

BRIEF JOURNEY into NUTRILosophy

The Healthy Plate

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

READING
LEVEL

5



UNITED WAY
Romania

NABU

About NutriCOOLtura

The United Way Romania Foundation, with the support of Edenred and Kaufland Romania, has developed the NutriCOOLtura project, which aims to inform and help children develop healthy nutritional habits through reading and practical learning experiences. The project also ensures the development of teachers' competencies in literacy and working with vulnerable groups, along with providing basic nutrition-related information. We offer support and information to parents to raise awareness of the importance of education, reading, and healthy nutrition for children, as well as for the entire family.

About UNITED WAY

United Way Romania's vision is of strong, supportive communities committed to helping people reach their potential. Our mission is to improve lives in our communities through giving and volunteerism.

NABU's Mission

NABU is a New York-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, with a mission to solve the imbalance in children's book creation and distribution, so all children can read and rise to their full potential.

About the ABC Lab

The ABC Lab is NABU's Authentic Book Creation Lab and is where NABU stories are born and come to life through workshops with local artists and writers. The workshops are a part of our goal to address the need for children's books in mother tongue languages. It is a peer-to-peer learning structure that enables a continuous learning loop and the exchange of skills and ideas, aimed at creating original and authentic mother tongue children's story books.

BRIEF JOURNEY INTO NUTRILOSOPHY - THE HEALTHY PLATE



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Chapter 1 - The Festival

There was a lot of noise in the schoolyard. Happy voices and colorful laughter animated the warm September afternoon. But where did all this enthusiasm come from? It couldn't just be the joy of meeting up on the first day of school.

„I did it! I signed up!” exclaimed Daria from grade 7, as she ran down the stairs. All her friends greeted her with applause and hugs.

„Mia, you signed up for MosaicFest Junior too, didn't you?” asked Daria, barely catching her breath after so many hugs.

„No... I couldn't decide,” whispered Mia, embarrassed. „I don't have any talent, which section should I have signed up for? Anyway, it's too late now.”

Mia's response caused disappointment in the group of friends.

„Mia, it can't be... we decided we would all participate!”

„Come on Mia, have courage! There are still a few spots



left, we'll be together, as usual."

„Please stop insisting. I didn't promise anything, I just said I would think about it. And I don't even find this festival very interesting. A waste of time, that's all," concluded Mia, slightly irritated. „See you tomorrow!"

„Wait, Mia, wait!"

„Let her go, Daria, it's not worth it. She's selfish," a voice from the group was heard.

Mia quickly left the schoolyard. A lump the size of a walnut nestled in her throat and she could barely hold back her tears. She deeply regretted disappointing her friends, but what would she do at MosaicFest Junior? She didn't have any special talent and she didn't like competitions or festivals. To be seen at an exhibition stand? Out of the question! No, definitely, she had no intention of signing up.

MosaicFest Junior was the first children's festival organized in the city. Various activities, music, special guests, exhibition stands – in short, great experiences and fun at the end of each week, for a month. Children were

invited to showcase their creations from various fields – art, gastronomy, science and technology. Of course, the spots were limited, and sign-ups had seemingly exploded in the last few days.

On her way home, Mia bought a bag of pizza-flavored chips and two chocolate donuts. A quick and tasty lunch. Yet another day when the lunch box prepared by her mother remained untouched in the fridge.

Cling! Cling! Her phone chimed – a message from Daria: „*Are you okay, Mia? Just so you know, there are only two spots left at the festival. Why don't you try the Gastronomy section?*”

Daria was Mia's deskmate and best friend. They had known each other since first grade. Mia wanted to immediately reply to Daria that she wasn't changing her mind, but she deleted the message and only sent two cute emojis.

She took the bag of chips, sat in the armchair, opened her laptop, and accessed the festival page.

MosaicFest Junior-Menu-Registration/Enter Available

spots – Gastronomy Section – 1 spot

Register now!

With her eyes fixed on the laptop screen, Mia nervously munched on the pizza-flavored chips and thought out loud:

„What should I do? What should I do? Oh, why is it so hard for me to decide?”

Disheartened, Mia navigated through all sorts of pages – culinary art, gastronomy, nutrition. Thousands and thousands of pieces of information – what and how to choose? She needed time to research, but time wasn't on her side.

„That's it!” Mia said to herself and sighed deeply. She gulped down the last chips and got up to write to Daria that, unfortunately, she hadn't changed her mind.



A digital pop-up appeared in the right corner of the screen, startling Mia.

„Hello there! I’m Rof Nutrilosoph, your digital assistant! I know lots of things about nutrition, balanced diet, and a healthy lifestyle! How can I help you?“

Mia dropped her phone and turned back to face the laptop. A slightly bizarre but very friendly creature had appeared in the right corner of the screen, smiling warmly.

