



Autumn & Winter



Menu Guide



Menu Guide



Tiny Tums from The Health Kick have produced this Autumn Winter menu launch for The Early Years Academy.

The focus for this menu is to boost wellbeing and immunity for the colder months. The season is packed full of nutritious produce and can be a great time to pack in lots of comforting yet nutritious dishes.

You'll notice a new health character to support this theme with Gus the Guts, Gus supports our immune system with a healthy gut.

We are sticking with the two course menu, offering first course (starter) twice a week and a second course (pudding) three times a week.



In line with the EYFS Nutrition Guidance we are sugar free (all puddings are fruit and veg based, free from ultra processed foods and added salt).



Menu Changes & Summary



This menu builds upon the favourites from the Spring Summer menu, while introducing new warming, nutrient-rich dishes appropriate for colder months.

Across the 3-week cycle, several new dishes have been introduced to bring variety, enhance nutritional value, and embrace seasonal produce.

- 5 new mains
- 5 new puddings
- 6 new starters
- 3 new teas & new tea items to existing teas

The Autumn–Winter menu has been developed to provide children with nutritional balance and comfort foods that support health and well-being through the colder months.

Seasonal changes can disrupt mood, sleep and children's emotional regulation. We'll ensure we have outdoor play (wrapped up of course) and boost seasonal nutrition to support emotional well-being.



Menu Changes & Summary



EYFS Compliance

We aim not just to meet the standards set out in the EYFS, but to exceed them, creating menus that are nourishing, inclusive, and enjoyable.

Every dish is developed with safety, nutrition and enjoyment in mind, ensuring that mealtimes are a safe, positive, social, and enriching part of each child's day.



Managing Allergens

The known allergens will be displayed in this image for an easy visual reference.



Chop & blend
according to age
and stage

This visual will be displayed on each recipe as a key reminder to ensure each dish is served according to the texture each child is ready for.

Family Input

We're always keen to take on board the ideas of our families to include these into our recipe planning. With this in mind, we have introduced some dishes as requested and ensured that we have more meat and fish dishes.

Parent suggested meals

- Spaghetti Bolognese (Beef or Tofu & Lentil)
- Salmon en croute
- Lamb/Veg moussaka & flatbread with dips
- More dumplings into existing dishes and soups
- Chicken/Cheesy bean & root veg pie

You asked for sensory breakfast ideas, we have come up with the following:

- Oaty fingers
- Mini egg muffins
- Toast fingers & breakfast dips

You will see the family suggestions on the menu with the gold heart.



Hidden veg or maximising nutrition?

We had a query over the use of hidden veg, so would like to explain our menu and the way we use it to maximise nutrition for the children in our care.

We don't see hidden vegetables as a sneaky or covert way to 'trick children' into eating veg. We see it as a way to use blended or finely grated vegetables alongside visible, recognisable ones as a simple way to boost the nutritional value of our dishes.

We never replace visible veg with hidden veg, children can see, smell, touch and discuss vegetables in the many ways they appear on their plates.

This means that our meals are packed with extra goodness, while still helping children to build a healthy, positive relationship with the vegetables they can see, taste, and enjoy.

There's some lovely Autumnal roasted root veg on our menu for children to enjoy.



Wholegrain or white carbs?

We had a query over switching to wholegrain carbs so we would like to explain our stance on these.

We have not used wholegrains on our menu because for very young children, wholegrains and wholemeal products are not always ideal. Let's look at why: -

- **Small stomach capacity** – little children get full very quickly. Wholegrains are high in fibre, which can be very filling. This can mean children can fill up before they've taken in enough nutrients
- **Nutrient absorption** – Wholegrains naturally contain compounds such as phytates, which can bind to important minerals like iron, zinc, and calcium. This means that even though we ensure those nutrients are in our recipes, the body may not absorb them as efficiently.

Iron, calcium, and zinc are especially critical in early years, relying heavily on wholegrains could increase the risk of nutritional deficiencies. We will continue to offer white carbs in settings but for balance, feel free to introduce wholegrains in the home.

New Recipes

The following new dishes have been introduced and are in your new Autumn Winter recipe pack.

