

A taste of home

HEALTHY CHALLENGES

With a great team of staff, a beautiful natural playground and a focus on community spirit, C&K Salisbury aims to feel like a “home away from home”. Some years ago, the centre was uncomfortable with the over-reliance on ‘microwave-style’ food from by the meal provider they were using. Partnering with The Wellbeing Food Company was a decision based on its wholesome, homestyle meals – as well as its approach to allergy management. Assistant Director Catherine Kellaghan says the centre is managing “more allergies than ever before”, with more than 20% of children having special meal requirements involving everything from nuts and dairy to peas and corn. With staff constantly multi-tasking and “no two days ever the same”, ease and flexibility were also top priorities.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The Wellbeing Food Company provides morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea for around 48 children each day. Heating and serving is managed by Catherine and other staff members as needed. “We could have employed someone part-time to organise preparation but it’s so easy, we decided to do it ourselves,” she says. “And the kids help too, like getting the trolleys ready for morning tea.” She works closely with The Wellbeing Food Company team, providing feedback to enhance menus and ensure quantities and meal selection are spot on. “They are fantastic with advice and responding to questions and any issues,” she says.



SNAPSHOT

- Salisbury C&K Community Childcare Centre, Brisbane.
- Childcare and kindergarten: 3 rooms (ages ranging from 6 weeks to 5 years).
- Community-based, not-for-profit centre with government-approved kindergarten program.

THRIVING CENTRES + HEALTHY HUMANS + HAPPY FAMILIES

Catherine says the service is perfect for the centre’s dynamic, busy environment. “Before lunch, I can just pop the food into the oven and go and respond to emails, then pop back and help the staff serve it up. I can do 50 other things and still manage it easily.” She also values the time and brain-space it saves. “I just cannot imagine having to come up with all the menus ourselves – let alone making sure it’s all planned out nutritionally like it is now.” The flexibility is a major benefit too. “I absolutely love what they call ‘The Pantry’, which is a list of extras you can select online according to your needs and the children’s tastes, which you come to know as you go. It means I can mix it up – like extra bread on soup day or extra cucumber because they love it. Or it might just be to have a few extra favourites in the cupboard because some kids are always, always hungry!”

According to Catherine, rice and pasta dishes (especially spaghetti bolognese) are firm favourites along with chipolatas and cheese and crackers. “We certainly never have parents saying their children came home starving!” she says. The biggest compliment is when parents ask for recipes. “Like one mum said: ‘What was the rice dish you fed him yesterday; he didn’t stop talking about it!’. It was chicken korma and, yes, I passed on the recipe. That’s not unusual.” Catherine understands the importance of reassuring parents of allergy-prone children. She outlines the team’s strict processes, provides menus and even sends samples home. “I know it can be a worry – so if they can also try the foods at home, and see with their own eyes that they are safe, it really helps.” The other bonus of partnering with The Wellbeing Food Company is that staff “don’t have to go through everybody’s lunchbox to check they haven’t packed risky food.”

Apart from reliability, the team’s delivery service has other side benefits. “We generally have the same two delivery drivers, who are great,” Catherine says. “And the kids help out with unpacking – they know where everything goes and it makes them feel capable. It’s also a great diversion for children who feel sad and unsettled at drop off.” Everyone’s a winner!

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