Projects about food, nutrition, and good eating make a nice transition or bridge from active play to mealtime. Transitional activities are like a bridge because they give children time to calm down after active play and get ready to sit at the table and eat. Try these transitional activities to help your children get ready for meals.

**Arts and Crafts about Good Eating**

**Calico Cat Comes to Lunch**
Draw the outline of a sleeping cat on a piece of cardboard. Give children glue and a variety of beans, peas, and lentils. Help the children glue beans onto the cat to make a decorative coat. Follow the art project with a meal of hearty bean soup and delicious whole-grain bread. Provide close adult supervision to prevent children from putting objects in their mouth, nose, and ears.

**Munching Mobile**
Save magazines with beautiful food pictures. Allow children to cut or tear pictures of foods they like from the magazine with adult supervision. Help children tape or paste pictures onto cardboard. Hang the food pictures from a coat hanger to make a Munching Mobile. Plan meals around favorite foods the children have picked.

**Story Time**
Visit your local library to find books with a food or eating theme. Look for *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, *Cooking Up a Story* by Carol Elaine Catron and Barbra Catron Parks, or some old favorites like *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, or *Peter Rabbit*. Read a story to give children a quiet transitional time from active play to mealtime, followed by a meal featuring a food from the story.
Happy Mealtimes Fun Food Activities for Children

Activities: Make Mealtimes Special

The Glory of Gardening
Teach children where foods come from and how food plants grow. Learning about growing food is a great way to increase interest in food and eating. Gardens can be as big as an outdoor plot or as simple as sprouting seeds in a plastic bag. Try a few of these special projects.

- Sprout carrot tops in a shallow dish of water.
- Place a damp paper towel in a plastic bag. Add a few lima bean seeds and have the children watch them sprout. (Do not eat sprouts.)
- Plan a potted-plant garden outside or on a windowsill. Ask a local gardener for advice on container-hearty vegetables like tomatoes, green peppers, and herbs that the children can watch grow and then eat.

Fun with Foods
Preparing foods is a special treat for children. Plan activities that allow children to help with food preparation.

- Tasty Toast
  Allow children to use cookie cutters to cut special shapes out of toast. Decorate the cut shapes with lowfat toppings like apple butter, jam, and cooked, dried fruits.

- Cereal Sundae
  Have available a variety of cereals, cut fresh fruits, and lowfat yogurt. Encourage children to be creative and artistic as they arrange their cereal sundae in a bowl or small plastic cup. Check your Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Pattern requirements on how to credit the cereal sundaes.
Activities: Make Mealtimes Special