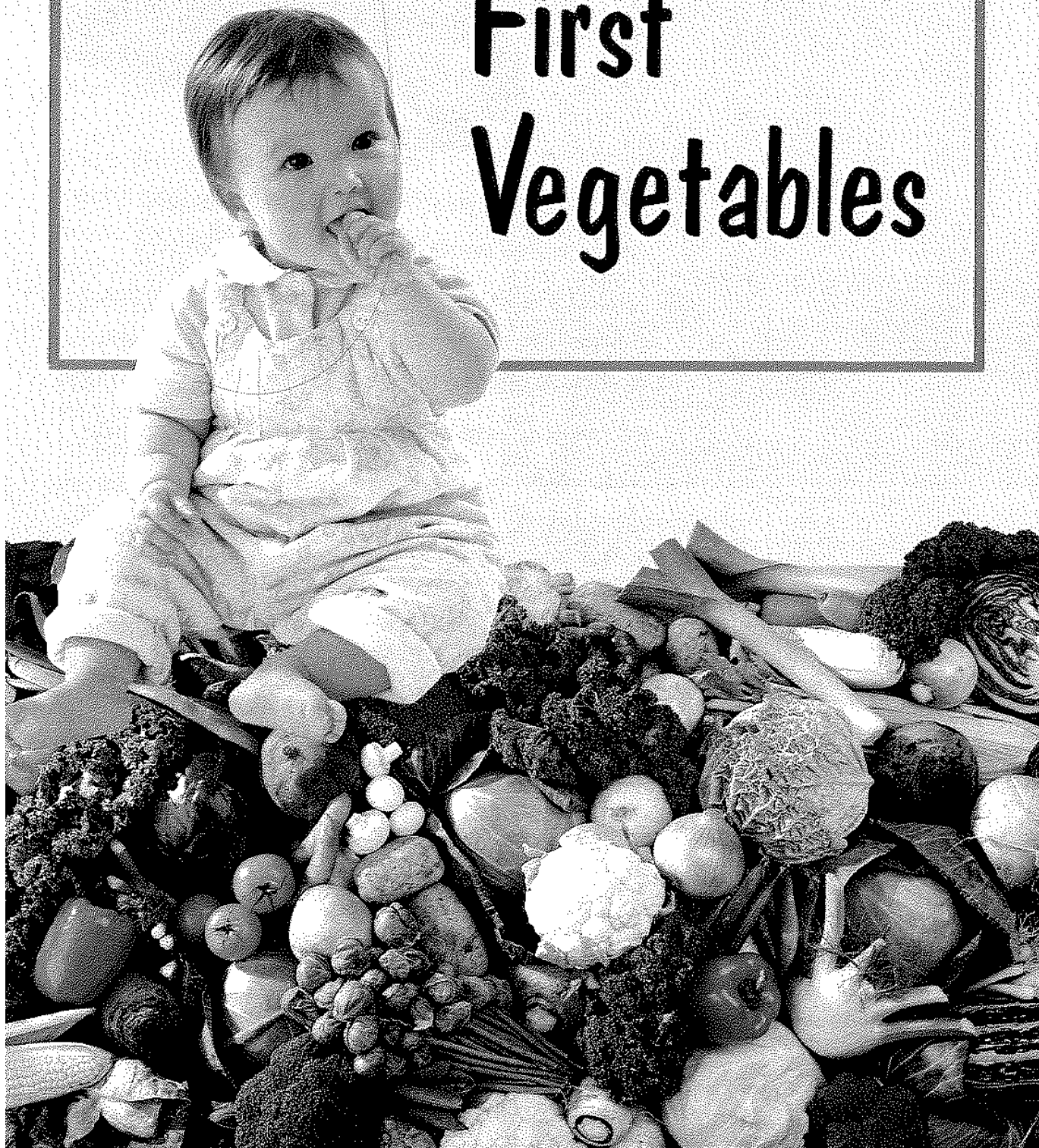


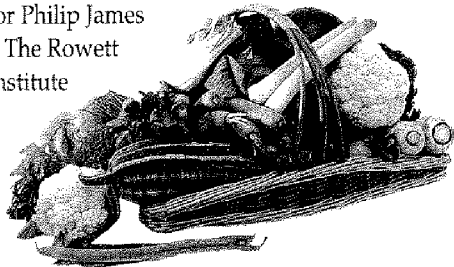
National
Childbirth
Trust and
National
Farmers' Union

