



Guide to simple, stress-free mealtimes for nurseries



Nursery Meals

Is **simplicity**
the key to
brilliance?

Find out how
Oxheys Nursery
rate low risk by
Environmental
Health



Why read our Guide?

Welcome to our Guide on making mealtimes easy, simple, and stress-free for nurseries. It's the first of four Guides which you will see over the coming weeks, which we hope you will enjoy and find useful.

Whether you're an owner, director or a manager, you will know only too well that nurseries are facing unprecedented challenges in managing costs and mealtimes are just one piece in a much bigger jigsaw.

The headlines remind us daily – record high inflation, continued labour shortages, food, energy, and fuel prices all rocketing.

By taking complexity out of the kitchen, doesn't mean a drop in quality. Far from it. In fact, in many cases nurseries can enjoy an uplift in quality, variety, in the ability to cater for children's dietary needs and feel proud in delivering an extensive and delicious choice of dishes, day in, day out.

Mealtimes are 'our business' and we know how important it is to serve great meals that your little ones, their parents, and your nursery team, will all love.

If you would like to understand more around how you can make your mealtimes 'genius in their simplicity' with no loss of quality, please enjoy our Guide and contact us on 07977 803009.

Our Guide is all about making nursery mealtimes straightforward – you could say mealtimes that are 'genius in their simplicity'.



Rupert Weber
Head of Education

Where to start?

You may be considering options right now across your catering provision.



You may be asking yourself whether to make change. And if so, what that change might look like? Do you have a cook on site, or do you contract out?

Don't forget that there's another way! A way that guarantees simplicity, alongside lower costs and importantly, high quality meals that are delicious and packed with goodness that little ones will love and thrive on.

Have you considered a high-quality pre-prepared meals system? Meals which can be easily cooked from frozen, enabling you to make notable efficiencies in both cost and labour. Meals where you cannot tell the difference in quality between fresh cook and a prepared meal.

And meals where waste is minimal – an issue that is increasingly important to all of us and don't forget that waste equals cost – none of us like to throw away money.

No more headaches having to rework costing and budgets every week to keep in line with inflation and supply shortages. No more lengthy calculations to ascertain nutritional content – it's all available at the touch of a button.

Our nursery customers tell us that an increasing challenge in delivering an excellent dining experience for little ones is in 'personalisation' and meeting bespoke dietary needs, whether cultural, religious, or personal preferences. And, of course, Natasha's Law has brought home the very real challenges of ensuring that one size does not 'fit all' when ensuring that children living with allergens are 'free from' the 14 known allergens.

Pre-prepared meals make these challenges easy. Cooking meals from frozen couldn't be simpler – whether multi-portion dishes or single portions to meet individual needs. Minimum waste, time handed back to your team for other duties and consistent cost



Watch the journey of a shepherds pie

Same ingredients, same high quality, but spot the difference...

What's on the menu at Oxheys Nursery in Watford?

A large selection of appetising and healthy meals to choose from, alongside simplifying kitchen operations was top of the requirement list when Ela Konyardi, day care manager at Oxhey Early Years Centre in Watford, Hertfordshire, decided to look for a new food provider.

Previously the nursery was buying in meals from the local primary school but handling the food was proving complex and staff were concerned that it did not meet the nutritional needs of the young children in their care. Parents were also not convinced, and many chose to send their children with packed lunches rather than have the hot food option.

"We wanted to change the menu three times a year according to the seasons and we wanted to provide both a hot lunch and hot tea for the children who are in full days, so we needed a large variety of meal options," explains Ela.

She was recommended apetito – which specialises in providing food to the childcare, health and social care sectors. Ela researched the company and decided to try it out.

apetito visited the setting with a selection of pre-cooked frozen dishes for a tasting session and to demonstrate how to prepare and serve the food. There was some hesitation around buying in frozen food, with Ela saying that there was the common misconception among staff and parents that it would not be as good quality. They were soon reassured that the apetito meals are designed by chefs and dietitians and are carefully frozen to 'lock in' the nutrition and flavour.

That's now more than a year ago and the children and staff continue to be happy customers.

'Now 90 per cent of parents want their children to have the hot apetito meals because they have seen the good food that the children are being served,' says Ela. 'Parents like it that their child is getting hot, nutritional food at nursery.'



Over 200 dishes – main meals and desserts to choose from

With apetito, the nursery has access to more than 200 different child-friendly dishes, which can be easily selected online using the 'my apetito' ordering platform, and gets the meals delivered weekly. They have a dedicated account manager who is available to answer any menu or delivery queries and also regularly checks in to ensure they are happy with the food – along with recommending new dishes and sending free samples.

"Fish and chips was on the menu before and we did not feel this was good for us because we did not want to promote fried food in the nursery setting. Now we are consistently serving really good food," says Ela.

"We have learned to tailor the food we order to our cohort of children because the menu is so flexible. This makes a massive difference because previously we could not alter the menu. We work on a three weekly rotating menu for both lunch and tea, which is very important to us. So basically, we need 30 dishes in our termly menu and they need to be equally liked by the children, nutritious and rich in everything that children need for healthy growing."

"Staff and parents like it that the food is oven baked, rather than deep fried, and is rich in vegetables. 'Providing children with nutritional food and talking about what is healthy and what is not is a now part of the EYFS,' she says. 'We encourage the children to try a variety of dishes to introduce them to new flavours and textures.'

"At snack time we also try to challenge them to try vegetables such as carrot, cucumber and celery rather than just bananas and apples. We want them to be used to a variety of tastes. Getting a healthy balanced diet, enriched with calcium and vitamin D, also promotes oral health."

