
Macrobiotic Kids' Parties

Kim Allen

Pretty pink and purple hydrangeas garland the picnic gazebo. Organic recycled tablecloths cover two tables with potato-stamp prints of crowns and jewels. About a dozen kids are laughing and their parents are watching nearby chatting noisily as they have known each other since pre-school days and internships at Kushi Institute or Vega Study Center. Thirsty, the birthday girl comes over with a few of her friends and asks for a drink. "What would you like?" the attending parent asks. "I'll have an amasake and so will Lily and Hannah. The boys want the kukicha mint. Thanks Mom." Thirty minutes later, all of the children are waved over for the meal. Plates are full with adzuki bean mochi, barley spring vegetable salad, and arame scallion pancakes. All join in words of gratitude for the sun, the water, and the birthday girl's parents, who grew the food in their organic garden—even the barley. Then, it is silent. Amidst the lively park, it is quiet. There are lots of smiles but no noise—just quiet...for a good half hour. We are chewing, of course. Pretty soon it will be time for the strawberry couscous birthday cake...

Fiction. Now, back to non-fiction. We live in a large suburb, my daugh-



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ter attends a nice private school, and we have family close by so parties and "special occasions" come up nearly every weekend. It makes the out-of-the-ordinary into the everyday. So while I do stress daily food to be the most important, I see how the "occasional" choices are important as well.

My party planning (and attending) ideals include being flexible, sociable, and a good example to my daughter and others, and also to strengthen my child's health and decision-making. The keystones to my approach are

education, daily good home cooking, creativity, flexibility, and open-mindedness.

I am a mom with a strong commitment to eating well. I regularly confer with other macrobiotic parents who are quite willing to share their experiences, lessons learned the hard way, and solutions. Most parents emphasize the foundation of everyday meals to help kids maintain a good balance. Melanie Waxman, mother of seven children, said, "What they have day to day is most important. It makes it healthy for them to try other foods. Kids are adventurous and want to try new things."

This whole party issue has given me a great opportunity for education. I can be an example to my child and have discussions about choices and consequences—hers, mine, and ours. She really seems to respond to personal stories my husband and I share about our childhoods. The book *How to Eat Like a Child* by Delia Ephron is a classic. It has pictures and the funniest "instructions" that my daughter loves to hear over and over. I also really like the universal, "That will rot your teeth out."

This takes us to the next tool—creativity. Taking cooking classes, us-

ing cookbooks, and consulting other resources provides nourishment for cooking that is fun and satisfying. Going to parties, I am creative by bringing a dish to share or by making a “cool” treat ahead of time and eating before we go.

When hosting a party there are endless areas for creativity from setting the table to food art with colorful vegetables to getting dressed. For the meals, it may be helpful to find the common denominators with those who will be attending. Some ideas for starters are pasta, hummus with pita, bean salads, garden salad, sandwiches, veggie sushi, and steamed bread with spreads.

The look of the food can determine whether or not the food gets touched. Little-sized foods or individual servings of kanten or mini cucumber sandwiches can be super kid friendly. For some real fun, let the kids be involved in menu planning and the preparations. Melanie’s children get to choose their own birthday dinner.

My daughter is four years old. She loves princesses and Barbie dolls. She loves to play on her bike and watch cartoons. She wants the pink sparkle chocolate cookies. They are gorgeous—like fairy food. So, here is where flexibility and open-mindedness come in. Melanie, a more seasoned mom reports that not being too strict has been best for her, “There is a junky phase. They come around.” Her teenagers’ friends “come over, try it, and love it—despite protest.” Susan, a longtime macro mom told me to focus on the fun. Kids will eat when they are bored. Parties are a time to be together, to celebrate, to laugh, and to play. Susan says, “There is so much more going on than the food.”

Parties are special times to celebrate a loved one or other event. It is a great opportunity to share with other people. Find the similarities—not the differences. It is a time to be inclusive and welcoming. My own mom (longtime macro mom too) had some

encouraging words, “Laugh about it, and keep it light. It’s not worth controlling or fighting about it. Do the best you can.”

The following recipes are proven hits for kid’s parties.

MAKE YOUR OWN PASTA/ SANDWICH BAR

Include various fillings, and vary by ethnic preference if desired. Some possibilities are: Breads of all sorts, tortillas, matzo, pitas, red lentil spreads, black bean dip, tempeh cubes (marinated & cooked), marinated tofu cubes, lettuce, spicy dill pickles, cooked broccoli rabe with garlic, “MisoMayo,” soy cheese, tahini sauce, sautéed apples, almond butter and jelly, Tofurky slices, carrot marinara, mock tuna salad (with fried tofu cubes, celery, dulse, and veganaïsse), and noodles of all sorts made from corn, rice, quinoa, or wheat.

“ICE CREAM” AND GINGER VANILLA COOKIE CAKE

Take the ice cream out of the freezer. I really found great results with Soy Delicious, Raspberry “Ice Cream.” My daughter likes Rice Dream—vanilla or chocolate. While you make the cookies, it should melt enough to construct the cake. Two pints should be enough for this recipe.

Making the Cookie

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, add the dry ingredients and stir well: about 3 cups of barley flour, approximately 1½ tablespoons baking powder, and a pinch of salt. Chopped toasted walnuts or pecans are excellent to add here too. Then make a small divot in the bottom of this mixture to add the wet ingredients: about ½ cup safflower oil, nearly a cup of rice or maple syrup or a mix of both, ½ teaspoon to 1 tablespoon (depending on your taste) fresh grated ginger, 3 tablespoons vanilla extract.

Stir together the wet ingredients, then the entire mixture. It should be wet enough to shape into cookies but not liquid at all. Add rice milk as needed to achieve desired consistency. A handful of oats may be used if it gets too wet. Brush oil onto a cookie sheet. Loosely shape batter into ovals and place on baking sheet. Cook in oven until they are dry and browned. This usually takes about 12 to 15 minutes depending on the size of the cookies. When they come out, let them cool for about 30 minutes.

Assembling the cake

Using a loaf pan, cover the inside with waxed paper with a couple inches sticking out the sides. Then, crumble the cookie into the bottom of the pan, making a layer about ½-inch deep. Spoon the melted ice cream on top to fill the pan halfway. Add another layer of cookie crumble, followed by the remainder of the ice cream. Flatten the top with the back of a spoon. Place in freezer until solid again. Usually, I make this the night before and freeze it overnight. When ready to serve, pull the wax paper gently and the cake will pop out. Cut in slices to serve.

Resources for Macro Parents and Kids’ Parties

www.cybermacro.com
Vegan Macrobiotic Yahoo group
Yummy, Yummy in my Tummy by Melanie Waxman on her website www.celebrate4health.com
www.christinacooks.com for an enormous recipe archive
Sunspire makes non-dairy, grain sweetened chocolate chips
IndiaTree and *Selecttea.com* both make plant-derived food colorings such as blueberry extract
Suzanne’s Flavored Rice Syrups have kids’ parties written all over them

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