Your Baby's First Vegetables



INTRODUCTION

by Professor Philip James
Director of The Rowett
Research Institute



Vegetables make good first solid foods for your baby. They are an excellent source of nutrients and they are very unlikely to cause an allergic reaction. They are also easy to prepare. You can be sure that home-grown vegetables, produced by the vegetable growers in this country, are grown with strict adherence to food safety which is very carefully controlled.

Vegetables are increasingly seen by experts as a crucially important part of a healthy diet for both children and adults. Introducing a variety of vegetables early on in life is particularly valuable because it establishes a pattern of taste and habit which can then be lifelong.

This booklet is for parents with young babies and toddlers. It gives information on when to start your baby on solid food, and how to include vegetables as part of a healthy diet for your growing child.

All information in this booklet applies to boys and girls.

Acknowledgements

The parents and children of the National Childbirth Trust who acted as models in this booklet.

Nippers UK Franchising Limited (UK Innovations Award Winner for BFA 1993) for the loan of the highchair.

The Horticultural Development Council which financed the production of this booklet.

Photography
Simon Butcher

Design
Vicky Zentner

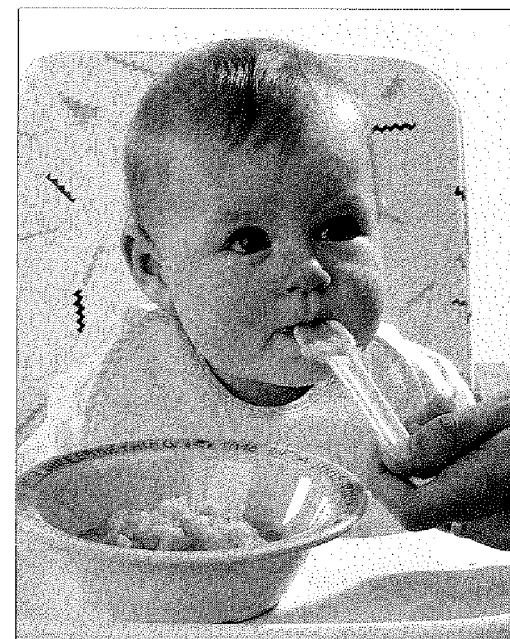
When should I start my baby on solid food?

Most babies are ready to start taking some solid food between the ages of four and six months. Before then it is difficult for a baby to digest foods other than breast milk (or formula).

You will probably know when *your* baby is ready to take her first solid foods. She might still seem hungry after finishing a good milk feed, or start waking more often at night because she is hungry. She may also begin to show an interest in food and start attempting to chew. Breast milk (or formula) will continue to provide the major source of nutrients for most babies for at least the first year.

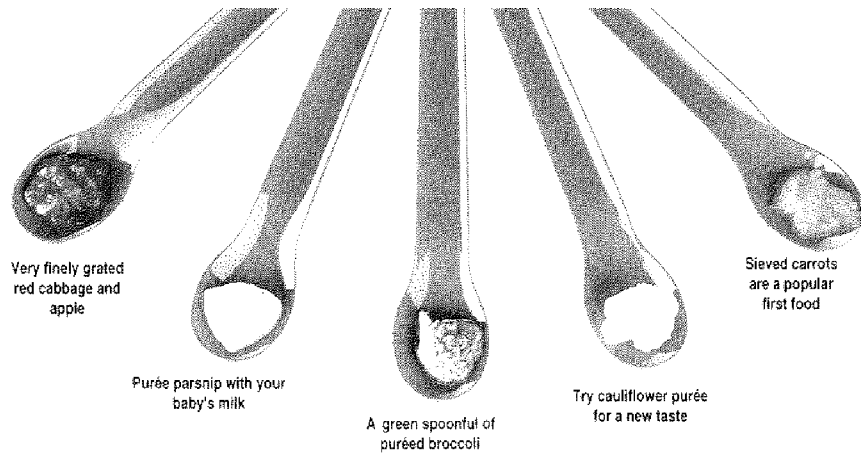
Which vegetables?