„Hi! I’m Mia, what did you say your name was?“

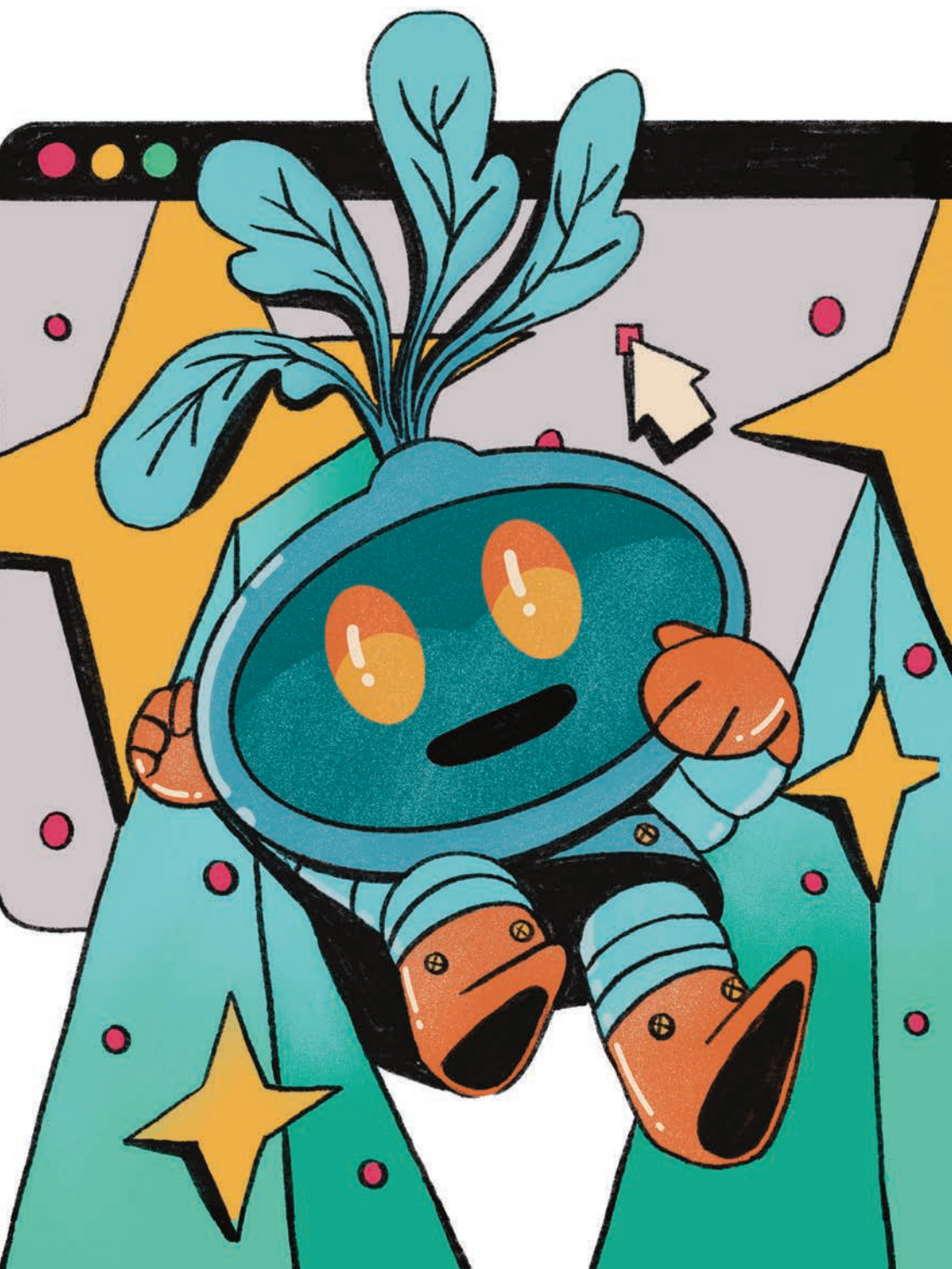
The friendly assistant chuckled delightedly and made a theatrical bow.

„Rof Nutrilosoph. That means... Rof the wise one in matters of nutrition.“

„Ah, I understand now... But how did you appear on my laptop screen?“

„You called me. I think you need help. You accessed several pages about gastronomy and nutrition.“

„Yes, that’s right, I was looking for some information, but now it’s too late. And anyway, I don’t think you can help me, because I don’t eat healthy food. At least, that’s what





my mom tells me all the time. I like chips, donuts and fruit gums.”

Rof Nutrilosoph’s face scrunched disapprovingly, and Mia burst out laughing.

„Is what I told you really that bad? You know, you’re very funny and expressive.”