Starters (first choice)

- Creamy tomato & roasted red pepper soup
- Broccoli & stilton soup
- Pumpkin & coconut soup
- Lightly spiced curry dip & Naan bread fingers
- Warm butterbean & carrot dip with pitta fingers
- Warm salmon & courgette dip with pitta fingers

Main (first choice)

- Salmon en croute with root veg mash
- Chicken/Cheesy Bean Pie and root veg mash
- Pea & Paneer curry
- Spaghetti Bolognese (beef/Tofu & lentil)
- Lamb/veg Moussaka

Seasonal Tweaks

- Mash with root veg & butter beans
- Mash with root veg and cheese
- Dumplings with grated veg and protein boost
- Roasted seasonal root vegetables



Pudding (second course)

- Pumpkin & apricot crumble
- Beetroot, apple & blueberry crumble
- Apple & carrot sponge pudding
- Blueberry & banana muffins (children's choice)

Tea

- Seasonal mini muffins
- Warm potato & apple salad
- Pumpkin Patch Picnic
- Assorted pittas (children's choice)
- Oaty fingers
- Mango & coconut
- Apple, carrot and cinnamon
- Pumpkin spiced

Sensory Breakfasts

- Toast & breakfast dips
- Mini Muffins
- Oaty fingers
- Hard boiled eggs
- Fruits



New Dishes



We have our seasonal special, the 'Pumpkin Patch Picnic' for children to enjoy recipes, activities, songs and actions.



Nutritional Benefits



The Early Years Academy are working with Tiny Tums from The Health Kick to enhance our Spring/Summer menu, ensuring that every item on there is supporting early childhood development. To help make this visible we are using the following images on our recipes, this shows how different dishes support the important areas of early childhood development.



Building Bones



Building a Brain



Gut health



Emotions



Eating a rainbow



The role of Protein

The key areas are:

- Building strong bones
- Supporting brain development
- Boosting gut health
- Helping with emotional regulation
- The importance of 'eating a rainbow'
- Protein's role in early childhood development

Supporting Brain Health

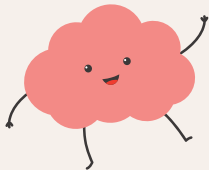


We know that preparing children for school is about more than letters and numbers; it's also about giving their brains the best possible fuel to learn, focus, and grow.

Nutrition plays a powerful role in brain development, and the foods children eat every day can support memory, concentration, and emotional resilience.

We're committed to helping your child build strong foundations for learning by offering meals and snacks that are rich in the nutrients brains need most, such as omega-3s, protein, fibre, and a rainbow of vitamins and minerals from fresh seasonal produce.

By making food a fun and positive experience, we not only nourish growing bodies but also encourage curiosity, independence, and confidence, all essential parts of school readiness.



Supporting Gut Health



We know how important a healthy gut is for keeping children strong, resilient, and ready to thrive. That's why we've made exciting changes to our menus, making the most of seasonal nutrition to help support your child's wellbeing while they are here with us.

We've added more fibre and a wider variety of vegetables, drawing on the natural benefits of seasonal produce such as root vegetables and pumpkins.

We've introduced a delicious range of sugar-free, vegetable-rich puddings and comforting warming soups that not only taste great but also help to build a strong "gut army", the friendly bacteria that play a key role in protecting children from germs.



Supporting Emotional Health

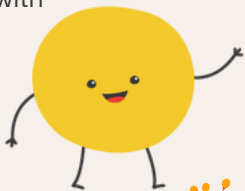


We understand that the shorter, darker days can affect children's mood and energy. That's why we've carefully shaped our menu to not only nourish little bodies, but also support emotional wellbeing while they are here with us.

We've introduced warming, comforting dishes that give children a sense of security and calm, while still being full of seasonal goodness. Our menus are rich in vitamin-packed vegetables, and hearty soups, which help balance energy levels and support steady moods throughout the day.

We also use sugar-free puddings filled with fruit and vegetables, giving a natural boost without the highs and lows that come with refined sugar.

Every choice we make is designed to help your child feel nourished, comforted, and emotionally supported during their time with us so they can thrive both inside and out.



The Early Years Academy are keen to encourage foods from many different cultures, and to take into account the family recipes and preferences which our children may have.