Root vegetables such as carrots, swedes and parsnips are popular first foods, and they are very easy to prepare. Scrub or peel, cut into small pieces, and steam or boil in unsalted water until tender. Strain the vegetables and push them through a sieve (or through a clean tea strainer), or liquidise them. You can add some of your baby's usual milk if you like to make the taste more familiar. The



food should be of a fairly smooth, liquid consistency. You can also try finely grated raw vegetables. To start with, just offer your baby a small amount - say a teaspoonful - at the end of one milk feed, or in the middle of a feed. If your baby doesn't seem keen, don't try and force her to eat. Just wait a day or two and try again.

You can try different vegetables: for example, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, peas, potatoes or beans. Try mixing two different vegetables together or adding baby rice.



Gradually increase the amount of solid food you give your baby after the milk feed. Babies generally know when they have had enough to eat, so don't push them to eat more than they want. Introduce new flavours too. Move gradually from giving solid food after one milk feed a day, to two and then three.

When your baby is eating solid food at each meal (normally around 7-9 months) you can start giving him the solid foods first and the milk afterwards. It is a good idea to offer balanced meals at this stage, by including some foods such as cheese, eggs, fish without bones, minced meat, peanut butter, or pulses such as lentils, as well as vegetables, fruit and

cereals. This will help to ensure that your baby receives enough energy, protein and minerals from his food. At this stage most of your baby's food can come from family meals. Eating with the family will make mealtimes more fun and help your baby to develop good social habits.

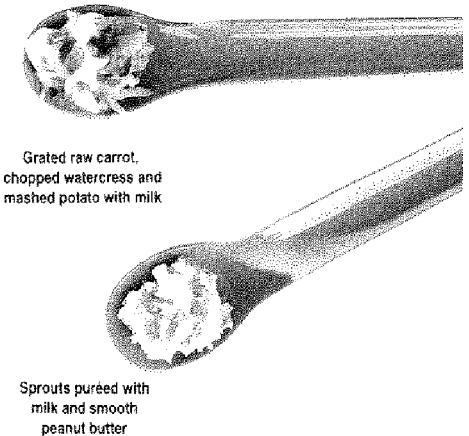
The ideas opposite may be useful if you want to make dishes specially for your baby or freeze some for when you are in a hurry.

* You might find it handy to freeze small quantities of puréed vegetables in clean ice cube trays or small pots with lids, and transfer them to plastic bags. Then just take out one or two pieces as you need them, defrost and reheat.



You'll find some more ideas for recipes on pages 10-13.

Don't be afraid of mixing foods which you may not eat together yourself, such as brussels sprouts with apple, or oats and green cabbage or spring greens (see the recipe on page 12). You may like to put separate helpings of mashed foods on the plate so that your baby can appreciate the different tastes and colours.



- Puréed cabbage or spring greens with a little milk and smooth peanut butter served with pitta bread
-
- Broccoli, pasta and cottage cheese
-
- Peas, parsnips and flaked white fish
-
- Steamed green cabbage, potato and a little liver or kidney
-
- Leeks, noodles and finely chopped cooked chicken
-
- Cauliflower with potatoes and lean minced beef or lamb
-
- Grated raw carrot, chopped watercress and mashed potato with milk (not suitable for freezing)

As your baby takes more solid food, give him a drink from a beaker or training cup. Cooled boiled water is best. For variety, you could give diluted pure vegetable juice. Don't give your baby food or drink containing artificial sweeteners.

