

# Eating is Fun At Nursery School

Children Learn to Accept  
And Enjoy Routine Actions

By Alice Books

Helping children to accept nursery school routines is a worthwhile part of the University Nursery School program. Student teachers offer the children no choice in certain routines, since good management precludes individual choice.

## Routines Are Accepted

Nursery school routines, for which there is no choice, are simply stated as such. "Time to wash up," "Time for lunch," are accepted as matter of fact announcements, while "Are you ready to rest now?" or "Are you ready for lunch?" lead to needless complications.

Students learn that when a choice is offered, the child is permitted to choose and, in fairness to the child, his decision must be accepted. No choice is offered for such routines as washing the hands before lunch, relaxing for a 12-minute period after play, sitting in a circle to hear a story, and eating lunch together. Children like to do these things together, and even the child who resists routines at home generally accepts them wholeheartedly at school.

The University Nursery School was organized in the spring of 1931 as a part of the home economics course in child development. During the intervening twenty years the school has served the students in this course as a laboratory for the study of children.

## Food Habits Shown

Lunchtime at nursery school discloses many differences in food habits among the children. By the time he is about three years of age the child has had a long history of eating experiences which may have helped him to build good food habits and positive attitudes toward eating. Such a child comes to the school lunch with a hearty appetite. He eats and enjoys a

wide variety of nutritional foods. He shows an interest in and willingness to try new foods.

Because of past experiences, however, a child may have developed poor eating habits and attitudes during this important three-year period. This child may display such a poor appetite that mealtime has become a time of using every device he has learned to effectively resist eating.

Food dislikes may have grown to a point that the child rejects most vegetables, meat, eggs, and anything else he may suspect of containing a vitamin or a mineral. Such a child automatically greets any new food with resistance. Rejection of food will be loud or silent, depending upon his past experiences with the success of either technique.

## Other Problems

Some of the poor-eating habits in evidence at nursery school may be symptoms of deeper problems. Jealousy, past illness, or negativism may be the cause of the trouble. A child who was denied the pleasures of touching, handling, feeling foods in earlier days may display beautiful table manners and converse charmingly with people at his table, yet reserve his eating for between-meal snacks when it is possible to convey food to mouth via fingers rather than forks.

Another child may have been subjected to new flavors, textures, or temperatures too rapidly or too early during the early months of his life. One child may have been forced to eat against his will, another may have been cajoled too much, or lectured regularly upon the virtues of food. Many children have, as models for eating, parents who themselves have poor food habits.

## Student Is in Charge

The student who is scheduled for



*Nursery school children at the University of Arizona enjoy their lunch hour as shown above.*

the lunch period at nursery school finds this part of the program interesting and her efforts contribute to the well-being of the children who share her table. She creates and maintains an atmosphere of calm at her table. She encourages the children to eat independently but is ready to give help if needed. She directs wandering interest back to the business at hand.

No arbitrary rule is made concerning clean plates and dessert, since the child may conclude that dessert is more important to the adult than the main part of the meal, and he may regard dessert as a reward rather than simply the end of the meal.

*—Alice Books is Instructor in Home Economics*

*Routine activities such as "time to wash up" as are an important part of the University of Arizona Nursery School experience.*

