

The Food Curiosity Starter Guide

5 no-pressure strategies to build food familiarity before dinner begins

The decision your child makes at the dinner table was already made, days or weeks earlier. Food acceptance is built through familiarity, not force. These five strategies work before the plate ever arrives.

01 Put It In Their World Before Their Plate

Leave a vegetable on the counter while you cook. Set it on the table during prep. Let it exist in their environment with zero expectation attached. A child who has seen a food fifteen times without pressure builds a completely different relationship with it than a child who only encounters it as a demand on a plate.

This week: Set one vegetable on the counter during dinner prep. Say nothing about it.

02 Give It a Story, Not a Sales Pitch

Nutrition facts don't build appetite, stories do. Find or create a simple narrative around one vegetable. A character who loves it. A weird origin fact. A silly nickname your child makes up. The story gives the food a file in your child's brain before it ever arrives on their plate. "Mr. Crunch's food" beats "carrots have vitamin A" every single time.

This week: Look up one surprising fact about a vegetable your child avoids. Share it at breakfast, no pressure to eat it.

03 Let Them Watch, Not Be Watched

Children learn by observation. Eat the vegetable yourself, visibly, casually, with enjoyment, without making it about them. No "aren't you going to try some?" Just model it like it's the most normal thing in the world. You don't need to teach. You need to be seen eating it.

This week: Eat one vegetable your child avoids in front of them, with zero comment directed their way.

04 Build Sensory Familiarity Away from the Table

Touch, smell, and sound before taste. Let your child hold a vegetable at the grocery store. Let them hear the crunch before they taste it. Involve them in washing, peeling, or sorting produce. Each sensory interaction without pressure builds the file. By the time the food reaches their plate, it's already familiar, not foreign.

This week: At the grocery store, hand your child one vegetable and ask them to find the best one. No eating required.

05 Use Repetition, Not Pressure

Research shows it typically takes 8-15 low-pressure exposures before a child accepts a new food. The key word is low-pressure. Exposure with reward or expectation attached works against you. Exposure that's quiet, consistent, and consequence-free works for you. The timeline is weeks, not one dinner. Keep showing up with the food and let the file build.

This week: Pick one vegetable for the next 30 days. Introduce it in at least three low-pressure ways before it goes on the plate.