Giving your baby enough iron

From about the age of six months, your baby's stores of iron may be getting low. Try to give her some iron-containing foods such as leafy green vegetables, iron-fortified cereals, liver, kidney, lean minced meat, well-cooked egg yolks and lentils.

Vegetables and fruits which contain vitamin C - for example broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, green beans, frozen peas, apples, pears and blackcurrants - will help your baby to absorb iron from non-meat foods.

(See chart page 15)

Be prepared for your baby to refuse your lovingly prepared foods sometimes. Remember that she is rejecting the food, not you. She may not be hungry, or may not be feeling well. If she is not interested, try the food another time, and perhaps cook it in a different way.

As your baby gets used to taking solid foods, it is a good idea to move from puréed to mashed and more lumpy foods so that she learns to chew. By now, you can prepare most foods for all your family at the same time, adding salt or hot spices after removing your baby's portion. Some children like to feed themselves.

Encourage this, however messy it is, as it will help your baby become a more independent eater. It may help to have two spoons, one for you and one for your baby.

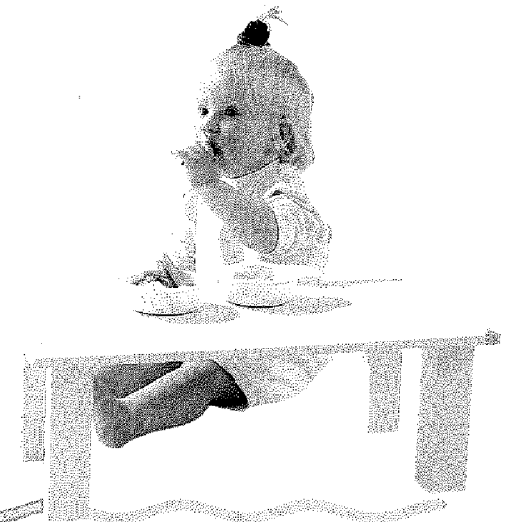
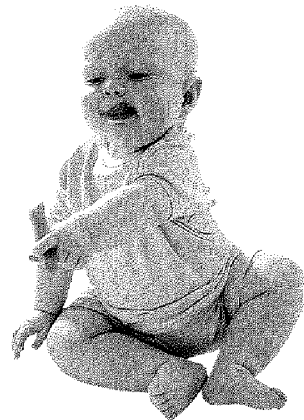
Choosing to chew

You could also try giving your baby 'finger foods'. Finger foods give your baby the opportunity to appreciate the different textures and tastes of the foods which she has previously had mashed. At first she may prefer them lightly cooked. Just steam or boil until tender. Some finger foods may be given raw. Raw vegetables can be a good teething aid for babies.

Toddlers often need feeding more than three times a day and finger foods make a healthy snack for older children. Always keep an eye on your baby when she is eating, even when she starts to feed herself.

The following vegetables all make good finger foods: brussels sprouts, carrots, parsnips, fennel, cauliflower or broccoli florets, mushrooms, dwarf beans, celery, peppers, iceberg lettuce, cabbage, sweetcorn on the cob (when your child has enough teeth to chew the corn).

For more meal ideas for older babies, see recipe section.



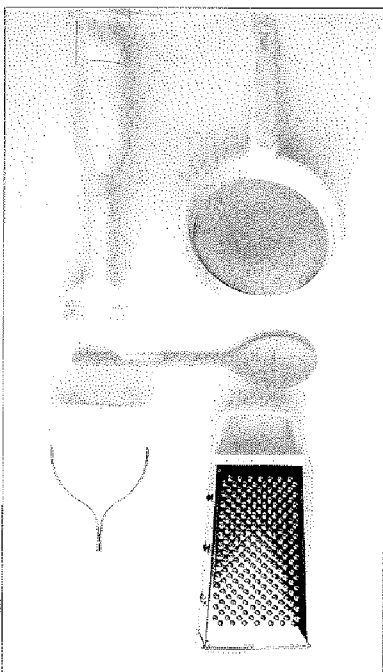
HELPFUL HINTS

Cooking vegetables

Steaming is a nutritious way of cooking vegetables. Cooking time is about the same as for boiling, but you don't lose so many vitamins and the vegetables retain their colour, flavour and texture better. If you don't have a steamer, try resting a metal sieve over a saucepan and covering it with the lid. You can save energy by steaming vegetables over rice, pasta

or potatoes whilst they cook. All kinds of vegetables including cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, parsnips, leeks, beans, broccoli, spring greens, peas and brussels sprouts can be cooked in this way.

