

Although home and restaurants are probably the places where your family eats together most frequently, there are many other places around town where you can enjoy family mealtimes. The homes of relatives and friends are perhaps the most obvious places where you might join with others around a table. Here are some other creative ideas – from real families – about places and ways to switch from eat-and-run to eat-and-fun.

Enjoy moveable neighborhood feasts.

YOU MAY HAVE ATTENDED a progressive gourmet dinner (where each course of a fancy meal is served at a different home). A simplified version works wonderfully for families. Start with a salad appetizer at one house, move to the next for the main meal, and offer dessert at a third. It spreads the cooking around – and fits fitness in with walks between houses.

Enjoy picnics plus playtimes.

YOU CAN HAVE A FUN FAMILY PICNIC anywhere there is a table – or space for a blanket (even in your own backyard). Whenever the weather is nice, a picnic can be an easy way to combine family mealtime with family playtime – at a public pool, beach, soccer field, or bike path.

Enjoy picnics in the park.

MANY FOLKS FEEL THAT FOOD JUST TASTES BETTER when eaten outdoors. Make a list of neighborhood parks within walking distance, plus city and state parks that may be a short bike or car ride away. Picnic your way through the list – maybe inviting other families for outdoor fun and a picnic potluck.



Enjoy field trip mealtimes.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS, AQUARIUMS, AND ZOOS are also entertaining and educational places to enjoy a family meal together. They may have a cafeteria or restaurant where you can purchase a meal – or a designated place for bring-your-own picnics. No problem with starting a conversation here: the exhibits will provide plenty of topics for discussion.

Enjoy mystery destinations and/or guests.

HERE'S AN IDEA (from a Connecticut principal) whose favorite family mealtime memories were the 'mystery meals' planned by her parents. The family would leave home (walking or in the car) and the parents would gradually share clues about their dinner destination or guests. The sooner the kids guessed the correct answer, the sooner they got to eat!