"Ela reports that shepherd's pie, fish pie and the roast chicken dinner are all very popular along with all the pasta dishes. They find the pies very tasty and the cakes, which are low in sugar, taste homemade. The nursery even orders extra batches of food for the staff to eat 'because it's so yummy!'

We are now rated as a low-risk-environment by Environmental Health with 5-star rating!

Each dish has the nutritional details and cooking instructions clearly displayed on the label. All of our meals are cooked on either a full cycle or half cycle from frozen, and staff then simply probe the food to ensure it has reached the correct temperature before serving.

"We have found that apetito works out a lot cheaper and also requires less people in the kitchen – it's not as time and labour intensive and it's been a huge cost saving for us."

"Staff are reassured that all the meals are guaranteed nut-free, and they can select dishes according to children's dietary requirements, including vegetarian, dairy free and wheat free".

An unexpected bonus is that, following a recent food hygiene inspection, the nursery found that its kitchen will not need to be inspected as frequently. "Using apetito has made our kitchen a low-risk-environment, for example we are not handling raw meat," explains Ela.

"We received five stars on our inspection and will have less visits from Environmental Health, rather than every 18 months they will now come every three years."

If you would like to know more about apetito's service to nurseries and how the team can help your business

please contact:
education@apetito.co.uk
or phone: 07977 803009

How does it work?

It couldn't be easier to navigate – simply choose from apetito's range of over 200 meals.

You'll need freezer space and ovens to reheat our meals, but this takes a fraction of the space that a fully staffed kitchen requires.

Making Ordering Simple – My-apetito

Even placing an order is simple! As a customer, you will have a dedicated 'my apetito' ordering platform, which is designed to be quick and user friendly. This easy-to-use platform means you can contact your account manager whenever you need them, build menus, and access nutritional data to ensure meals are balanced and dietary requirements are met.

Training is given in using this online ordering system and the apetito team is always available to answer questions or offer advice. The planner will also make helpful suggestions based on popular combinations.

Nurseries simply search for their preferred meals on the menu planning tool, view the nutritional information and click to order. Your meals will be delivered to agreed times ready for you to store and serve when needed.

Contact us: 07977 803009



Sample menu

All our sample menus adhere to the 'Eat Better, Start Better' guidelines and are put together by our team of Nutritionists & Dietitians with your little ones in mind.

Week 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lunch meal	Vegan Katsu Curry	Penne Pasta in Tomato & Basil Sauce	Chicken in Gravy Meat Free Mushroom & Chicken Style Pie	Plant-Based Shepherds Pie	Beef Bolognese Lentil Bolognese
Served with	White Rice Mixed Vegetables	Sweetcorn	Roast Potatoes Mixed Vegetables	Green Beans	Penne Pasta Minted Vegetables
Dessert	Rhubarb Crumble Custard	Vanilla Sponge	Rice Pudding	Apple Crumble Custard	Chocolate Sponge
Dinner meal	Chicken & Sweetcorn Bake Potato, Cheese & Leek Bake	Vegetarian Hotpot	Quiche Lorraine Vegetable Quiche	Salmon & Broccoli Bake Tomato, Lentil & Sweet Potato Crumble	Vegan Thai Red Curry
Served with	Minted Vegetables	Vegetable Medley	Potato Wedges Peas	Baby Potatoes Mixed Vegetables	Vegetable Rice Vegetable Medley
Dessert	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit



Find out more: www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/nursery-meal-services

Why is simplicity important?

It's been said that simplicity is the key to brilliance!

If we consider the complexity of catering for children, it's no mean feat.

Through using pre-prepared meals, all your team needs to do is to choose from the extensive list of favourite meals and order the desired quantities. They can select individual portions to meet any special dietary needs ensuring they manage waste and unpredictability of attendance effectively.

And labour issues will be a thing of the past. apetito's team will train your team how to cook meals easily from frozen with minimum resource. Simply place in the oven, cook for the recommended time, and serve. Simple!

The power of personalisation

It's a given that today, nurseries need to meet children's dietary needs, religious, and cultural backgrounds, not forgetting their personal preferences when providing food.

Catering for bespoke needs can be complex. To ensure no cross-contamination or 'free-from' the 14 main allergens can be time consuming and with increasing diversity in nurseries, there are many cultural needs to be accommodated. It takes time to design menus, which are cost effective, nutritionally balanced and deliver great tasting meals.



With our system, a dedicated account manager is also always on hand to help tailor menus to meet bespoke requirements, whilst fully appreciating the importance of making sure that all food is safe for children who need 'free from' meals.

The benefits are clear – less time needed in the kitchen, more time for resources to be devoted to frontline duties.

Making a change has never been simpler

It couldn't be easier to make the move over to apetito. We offer fast-track mobilisation and we have a fabulous first-class team here at apetito. Your dedicated account manager will always be on hand to teach and train your staff on how to store, cook and prepare the food, as well as how to use our easy online ordering system.

You will also have access to our free Nutridata app which allows you to search, filter, view and compare all apetito products – enabling staff to access nutritional and allergen information with ease.



Contact us: 07977 803009



Find out more: www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/nursery-meal-services



Look out for our Guide Series...

'Making Mealtimes Simple' is the first in a series of four Guides for Nurseries, which will cover Simplicity, Efficiency, Enjoyment, and Safety – all designed to schools make easy, efficient, and safe alongside meals that children will love.

Look out for our next Guide – 'How to Increase your Efficiency in the Kitchen' which will be published in April.

apetito Ltd. Canal Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8RJ
T. 07977 803009 www.apetito.co.uk

Want to find out more?

Take advantage of our free sample tasting

The session gives nurseries who may be thinking of making a change the opportunity to try our meals and see the flexibility, quality, and benefits of our service for themselves.

Call 07977 803009

**[www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/
nursery-meal-services](http://www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/nursery-meal-services)**

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