Microwaving is a quick way of cooking small quantities of vegetables but beware of 'hotspots' in the middle of microwaved foods. You can keep any cooking water and use it for thinning baby foods or cooking cereals.



Useful equipment

HAND BLENDER

Copes with smaller quantities without wasting too much. Does not always give an even texture

SIEVE

With a fine mesh, strong enough to push food through

WOODEN SPOON

Useful for pushing food through a sieve

MASHER

Much quicker than a fork and useful when your baby is moving on to less smooth textures

GRATER

Can be used for some raw or cooked vegetables

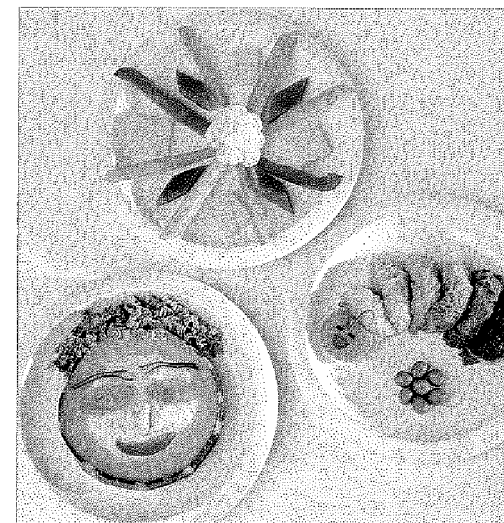
A FOOD MILL and a BLENDER (or food processor) are also useful, but not essential

Salt and sugar

Don't add sugar, artificial sweeteners or salt to your baby's food. Too much salt is bad for the kidneys and could lead to dehydration. Adding sugar can encourage a sweet tooth and lead to tooth decay later on. Remember that foods which may taste quite bland to you may be an exciting new experience for your baby.

Reluctant eaters

If your baby is unwilling to try new foods or seems to have a very small appetite, the following ideas might be useful. Encourage him to try new foods when he is with other children or visiting his grandparents. Novel foods can also be introduced at picnics where everything is 'different'. Meals with different colours, shapes, and textures may encourage a baby who has been used to mashed mixtures (see photograph). Use dishes with pictures, so that the picture appears as the food is eaten. Make simple faces out of food. Or cut vegetables into special shapes; for example, beetroot, carrots and parsnips can be cut into fish or animal shapes. As they get older, children can 'help' with food preparation, by mixing (in a large bowl), washing vegetables and stamping out biscuits.



Food safety

Don't give your baby food which is too hot. Be especially careful if using a microwave oven, as dishes which feel cool to the touch may be scalding hot in the middle, so stir well.

Cook eggs thoroughly so that both the white and the yolk are set.

Nut butters and finely ground nuts are a good source of energy but whole or chopped nuts should not be given to children under five because of the risk of choking.

Don't leave your baby alone when he is eating, again because of the risk of choking.

RECIPE IDEAS

In most of these recipes you can alter the combination of vegetables according to what is in season (see chart on page 14). Bear in mind the colour of the vegetables and the length of cooking, and let your imagination guide you. Each of the recipes which follow will probably provide more than one balanced meal for babies from seven months old. Suitable oils include rapeseed, sunflower, corn or soya oils. Use margarines containing unsaturated fats such as sunflower or soya. Eggs used are size 3.

* Those marked with an asterisk are suitable for freezing.

