



Food, Nutrition & Healthy Eating Policy

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Our Values

Food at Young Friends is nourishment — not just of the body, but of the mind, planet, and community. Children are immersed in a culture of respect for food, real cooking, and joyful, informed eating.

- **Sustainability** – Every choice reflects care for the earth and our bodies
 - **Respect** – Children are active participants, not passive consumers
 - **Authenticity** – No packets, no pretence — just real food made from scratch
 - **Supportive Leadership** – Staff guide by example and shared experience
 - **Community** – Meals are moments of learning, connection, and inclusion
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Policy Statement

We are committed to providing children with a nourishing, plant-based diet that supports healthy growth and positive food relationships for life. Our meals are homemade, inclusive, and thoughtfully prepared — never ultra-processed or rushed. Food is part of our curriculum, not separate from it.

What We Serve

All food provided at Young Friends is:

- 100% plant-based and cooked fresh from scratch daily
 - Made using our Thermomix to preserve nutrients and texture
 - Free from refined sugars, salt, and processed ingredients
 - High in vegetables, legumes, whole grains, seeds, and fresh herbs
 - Seasonally inspired and reflective of children's cultural diets where applicable
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Oat Milk and Fortified Alternatives

- We make our own oat milk, fortified with plant-based vitamins including calcium and B12
 - Children are involved in the process — seeing ingredients, helping with preparation, and learning about nutrition
 - This reflects our commitment to sustainability, animal ethics, and real nourishment
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Respect for Food and Cooking Skills

Children are taught to:

- Take part in food preparation using real tools (peelers, child-safe knives, scales)
- Learn about ingredients through touch, taste, and storytelling
- Make breads, smoothies, snacks, seasonal dishes, and oat milk
- Grow herbs and other produce, and see where food comes from
- Lay the table, clear their dishes, and compost scraps after every meal

This builds respect for food and appreciation for the work behind it.

Mealtimes as Curriculum

Mealtimes are part of the learning day, not just transitions. We:

- Eat together without rushing
 - Practise independence and positive social communication
 - Talk about taste, nutrition, colour, and where food comes from
 - Discuss portion sizes and healthy amounts
 - Avoid rewards, coercion, or pressure to eat
 - Incorporate food-related stories, art, and science
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Portion Sizes & Seconds

- Chef measures portions using **child's fist** as a guide for each main element
 - Adjust slightly for younger/older children
 - Once all children have been served, seconds can be offered if there is enough for all
 - Seconds are smaller than first servings; thirds are rare and only very small tasters if plenty remains
 - Staff encourage children to check in with their hunger: *"Is your tummy still hungry, or do you feel full now?"*
 - Serve manageable portions to avoid waste; encourage tasting before refusal
 - Leftover food in serving dishes (not plates) can be stored for later snacks
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Mealtime Expectations for Staff

Food for Staff

- Staff meals are **not provided**
- Leftovers are for children only and must be stored by the chef for safe later use
- Staff support sustainability by helping repurpose leftovers creatively (e.g., rice → rice balls, veg → soup)

Role at the Table

- At least **one staff member per table** throughout the meal
- Eat a **child-sized portion** with children, modelling calm eating and table manners
- Engage in gentle conversation that encourages children to talk to each other and to you
- Maintain a **calm, low voice** at all times
- Avoid hovering over children or walking unnecessarily around the room — remain seated unless needed for safety or service
- Create an atmosphere of **rest, connection, and recharging**, not hyperactivity or noise

Modelling Manners & Etiquette

- Children remain seated during meals
 - No shouting, running, or disruptive behaviour
 - Model polite language, respectful listening, and correct cutlery use
 - Dim lights where possible to create a calm, focused atmosphere
 - Encourage turn-taking in conversation and active listening between peers
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Allergies & Intolerances

- At Young Friends Kindergarten, we **fully cater for all allergies and intolerances** with the utmost care and attention.
- We work in close partnership with parents and families to understand each child's specific needs and to create safe, enjoyable meals that reflect our ethos.
- Our chef maintains a **dedicated freezer** stocked with **homemade, allergy-safe alternatives** that are free from ultra-processed ingredients. This ensures that no child is excluded from mealtime experiences.

- Allergy-safe alternatives are planned into the menu from the start, so children feel fully included and can enjoy dishes that look and taste similar to those of their peers.
- Our kitchen is an **open, active environment** where cooking takes place throughout the day. While we follow strict separation procedures, we are transparent that **we cannot offer an absolute guarantee** against trace exposure.
- We follow robust **allergen management protocols**, including:
 - Clearly labelled storage and preparation areas
 - Colour-coded utensils and chopping boards
 - Careful cleaning practices to avoid cross-contamination
- We adapt recipes with sensitivity and creativity, never compromising on quality or flavour.
- We ensure all staff are confident in the allergy management process through induction training, ongoing refreshers, and clear visual reminders in the kitchen and rooms.
- For full details on how we manage allergies, please refer to our **Allergy Policy**.

Cultural Considerations

Our plant-based, whole-food menu is naturally inclusive of most cultural dietary requirements, as it contains no meat, fish, dairy, or animal-derived products.

- We remain sensitive to cultural food traditions and will work with families to incorporate herbs, flavours, or dishes that reflect their heritage where appropriate.
- Children's cultural backgrounds are also celebrated through conversation, stories, and cooking activities — even if the specific foods themselves are already part of our inclusive menu.

Packed Lunches

Young Friends Kindergarten **does not accept packed lunches** for children attending the setting. This is a carefully considered decision based on:

- **Inclusivity** – All children share the same high-quality meals, which promotes a sense of belonging and equality. No child is made to feel “different” because of what’s in their lunchbox.
- **Health & Nutrition** – Our meals are nutritionally balanced, freshly cooked on-site, and meet our plant-based, whole-food standards. Packed lunches can vary greatly in quality and may contain items that don’t align with our food ethos.
- **Allergy & Safety Management** – Controlling the menu ensures we can fully manage allergy risks. Packed lunches create a higher risk of accidental exposure to allergens.
- **Sustainability** – Our kitchen produces minimal waste and avoids single-use packaging. Packed lunches often generate unnecessary waste and may use disposable wrappings or containers.
- **Consistency** – Mealtimes are part of our curriculum. All children experiencing the same foods allows for shared discussions, role modelling, and positive exposure to a variety of tastes.

We are proud that our menu is:

- Freshly prepared from scratch every day
- Entirely plant-based and inclusive of all dietary needs
- Developed to introduce children to a wide range of seasonal ingredients and flavours
- Prepared with sustainability and respect for food at its core

By eating together from the same menu, our children gain not only nourishment but a shared community experience, which is central to our ethos.

Food Waste & Sustainability

Children are involved in:

- Composting and sorting food waste

- Learning how to use food creatively (e.g., peelings for stock)
 - Understanding food waste as an environmental issue
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Monitoring & Support

- Menus are created by the cook and reviewed termly
 - Parents can request menus or make suggestions
 - Children's eating patterns are monitored and discussed at key person meetings
 - Food logs are maintained if needed
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Linked Policies

- Food and Kitchen Hygiene
 - Managing Allergies and Intolerances
 - Sustainability
 - Partnership with Families
 - Curriculum and Pedagogy
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Signed:

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Young Friends Kindergarten

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