

PORTLAND

lifestyle & family

FOOD / PARENTING / JUNE 1, 2015

Ask Ariel: Picky Eater



by Ariel Frager

Dear Ariel,

My son is such a picky eater. He won't eat meat or most vegetables. He pretty much dislikes anything that isn't bread or pasta. If I force him to try something, he makes himself vomit. I'm worried about him getting enough nutrition, but I don't want to give him a complex about food, either. How can I get him to try new things?

<http://www.portlandfamily.com/posts/ask-ariel-picky-eater/>

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Signed,
The Food Police

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Dear FP,

As much as I love giving advice (and I do love it), the kids/parents food dance is tough, and so is pinpointing a correct answer. The food philosophy of a family is dependent upon many factors, such as culture, religion, and dietary preferences of the parents. I don't think it is right to advise a right or wrong way to feed a kid who only wants to eat white things like bread and pasta.

What may help is changing the family food philosophy, so your son isn't so stressed. The very best thing I can say to you, Food Police, is to chill out. Your kid will survive having many white meals. He will likely get enough nourishment. You are not a failure as a parent if your kid doesn't eat kale.

The overarching food philosophy we have in our family is the tenet of "no drama." Our son eats whatever we are eating for dinner. He doesn't get a choice and if he doesn't like the meal I have prepared, he doesn't have to eat it and he will not be offered an alternative. A little bit of everything goes on his plate. He either eats it or he doesn't. I never comment on what he has eaten, no praise for eating broccoli, no criticism for a second or third helping of plain white pasta. I never make comments like, "If you eat your vegetables, you can have dessert," because it turns vegetables into things that merit a special reward and I don't want him to think that way about vegetables. Most of the time he eats something green, but not always. I don't really care that much about what he eats at each individual meal. What I am trying to cultivate in him is enjoyment of our family eating dinner together at the table every night with no drama. This food philosophy has helped me relax and trust that our son will get all the nutrients he needs.

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