„Sorry, my circuits react strangely to certain notions that contradict everything I know about nutrition. There, I’ve recovered now. I still think I can be of help to you. Come on, tell me what this is about and then we’ll see if it’s really too late.”

Mia didn’t hesitate any longer and briefly told Rof Nutrilosoph about her dilemma regarding participation in MosaicFest Junior.

„Sign up, Mia, what are you waiting for? We’ll prepare a healthy food stand together. People will be delighted, and you...





you will become a top-notch apprentice Nutrilosoph, I'm sure of it!"

Rof Nutrilosoph's optimism and confidence were contagious, and his playful smile made Mia feel good and relaxed. The humorous assistant seemed very excited. Suddenly, an explosion of fruits, vegetables, and playful seeds appeared on the screen, bursting in all directions like fireworks.

„Hey, Rof Nutrilosoph, isn't it a bit early to celebrate?"

„Not at all! A little enthusiasm doesn't hurt, it helps you move forward."

Mia smiled. The wise assistant seemed to have sprinkled a dose of confidence around her. She quickly sent the registration form and then gave Daria the big news.



Chapter 2 - Foods Transform

„Let's get to work! Where do we start?” asked Mia, preparing to bite into a chocolate donut.

The friendly assistant's face immediately grimaced and covered the entire laptop screen.

„With the doonut! Please, put it aside! My circuits don't function well when I see something like that!” he said, amused but serious.

Mia disappeared into the kitchen with the donut and returned with two nectarines.

„Enjoy your meal, Mia! Bravo, you've taken the first step! Nectarines are very rich in nutrients.”

„I'm glad... but you should know that I only gave up the donut so I wouldn't have to see that tortured little face of yours anymore. I don't really understand how this nutrition and nutrients thing works, but I guess the fact that nectarines are so rich in those is a good sign. By the way, is nutrition pretty much the same thing as diet?”

„Not exactly. It's more than that. I suggest we discover it

together, would you like that?”

„Sure, I can’t wait!”

Mia really enjoyed discovering new things, and Rof Nutrilosoph had sparked her interest in learning more about nutrition. She swallowed the last bite of the juicy nectarine and settled comfortably in the armchair.

„Now, you’ve just eaten a nectarine,” Rof Nutrilosoph observed. „This flavorful fruit has begun an amazing journey – it will interact with all sorts of substances and bacteria in your body, it will be ground up, transformed until it offers you its precious substances – the nutrients I was talking about. The nutrients from foods are absorbed by the body and... put to work. They give you energy, help you grow, develop, and are trusted allies of the immune system, meaning they offer protection against diseases and infections.”

„Aha, so the nectarine’s journey is something like ‚nothing disappears, everything is transformed’, and nutrition, in fact, shows us how the foods we eat interact with our body?”

„Yes, that’s basically it... nutrition puts food and how we feed ourselves under a magnifying glass. It starts with the diet, but it represents the entire process through which the body assimilates and uses the nutrients from food.”

„I understand now, Rof Nutrilosoph, but... if all food contains nutrients, what’s the problem with chips and donuts? They’re food, they’re delicious, and they contain nutrients, don’t they?”

„Well... not everything that tastes good is healthy, and not everything that’s edible is nutritious. Let’s take that magnifying glass we were talking about and look at things more closely, okay?”

„Okay!” exclaimed Mia enthusiastically. She really wanted to understand why almost all of her culinary preferences were unhealthy. How could some chips or donuts make you sick?

„I was saying earlier that not everything edible is also nutritious, right?” continued Rof Nutrilosoph.





„Yes. In other words, are there foods that don't really contain nutrients?”

„Correct. I invite you to take another food journey, this time outside the body, and the main traveler will be the potato. The potato is a natural food, rich in nutrients. Potato chips, on the other hand, are ultra-processed foods, and when it comes to nutrients, they leave much to be desired. The more transformations foods go through and the longer the journey they take before reaching your plate, the further they move away from their natural state and lose their nutritional qualities. This very long journey is called ultra-processing. Along the way, many substances that the body doesn't need are added – additives, colorants, preservatives, unhealthy fats, sugar.”

„Why?” asked Mia curiously.

„For better taste, a more pleasing appearance, and to last longer without spoiling,” Rof answered, smiling. „And so, at the end of the journey, we'll have on our plate some foods that are poor in nutrients, but rich in substances that don't help us at all, and are even harmful.”

„Wow! This journey gives you chills. You know, Rof Nutrilosoph, I’ve kind of lost my appetite for jellies and chips,” said Mia with a small grimace of disgust.

The friendly digital assistant smiled widely and sent Mia a virtual hug.

Mia started thinking. She was beginning to understand, although it was quite difficult for her to accept, that sometimes it’s good to curb your cravings, no matter how much you like certain foods, especially if they’re not natural.

