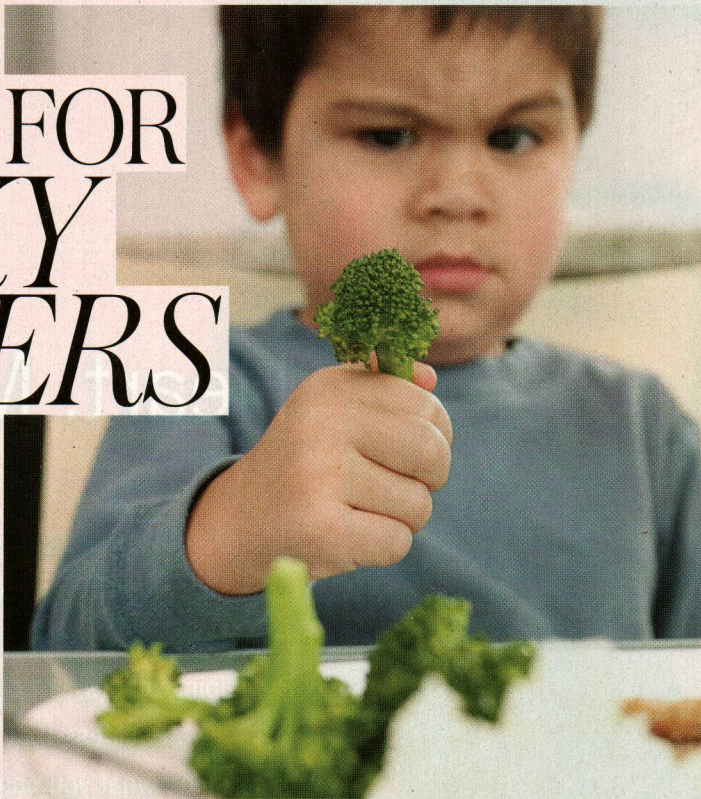


HOPE FOR PICKY EATERS

Does your child purse his lips whenever broccoli is near? Here's how to **OPEN HIS MIND**—and his mouth.

By **Danielle Winston**



→ **WHEN YOU RAISE A CHILD** who's a picky eater, you can easily find yourself agonizing over each bite. Will he spit out the string beans again? How can I make sure he gets the proper nutrition he needs? Will he always be this way? Okay, breathe. Holistic coach Catarina Rivera of the Institute for Integrative Nutrition has suggestions on how to get your little one to love foods beyond chicken nuggets with ketchup and bowls of mac and cheese.

Be an example.

The first step in getting your child to eat a variety of foods is to do so yourself, Rivera says. After all, she says, kids copy what they see at home. Become a model for healthy eating and not only will you influence your child's attitude in vast and subtle ways, you'll also become healthier in the process.

Punch up flavor and presentation.

"We need to make healthy foods just as exciting as the processed ones advertised to kids," Rivera says, adding that children's palates

are overwhelmed by sugar and salt in junk foods, so they need to adapt to healthy alternatives. Want your little girl to get fiber by eating garbanzos? Try a roasted chickpea bruschetta on crackers instead of a heavy stew.

Feed them a variety of foods early.

"Young children are still developing taste buds and preferences, so expose them to diverse foods and flavors," Rivera advises. Introducing them to unusual but tasty dishes—seafood paella, lemony grilled octopus—early will help them develop

a more sophisticated palate.

Get them involved.

Rivera also suggests growing a vegetable garden with your children, asking them to pick out fruit in the grocery store and cutting vegetables into small pieces they can eat by themselves. "Children are disconnected from cooking as well as how food is grown, so they resist the unknown," Rivera says. It's hard to reject a radicchio you grew yourself.

Sneak it in.

Stuff kid favorites with nutritious extras: "Slide carrots into lasagna," Rivera says.

"Puree onions, garlic and green peppers in sofrito and add the mixture to spaghetti sauce, pizza or beans." An easy bribe: Melt cheese atop the neglected food.

Educate older kids.

Older kids can be trickier to persuade than small ones, because they're more aware of junk food advertising, Rivera says. So, "connect healthy eating to their favorite hobbies or activities," by letting them know how nutritious foods provide the right energy to excel at sports. Also, she says, teach them to read nutrition labels. "Understanding that junk food is loaded with chemicals is an eye-opener for kids," she says. "When you teach kids what they're eating and offer choices, you can make it fun."

Ask NATALIE

Natalie Morales is the news anchor and cohost for NBC's Today show.



Q/ DO YOU THINK IT'S EVER OKAY TO DISCIPLINE SOMEONE ELSE'S KID, ESPECIALLY IF THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOR IS AFFECTING YOUR OWN SON OR DAUGHTER AND THE PARENT ISN'T DOING ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

How parents choose to discipline their kids is very personal and it can be taboo to get involved. I may not always agree with how my friends choose to correct their kids' behavior, but it is their child and in most instances, their problem. However, if the behavior is happening in my home and is affecting my own kids' behavior, then I speak up, delicately. I will usually pull my child away and, in front of the other child's parent, make it clear that his behavior is not acceptable and that if it continues, I will have to send his friend home. By saying this in front of the parent, I hope they get the message that they should be doing the same with their child. Good luck!

➔ **Have a parenting question for Natalie?** E-mail her at natalie@latina.com.

PHOTOGRAPHS, FROM LEFT: VEER; GLENN GLASSER.