We ensure that we have several days in our three week menu to embed these dishes into our menu and encourage our families to share recipes with us for all of our children to enjoy.



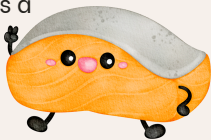
Health Benefits



Let's look at some of the new menu items and how they support your child's health and development.

Salmon en croûte

Our Salmon en Croûte is a new nursery favourite, with flaky golden pastry wrapped around tender salmon. Packed with protein for growing muscles and brain-boosting omega-3s. It's a tasty, nourishing meal that little ones love.



Warm Butterbean and carrot dip

Our new warm Butterbean & Carrot Dip is smooth, creamy, and packed with goodness. Butterbeans give little ones protein and energy, while sweet carrots add vitamins for bright eyes and strong bodies. Perfect for dipping breadsticks or veggie sticks, it's a fun, healthy, tasty dish.



Health Benefits



Let's look at some of the new menu items and how they support your child's health and development.

Beetroot, Blueberry & apple crumble

Our new Crumble is a colourful twist on a classic! Made with a healthy topping of oats, coconut, flaxseeds, and a touch of date paste and apple for natural sweetness, it's packed with goodness. The fruity filling combines beetroot, juicy blueberries, apple, and raisins. Rich in fibre, vitamins, and natural energy, it's a warm, nourishing pudding that little ones will love.



Pea & Paneer curry

Our Pea & Paneer Curry is a mild, creamy dish full of flavour and goodness. Soft cubes of paneer cheese give little ones protein and calcium for growing bodies, while sweet green peas add fibre and vitamins to keep tummies happy. Gently spiced for tiny taste buds, it's a warm, comforting curry that introduces children to exciting new flavours in a healthy way.



Health Benefits



Let's look at some of the new menu items and how they support your child's health and development.

Broccoli & Stilton soup

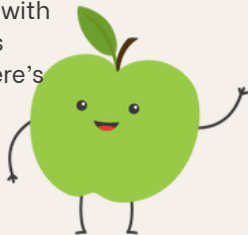
This yummy soup is warming and supports immune system, thanks to a healthy dose of vitamin C in the broccoli. Broccoli is also a good source of vitamin K to build bones alongside the calcium in the stilton.

A little goes a long way with stilton so this won't be too overpowering, just a nice introduction to new flavours.



Apple & carrot sponge

This apple and carrot sponge pudding is naturally sweetened with apples which provide vitamin C to fight off germs and keep you strong, carrots help your eyes see in the darker months and blended raisins make it naturally sweet with energy for play. A sprinkle of cinnamon adds that seasonal cozy flavour, and because there's no sugar, it's extra kind to your teeth.



Health Benefits



We have our lovely seasonal themed picnic tea in the 'pumpkin patch' so thought we would share some of the nutritional benefits of this versatile seasonal food.

Pumpkin nutrition

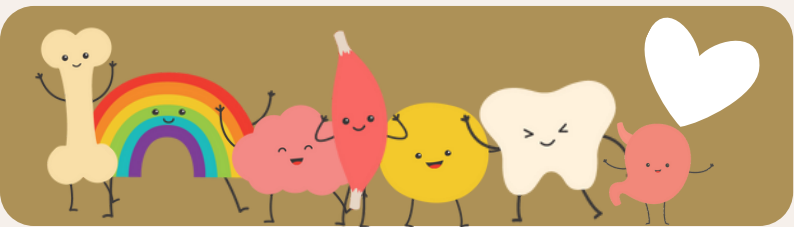
- Pumpkins are a great source of fibre supporting digestive health
- Pumpkins have vitamin C, which helps the body fight off colds, keeping you feeling heathy
- Pumpkins are packed with vitamin A, which helps with eye health and vision
- Pumpkins give you natural energy because they're full of good carbs and vitamins, perfect for running, jumping, and playing.



Summary



We truly value the role of food in early childhood development and will continue to enhance our nutritional message and menu, to ensure that every child gets the very best start in life with their food journey at The Early Years Academy.



This Autumn Winter 2025 menu design and launch, with all of the supporting documents have been lovingly prepared to support the health, wellbeing and development of each and every child in our settings.