Carrot and Lentil Purée

* Fry the onion and carrot gently in the oil for a few minutes. Garlic and spices can be added at this stage if your baby likes them. Add the lentils and water. Simmer gently for about 20 minutes until the lentils are soft. Liquidise with milk, or mash, depending on your baby's age.

1 small onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, chopped
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
2 level tbs/1oz/25g split red lentils
1 mug/half a pint of water
Optional: garlic and spices such as a pinch of cumin, turmeric, ginger and coriander. Do not add hot spices such as chilli and cayenne to baby food

Pasta Salad

This is a salad which you can adapt to your child's preferences. Use it to introduce new flavours too.

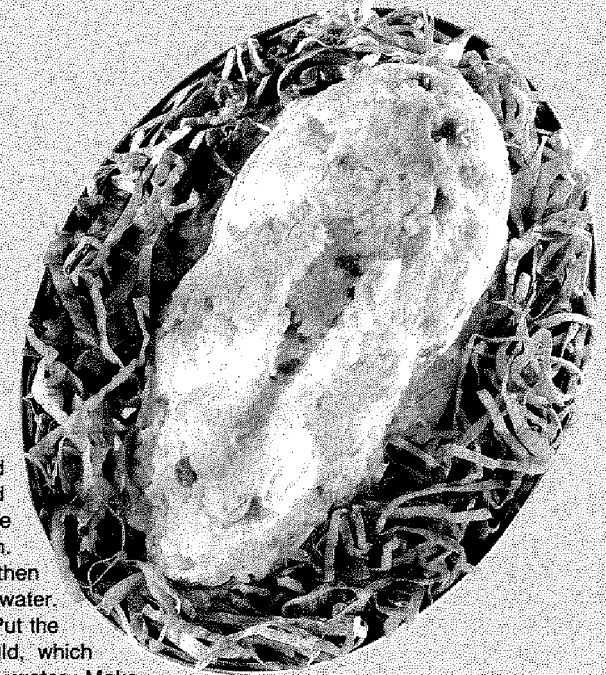
1-2 oz/25-50g cooked pasta twists or shapes
1 tbs chopped lean ham, chicken or tuna
a selection of diced vegetables: for example celery, beetroot, red or green pepper, sweetcorn, watercress, green beans, peas, sliced red or green cabbage
a few drops of vegetable oil



Rice Rabbit

3 rounded tbs/2-3 oz/50-70g brown rice
1 medium carrot, peeled and diced
3 tbs/2 oz/50g frozen peas
1 spring onion, finely chopped
2 oz/50g grated cheddar cheese
1 pint capacity mould

Wash the rice, put it in a saucepan of boiling water and cook for 20 minutes. Add the diced carrot and cook for five minutes. Add the frozen peas and the finely chopped spring onion. Bring back to the boil and then drain off any remaining water. Mix in the grated cheese. Put the mixture into a rabbit mould, which has been rinsed out with water. Make sure that the mixture is pressed into the ears, eyes and tail so that the shape comes out clearly. Leave to cool for a few moments while the cheese sets and the rabbit takes shape. Or keep in the fridge and turn out when it is cold. Serve on a bed of 'grass' such as shredded green cabbage or lettuce. To make single portions, use small moulds or empty yogurt pots.



Children's food does not have to be bland. Many toddlers will enjoy strong flavours, sharp tasting foods and mild spices, given the chance.

Cabbage and Celery Cake

Suitable for a meal at home, a portable meal to take on a picnic. Chop the celery and onion finely and steam or boil in the minimum of water with the cabbage for about 10 minutes. Allow to cool. Beat the eggs into the flour. Add the garlic and other remaining ingredients. Pour into a 9" pie dish and bake at 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4 for 45 minutes, until golden brown. Serve warm or cold with brightly coloured vegetables.

