

USDA distribution dates for October

Siletz	Salem
Oct. 1 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Oct. 8 By appt only
Oct. 2 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Oct. 15 By appt only
Oct. 3 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Oct. 21 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Oct. 7 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Oct. 22 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Oct. 8 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Oct. 23 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Oct. 9 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Oct. 29 By appt only
Oct. 10 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	
Oct. 11 By appt only	

For those who work during these hours, we will open the warehouse on the first or second Saturday of each month for better efforts to meet your schedule at the Siletz warehouse. These appointments will need to be scheduled in advance.

LIKE us on Facebook at Siletz Tribal FDPIR. We would like to see more people sharing their recipes on our FB page.

Our Salem location will start to open up for two Wednesdays after distribution, for those who miss their original appointment, with limited fresh produce. These appointments will need to be scheduled in advance as well.

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Saving fresh and seasonal berries

Berries are delicious, but they’re also kind of delicate. Raspberries in particular seem like they can mold before you even get them home from the market. There’s nothing more tragic than paying \$4 for a pint of local raspberries, only to look in the fridge the next day and find that fuzzy mold growing on their insides.

With fresh berries just starting to hit farmers markets, we can tell you how to keep them fresh! The tip on how to prevent them from spoiling quickly in the first place: Wash them with vinegar.

When you get your berries home, prepare a mixture of one-part vinegar (white or apple cider work best) and ten parts water. Dump the berries into the mixture and swirl them around.

Drain, rinse if you want (though the mixture is so diluted you can’t taste the vinegar) and pop your fruits in the fridge. The vinegar kills any mold spores and other bacteria that might be on the surface of the fruit, and voila! Raspberries will last a week or more, and strawberries go almost two weeks without getting moldy and soft. So, go forth and stock up on those pricey little gems, knowing they’ll stay fresh as long as it takes you to eat them.

You’re so berry welcome!



Navigating the sensory preferences of authentic autistic food identity

Nancy Ludwig, MS, RDN, LD,
Siletz Tribal Head Start Nutritionist

In my role as a consultant nutritionist to Siletz Tribal Head Start, I offer information for families and the community. As an extension to last month’s article, “Matching our Food Choices to Support our Unique Health Needs”, I want to explore how we might support students and families to support Autistic food identity, even without formal diagnoses.

Authentic Autistic food identity is a topic rarely discussed. I would dare to say, it is highly unique to each person, and yet is often unsupported, shamed, and oppressed in ways that might be more difficult to see than racism, sexism, and ableism. Autistic food needs are based in biology, and when they are not honored, explored, or supported, they result in lack of safety, which can lead to behaviors that result in further oppression and set the stage for trauma.

“Food is more than what we eat – It’s a reflection of identity, culture, and lived experience. Honoring Autistic food identity means moving beyond stereotypes and centering on authenticity, autonomy, and dignity.” This bold statement comes from my recent trainings with Naureen Hunani, Dietitian from Canada and founder of RDs for Neurodiversity, www.rdsforneurodiversity.com and Kieran Rose, The Autistic Advocate from United Kingdom. <https://theautisticadvocate.com/>

Authenticity means honoring personal preferences and sensory truths, even when they differ from the dominant food culture. Autonomy is the sense of agency over one’s body and choices. It is a key milestone in identity development.

Food can be an early battleground for autonomy. Dignity focuses on our innate value rather than basing our

worth on accomplishment, status, or merit. Dignity is often breached by Epistemic Injustice, which means that lived experiences are often dismissed by outsider interpretations. In other words, discrimination occurs as a result of bias or prejudice.

Autistic Food Identity is a big topic. As part of my introduction to the topic, I would like to gently raise questions while inviting you to explore possible dynamics that may be hidden in plain sight.

Sensory processing is a key area of difference for Autistic individuals, and it is core to forming food identity. These biological differences come with needs that are an internal experience along with the external responses (from others) that often shape, influence and invalidate the Autistic experience. In other words, our beliefs about self are often shaped by others and how they view us. This identity is constantly evolving, and food identity may be different from general identity.

Sensory preferences and aversions are part of how an autistic person experiences and navigates the world. People can be supported to explore authentic preferences such as crunchy textures, specific temperatures or mild flavors. However, when these preferences or needs are pathologized or ignored, food identity may be shaped by avoidance, anxiety, or masking.

The whole-body experience, inside and out, intertwines sensory (what we feel through our physical senses of touch, smell, taste, hearing and sight) with interoception (our perception of internal signals, including fullness, comfort, happiness, etc.). When these senses and internal signals are invalidated, individuals can begin to believe that their sensory needs are “wrong” or “too much”, or they need to eat foods that

cause discomfort to avoid judgement, shaming or stigma.

When negative societal beliefs are absorbed, harmful narratives are reinforced and Autistic people are disconnected from their authentic preferences. Stress increases and erodes sensory safety.

Often, Autistic children learn that they can’t follow their own needs and learn to respond to the requirements of others to feel safe. However, it isn’t safe. This then becomes a masking practice. Our need for cultural and social belonging is such that to break these normative patterns and claim, or reclaim, food preferences, support is required. This is often only available to those with privilege.

Without biologic needs being seen or validated, individuals are labeled as “picky”, and this faulty thinking may lead to burnout.

Food can also be a powerful part of our cultural identity with family recipes, holiday meals and communal eating. If an Autistic person’s needs make participation in these traditions difficult, they may feel excluded or “less connected” to their culture. Over time, adapting cultural foods to align with sensory and safety needs can help reclaim both cultural belonging and food identity.

In learning to trust our body’s needs, validation is necessary. It is difficult to trust ourselves when adults around us question or shame us. I encourage us all to consider these basic questions as we explore authentic food identity at home, in the world, and in the Head Start Classrooms – even without considering Autism.

Are we safe enough to clearly sense when we are meeting our needs and noticing our internal signaling? How can we be supported to find out what is right for us and for our children? How safe do our children

and Head Start Students feel around eating together at meal times? Are we supporting our children and Head Start Students to meet their sensory needs without shaming? When food is such a basic need, how can we normalize individual food needs and preferences? How can folks distinguish between a desire to eat a wider variety of foods, and cultural pressure to conform by eating a wider variety of foods?

How can we reframe the common words “picky eater” to look beyond the behavior, without a judgmental lens, to see the reasons so that we can better accommodate and honor our children’s biological needs?

These ideas may not seem like nutritional principles, but they lead to ideal nutrition. Eating in community with others, where we are loved and supported, helps to prepare us to receive our foods in more positive and effective ways. The positive family style setting, personal choice, conversations and exploration of foods via taste, smell, sound, sight, and touch, sets the stage for children to learn and to choose foods that meet their sensory needs.

Curiosity goes a long way to open the conversations with our young ones. It can also allow us to look back at ourselves and our own relationships with food, and how we formed our identities in ways that may or may not have been authentic, or supportive of our autonomy and dignity.

Please know that Siletz Tribal Head Start offers support for nutritional consultation at no cost to Head Start families. This usually occurs over the telephone. If you have concerns about your Head Start child’s nutrition or family nutrition concerns, please contact your teacher or the director and ask to speak to the nutritionist. We want to support your children and families.