



## **Food and Drink Policy**

### **Introduction**

At Cocoon Family, we understand that healthy eating is crucial for the growth and development of young children. Our Food and Drink Policy outlines the guidelines we follow to ensure that children receive nutritious and balanced meals throughout their day at the nursery.

### **Packed Lunches**

Cocoon Family operates as a packed lunch nursery, which means that all children must bring their own packed lunch from home (No nuts – see below for more information). We ask parents and guardians to ensure that lunches are well-balanced, containing a variety of food groups, such as protein, carbohydrates, fruit, and vegetables.

We kindly request that packed lunches are kept in an insulated container or lunchbox to maintain food safety, especially for perishable items. Please ensure that the container is clearly named.

Please note:

- We **do not** have space in our fridge to store packed lunches.
- We are **unable/ not allowed** to reheat food brought from home.

Practical tips:

- Use an insulated lunch bag with a freezer block to keep food fresh.
  - Use a thermos container to keep hot meals warm enough for lunch time.
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- PLEASE NOTE: Cut grapes and cherry tomatoes lengthways in quarters for safety.

### **Our 'Always, Sometimes, Never' Approach**

To support parents in providing healthy, balanced meals, we use the following guidance for packed lunches:

#### **Packed lunches should Always include:**

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables each day (please cut grapes and cherry tomatoes lengthways for safety).
- A source of protein, such as meat, fish, eggs, lentils, beans, chickpeas, houmous, or falafel.
- A starchy food, such as bread, wraps, rice, pasta, couscous, noodles, or potatoes.
- A dairy food such as cheese, yoghurt, or milk-based dessert.
- Healthy extras, such as vegetable sticks with dips, crackers with cheese, or rice cakes.

#### **Packed lunches may Sometimes include:**

- A meat product such as a sausage roll, small pasty, or corned meat.
- A small cake, muffin, or similar baked item (preferably homemade or lower sugar).

#### **Packed lunches should **Never** include:**

- Confectionery such as chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits, or sweets.
- Crisps or fried snacks.
- Fizzy drinks, energy drinks, or juice with added sugar (including 'sugar-free' or 'no added sugar' versions).

### **Food We Offer**

While children are encouraged to enjoy their packed lunches, we also provide a variety of healthy snacks throughout the day, which include:

- Fresh fruit (e.g., apples, bananas, pears, etc.)
- Fresh vegetables (e.g., carrot sticks, cucumber, etc.)
- Rice cakes

These snacks are carefully selected to offer additional nutrients and promote healthy eating habits. We get our fruit and vegetables from local business Kent Fresh.

### **Drink Provision**

Water is available for all children throughout the day. We encourage children to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Water will be provided in individual cups or water bottles, and children are encouraged to drink regularly.

Families are welcome to send milk in a named bottle for their child if needed at nap time.

### **Nut-Free Environment**

Cocoon Family is a nut-free nursery. To ensure the safety of all children, we kindly request that no nuts or nut-based products (including peanut butter, nut snacks, or any food containing nuts) be included in packed lunches. This policy is in place to protect children and staff with nut allergies and prevent any potential allergic reactions.

Nuts include:

- Peanuts
- Tree nuts (almonds, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, cashews, pecans, macadamia nuts, walnuts, pistachios)

Pine nuts and sesame seed products (e.g., pesto sauce, hummus) are currently allowed. If anything changes, you will be informed.

### **Food Allergies and Special Dietary Requirements**

We are committed to ensuring that children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements are catered for. Parents must provide detailed information about any allergies, intolerances, or dietary preferences upon enrolment. We work closely with parents to ensure safe and appropriate alternatives are available for their child.

### **Encouraging Healthy Eating**

Our staff actively encourage children to try new foods and enjoy their meals in a positive, supportive environment. We believe that making mealtimes a pleasant experience is an essential part of developing lifelong healthy eating habits.

### **Conclusion**

Cocoon Family is committed to providing a nurturing environment where children are supported in developing healthy eating habits. By following this Food and Drink Policy, we aim to ensure that children receive the nutrition they need to thrive while also respecting individual dietary choices and requirements.

**If you have any questions or concerns about our food and drink policy, please don't hesitate to contact us.**

**Thank you for your cooperation and support!**

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## Appendix: Lunchbox Guide for Parents

### What to Include

- Fresh fruit (e.g., sliced apple, banana, orange segments, melon, strawberries).
- Vegetables (e.g., carrot sticks, cucumber, cherry tomatoes cut lengthways, pepper strips).
- Protein (e.g., chicken strips, tuna, boiled egg, beans, houmous, falafel).
- Starchy foods (e.g., wholemeal bread sandwich, pitta, wrap, pasta salad, rice).
- Dairy foods (e.g., cheese cubes, yoghurt, fromage frais).
- Healthy extras (e.g., crackers, oatcakes, rice cakes, plain popcorn).

### Foods to Limit (Sometimes)

- Meat products such as sausage rolls, pasties, pies.
- Sweet treats such as small cakes, biscuits, or muffins (preferably homemade or lower sugar).

### Foods to Avoid (Never)

- Chocolate, sweets, or chocolate-coated snacks.
- Crisps or fried snacks.
- Fizzy or sugary drinks (including 'sugar-free' versions).

### Practical Tips

- Use an insulated lunch bag with a freezer block to keep food fresh.
- Use a thermos container to keep hot meals warm for lunch.
- Cut grapes and cherry tomatoes lengthways for safety.
- Label your child's lunchbox and water bottle clearly.
- Avoid large portions — small, balanced amounts work best for young children.
- Encourage your child to try new foods by varying their lunchbox content.

### Helpful Resources

NHS Healthier Families: Lunchbox Ideas - <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>

BBC Good Food: School Lunch Recipes - <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/school-lunch-recipes>

Help for Early Years Providers: Healthy Plate Guidance - <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/nutrition/a-healthy-plate>