2 medium sticks of celery
1 medium onion
1 clove garlic, crushed
6 oz/175g shredded cabbage
4 beaten eggs
2 tbs finely chopped watercress
4 oz/100g wholemeal self-raising flour
2 oz/50g grated cheddar cheese

Baked Egg Cat's Face

For one cat's face

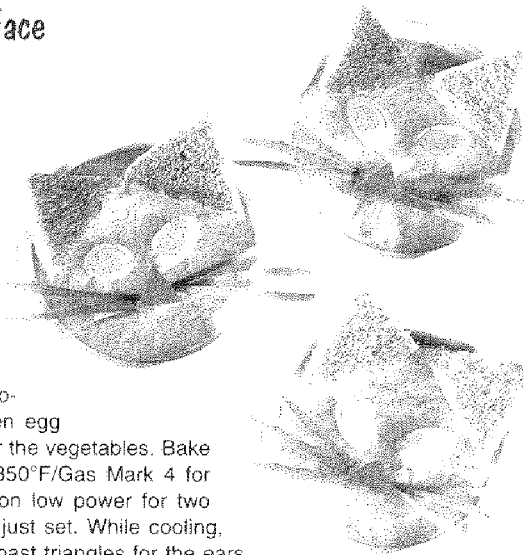
1 lbs cooked leeks, white cabbage or cauliflower

1 beaten egg

2 tbs milk

To decorate

1 slice of toast, and a selection of vegetables, eg carrot, pepper, peas, cauliflower florets



Chop the vegetables and place in an individual, greased ovenproof (or microwave) bowl. Mix the beaten egg with the milk, and pour over the vegetables. Bake in a medium oven 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4 for 10 minutes or microwave on low power for two minutes or until the egg is just set. While cooling, decorate the top with two toast triangles for the ears, six thin strips of carrot or pepper for whiskers, two circles of leeks or peas for eyes, and a small cauliflower floret for the nose.

Oaty Vegetables

a small amount of green cabbage, broccoli or kale

1 slice of onion

half a stick of celery

half a carrot

4 fl oz/120 ml water

1 lbs of quick-cooking oats

* Slice or chop the vegetables into small pieces. Boil the water in a saucepan, add all the ingredients and simmer for 10 minutes. Mash for a baby or serve sprinkled with cheese for an older child.

Leeks and Liver

* Top and tail the leek and remove the outer leaves. Slice it and wash it thoroughly. Steam or boil in unsalted water for 15 minutes. Meanwhile brown the liver in the oil. Add a little vegetable water or tap water and cook for 5-10 minutes. Mash the leek and liver together and serve with potatoes.

1 small leek

4 oz/100g lamb's liver*

2 teaspoons vegetable oil

*You can use kidney instead of liver. Cut the kidney in half, remove the core using scissors and cook as above



Sunshine Squares

5 oz/150g rolled oats

6 oz/175g finely grated carrots

5 oz/150g grated cheese

2 beaten eggs

1 teaspoon mixed herbs (for example parsley or thyme)

* Suitable for a meal at home, or a picnic. Grease a small swiss roll tin. Mix all the ingredients together in a bowl. Press into the tin and bake at 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5 until set and just turning brown (approx. 25 minutes). Cool for a few minutes and then cut into squares. Store in a refrigerator.

Carrot Biscuits

* If you have a food processor or blender, mix the first four ingredients until smooth. If not, purée the carrots and apricots and then beat in the margarine and egg. Add the dry ingredients and mix until it leaves the sides of the bowl clean. Roll out to about a quarter of an inch (6 mm) thick. Either cut into finger-sized pieces for a baby or use cutters to make bear, rabbit, star or other interesting shapes for an older child. Bake in the oven at 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5 until just beginning to brown (approx. 12 minutes). To produce harder fingers for teething use a cooler oven for a longer baking time.



Stuffed Pancakes

Make up pancakes as usual. Fill with combinations such as those listed on page 5, or with one of these ideas.

cooked spinach and onions chopped, with cottage cheese

steamed cauliflower or broccoli with grated cheese

scrambled egg with peas or green beans

FRESH IS BEST

Green vegetables such as cabbage, brussels sprouts, broccoli, peas and beans are excellent sources of important vitamins such as folic acid (which is not easily found in many other foods) and vitamin C.

