

Family Food (Not Baby Food)



Baby food--what comes to mind? Little jars of pureed food? A box of dry cereal to be mixed with formula? Anything edible you can find down an infant aisle in a grocery store?

If you ask me, looking down that infant aisle in the grocery store represents big business. I'm not saying there is not a time and place for commercially made baby food, but I'm asking you to think about this differently.

[Wikipedia](#) says "The industrial revolution saw the beginning of the baby food market which promoted baby foods as convenience items." What did babies eat before baby food was available? What do babies eat in other countries? If we didn't have baby food available, what would we feed babies?

I bought into the pureed baby food belief, too. While feeding our own children baby food all those years ago, we asked ourselves after a while, "what is the purpose of this?" It wasn't long before our children grabbed the nearest green bean off the table or bread off the nearest plate. Not long after that, our babies were refusing the commercially made baby food and insisting on table food.

After several years of caring for infants and young toddlers, the progression is almost always the same and infants seem ready for table food long before parents are 'ready'.



Here are some interesting facts:

[IrishHealth.com](#): ". . . babies are capable of chewing at six months, and giving them pureed baby foods such as those widely available commercially could delay development of chewing ability. . . Ms Rapley says there is no reason young children need pureed food, as long as they are sitting up straight and supervised by an adult when eating."

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[Culinate.com](#): "Around the globe, babies are started on solids with a variety of foods. In Oceania, babies are given pre-chewed fish, grubs, and liver. The Polynesians prefer a pudding-like mixture of breadfruit and coconut cream. Inuit babies are started on seaweed and seal blubber, while Japanese health-care providers recommend a thin rice porridge, eventually made thicker and topped with dried fish, tuna, tofu, and mashed pumpkin. . .

The point is to get baby prepared to eat with the rest of the family, not be a cause for purchasing special prepared food so baby can learn to expect high-priced separate meals.

. . . Feed them (babies) a little of what you're eating, mashed up. And if you're not eating fresh real food — whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, eggs — clean up your act."

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EcoChildsPlay.com: "The fact is, we have become so conditioned to believe that the usual method of beginning our infants with runny rice cereal, gradually progressing through smooth then lumpier purees, in defined quantities and on a defined schedule, keeping flavours bland and simple — is the right and indeed the *only* way to do things, that we don't even *think* about even questioning *why* this is the way we do it. . . .

Anecdotal evidence suggests that babies who have been spoon-fed have more problems with gagging and 'choking' when they start to handle food... than those who have been allowed to experiment much earlier."

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For several years now, in cooperation with parents, I have been working with infants who are ready for table food, offering first smashed fruits and vegetables, then working in other foods as the baby is ready. Most of the time the baby is more ready than the adults are. I agree with the above research that says babies who have not been introduced to solid foods sooner have more problems later when solids are introduced.

So, I'm asking you to look at baby food in a different way: Family Food