

## PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

# *for the adventure of family life*



## 22\_Eat with joy!

“What should I cook, my children are so picky – the little one eats nothing except white pasta and pizza!” Does that sound familiar to you? Many parents get stressed when they think about family meals. It's supposed to be healthy, balanced and nutritious, but the little one refuses to eat all the healthy veggies. The chef does not feel valued for his or her work; the good mood is gone.

### **Children have very fine sensory organs**

If work in the kitchen is associated with fulfilment of duty and reluctance, then children feel this aversion. Nutrition experts almost never point to the joy, enjoyment, beauty and sociability of eating. These "ingredients" are just as important for health as the specific combination of vitamins and minerals. Without joy, poetry and passion, everyday food is reduced to the status of medicine. Children who have pleasant taste and sensory experiences will remember them forever. Even if they temporarily deviate from it and prefer to eat chips and pizza, in the long run these sensory impressions become important guidelines in their lives. Children have very sensitive taste buds and food preferences often change quite quickly. We all know that taste cells change and that in adulthood we like many things that we didn't like as children.

### **In terms of evolution, it was essential for survival that children do not eat everything at once.**

If they had tasted every berry and every herb as prehistoric people, many would have poisoned themselves. This "primal scepticism" is still active in people today. We adults also view many things with this scepticism in foreign countries. But when children see that adults eat with pleasure, it makes an impression on them. Thus, eating together is much more than “just” eating. It's about togetherness, "feeling oneself," sensory experiences.

**All too often adults spoil the mood at the table because that's where they start to "educate."**

For example, the children come home hungry and the parents bombard them with questions about how it was at school, what they should have done better, how they could study more or behave more socially... Who of us would still like our food if we were criticized or lectured? Eating is no longer fun in that case!

We can start cultivating humour, serenity and sensory experiences while eating. Even if the little one doesn't eat the vegetables, we don't let that stop us from enjoying the food and trust that the child's eating habits will change over time. Finally, children develop an interest in food when they are involved in shopping and cooking, and especially when it is done with joy and relaxation.

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