

Set for less stress during lunch

The lunch buffet at the preschool “Birkamytet” helps the children to eat more and dare to try new types of food.

“Welcome in and eat”, says Lovisa Frygner, 6 years, to her friends at the section “Lingonet”. They attend the preschool “Birkamytet” in Ängby, north-western Stockholm where lunch is served at Giraffen Restaurant located in the corridor between Lingonet and Blåbäret.

SOFT MUSIC flows from the speakers while the kids are eating. They sit at three low tables which seat 17 people. Every day an adult and a child are responsible for the lunch. When The Teacher's Journal (Lärarnas tidning) visits Birkamytet, Lovisa Frygner has been tasked to help out. She has a necklace with a feather so that everyone can see that she has been given the confidence to help with lunch. Lovisa counts how many empty seats there are and then she goes to collect just the right number of children. First, she gets those who tend to sit down and take a long time to eat, so that they will have enough time at their disposal. Giraffen Restaurant opens at eleven o'clock.

The buffet table in the corridor

is set with bowls which the children can fill with whatever they want. No one needs to taste everything.

CAMILLA NILANDER Vallejo, child minder and cook, cooks all the food from scratch. Here, no processed foods products comes across the doorstep - no additives, either. Today macaroni cheese is served, in good company of peas, sunflower seeds, beetroot and lots more. - "The children eat more food with this type of lunch system where they all serve themselves", says Camilla Nilander Vallejo. "They dare to try more, new vegetables and other things.

THE CHILDREN DON'T need to go along with Lovisa when she comes and invites them to lunch. They can choose to play for a bit and come back later when they feel more hungry.

Lovisa Frygner goes to Blåbäret and comes back with Lily Grau, who has not yet turned two and is the smallest child here today. Lily needs almost no help to take food from the buffet, not even with the peas.

TIPS FOR A BUFFET LUNCH

Boba Stamatovic, child minder working at Blåbäret, occasionally receives visits from other preschools to talk about lunch buffets. She has prepared some working material together with preschool teacher Sara Calestam with suggestions of questions for discussion and a work plan for how to introduce a buffet lunch at any preschool.

But Lovisa is prepared if Lily would need her. Then she carries Lily's plate and puts it where Lily suggests that she wants to sit. All children sit where they want and many choose the same spot every day.

The children chat while they eat:

- “My dad starts on snail” says Josefin Wärme, 3,5 years.
- “I also start on snail”, respond Sofie Serander, 3 years.
- “I’m actually finished”, exclaims Josefin, and shows her empty plate to everyone.
- “If it is a real snail you can eat it”, continues Sofie.
- “I don’t like it”, responds Josefin.

It is difficult to balance peas on a plate but there is surprisingly little spillage on the floor. The younger children also helps the older children sometimes. If they allow themselves to be helped though, they might look after themselves.



THE FEATHER HELPS

To make it clear which adult works in the restaurant, they wear a special necklace. Someone put a feather on the necklace once and after that the teacher has been called “the feather”. The child who helps is called “the little feather”. All children are asked if they want to be the little feather, but no one is forced. The youngest child who has carried out the responsibility of Little Feather had not even turned two years old and did it splendidly, with some help from the adult

THE ONE WHO IS FULL cleans his or hers plate with a rubber scraper in a trash can, puts the dish on a trolley and puts their cutlery in a bucket of water. The food today was very popular; hardly anything goes into the trash.

- “I’m the last to eat”, says Lovisa, “but it doesn’t matter”. When she’s finally able to sit down with her plate she is quite hungry. By that time she has not only brought all the children to the restaurant, but also helped the smaller children back to rest after they have eaten: she has followed them to the bedroom and tucked them in.