Vegetables also provide useful quantities of iron, other valuable minerals, fibre and essential fatty acids. For an indication of which vegetables are particularly rich in individual nutrients see the chart opposite.

SEASONALITY TABLE

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Asparagus	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Broccoli	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Celery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Courgettes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fennel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kohl Rabi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leeks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parsnips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Peppers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Radish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rhubarb	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Salad Onions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Savoy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spring Greens	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sprouts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Swedes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweetcorn	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turnips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Vegetables available all year round

Beetroot Cabbages Carrots Cauliflower Cucumber Lettuce
Mushrooms Peas Potatoes Onions Watercress

Vegetables are at their best when fresh. Leafy vegetables soon start to lose nutrients in storage, especially if they are exposed to sunlight.

Getting the most from vegetables

- ✓ If you can, buy vegetables shortly before you plan to use them
- ✓ Store them in a cool, dark place or in the bottom drawer of the fridge
- ✓ Wash and cut, chop or grate vegetables just before use
- ✓ Use a minimum of water in cooking so that water soluble nutrients are not lost
- ✓ Choose home-grown vegetables as they are likely to be freshest. Some are on sale within hours of harvest.

Vegetables produced in this country are grown to very high standards under strict laws which cover every stage of growing, harvesting, handling and packing. British farmers grow a wide variety of vegetables to tempt your baby's - and your own - taste buds all year round.



GOOD SOURCES OF PARTICULAR NUTRIENTS

*** EXCELLENT source of the nutrient

** GOOD source of the nutrient

* USEFUL source of the nutrient

	Carotene	Folates	Vitamin C	Vitamin E	Iron
Carotene - Needed for good eyesight, skin and bones. An anti-oxidant					
Folates - Essential for new growth and nerves					
Vitamin C - An anti-oxidant. Helps healing					
Vitamin E - An anti-oxidant. Protects tissues					
Iron - Needed to make red blood cells					
Beetroot		***	**		*
Broad beans	*	***	**	**	**
Broccoli	**	***	***	***	*
Brussels sprouts	*	***	***	**	
Cabbage	*	***	***		
Carrots	***	**		**	
Cauliflower		***	***		
Curly kale	***	**	***	***	**
Green beans	*	***	**		*
Leeks	**	***	**	**	*
Parsnips		***	**	***	*
Peas (frozen)	**	***	***		**
Runner beans		***	**		*
Spinach	***	***	**	***	**
Spring greens	***	***	***		**

Source:
McCance and Widdowson's
The Composition of Foods
(5th Edition), Royal Society of
Chemistry and MAFF

About the National Childbirth Trust

The National Childbirth Trust (NCT) offers information and support in pregnancy, childbirth and early parenthood and aims to enable every parent to make informed choices.

Breastfeeding counsellors, trained by the NCT, are available to discuss any non-medical concerns that you have about breastfeeding or starting on solid foods. Postnatal support groups provide the opportunity to meet other parents who live nearby.

Leaflets and information on many aspects of pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding are also available. Send a stamped addressed envelope for a list of booklets and products. The NCT is a charity and donations to support our work are welcome. For further copies of this booklet, send a 9 x 6 inch SAE to the NCT at the address below.



National Childbirth Trust
Alexandra House
Oldham Terrace
London W3 6NH
Tel (081) 992 8637

About the National Farmers' Union

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) is an association of farmers and growers in England and Wales. It represents its 100,000 members on the whole range of agricultural matters.

The NFU takes a close interest in countryside, rural and food quality issues and in the promotion of 'home-produced foods'.



National Farmers' Union
22 Long Acre
London WC2E 9LY
Tel (071) 235 5077 & (071) 331 7200

The Horticultural Development Council,
the organisation funded by growers to commission research on behalf of the horticultural industry, paid for the production of this booklet.



The Horticultural Development Council
18 Lavant Street
Petersfield
Hants GU32 3EW
Tel (0730) 263736