„So the conclusion would be something like – it’s good to eat foods rich in nutrients and as minimally processed as possible, did I understand correctly?”

„Perfect score, correct answer!”

„Thank you, thank you! I have another question – are all nutrients in foods the same? I’m thinking you wouldn’t recommend I eat only nectarines, even though they’re healthy and rich in nutrients.”

„You’re right, Mia! Nutrients are found in different proportions in foods and they’re not all the same.

They're divided into two categories: macronutrients and micronutrients. Macronutrients, like carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, are needed in larger quantities, while micronutrients, meaning vitamins and minerals, are needed in smaller quantities, but are just as important."

„Oh... it seems very complicated," said Mia, a bit confused. „I still don't understand the connection between foods and all these macro-micro-nutrients."

„We'll simplify it right away. Pay attention now, because I'm going to tell you a kind of coded message that will help you solve the enigma."

Chapter 3 - Foods Group Together

Mia eagerly awaited the coded message. She enjoyed challenges that put her neurons to work. “Go! Grow! Glow!” came Rof Nutrilosoph’s encouragement. Complete silence. Time to think. What could these words mean? On the screen, Rof began to move, exercise, grow taller, and laugh, as if he had just won a battle with some imaginary creatures. Mia was struggling to decipher the message, and all sorts of ideas collided in her mind – foods, nutrients, not all are the same... what we eat, how we combine them, we go, we grow... we glow... when do we glow?... when we are healthy and feel good in our own skin. “That’s it, I think I know! It’s about categorizing foods according to how nutrients do their job in the body.”

“Excellent, Mia! That’s right!” exclaimed Rof Nutrilosoph, exhausted after so many demonstrations on the screen. “Let’s take them one by one now:







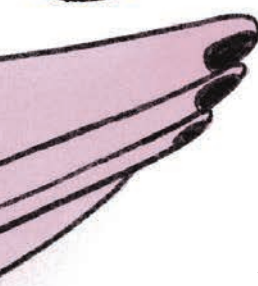


Go! – Group 1 – includes cereals, bread, rice, oats, and healthy fats. These are foods that give you energy, help you carry out daily activities, do sports, exercise, and are rich in carbohydrates and healthy fats.



Grow! – Group 2 – includes meat, milk and dairy products, eggs, fish. These are foods that help you develop, grow as it were, and are rich in proteins, the ‘builders’ in the body.

Glow! – Group 3...



“I’ll say it! Fruits and vegetables!” Mia completed enthusiastically. “We eat fruits and vegetables and glow with health because they are rich in micronutrients, meaning vitamins and minerals.”

“Well done, Mia! Fruits and vegetables mainly contain vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

They have an important role in immunity, provide protection against diseases, help with digestion and the absorption of other nutrients by the body.”

“Now the information is more organized. How nice! Still, there seems to be one unknown element left in this whole equation of food and nutrients. How do we know approximately how much we should eat from each category, is there a ‘magic’ combination?”

“Well, dear Mia, you’ve asked the right question. Diversity and moderation are what will help solve your equation. We shouldn’t neglect any food category but, at the same time, it’s good to know and respect certain proportions. Too little or too much of anything creates an imbalance in the body, and sooner or later illnesses will appear.”

Mia sighed.

“Fine, so I can eat everything, but in moderation.”

The friendly assistant was already drawing a sort of triangle on the screen. “Well, look at that! I really wasn’t expecting a geometry lesson!” Mia said to herself.



Chapter 4 - The Food Pyramid

“I know what it is!” Mia said quickly. “An isosceles triangle. But what do we do with it? Is it another coded nutrition message?”

Rof Nutrilosoph was amused. “Yees, something like that. We’re going to fill it together with foods. It’s a very useful tool that helps you prepare a balanced and healthy meal. It’s called the Food Pyramid. We have five levels. Think of it like this: at the base of the pyramid, on level 1, sit the foods we can consume in large amounts, and as we slowly climb toward the top, we have the categories of foods that we eat in smaller amounts.”

“I’ll start with the extremes, Rof Nutrilosoph, although I’m not too sure. I think we should eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, as we know they’re full of vitamins and are like brave guardians against diseases, and at the top I would squeeze in sweets and sugar - even I know those are unhealthy choices.”

“Very good! We have three intermediate levels left. Go ahead... Let’s see, we eat fruits and vegetables, we’re strong, healthy, now we need energy for all the activities during the day...”

“Cereals, bread, pasta, rice - foods rich in carbohydrates,” Mia interjected.

“That’s right, you’re correct! Here I’d just like to add something - it’s healthy to eat foods made from whole grains, unprocessed, those that contain the entire grain, including the outer bran layer which is very rich in nutrients.”

“Ah... and it’s the same with apples, right? It’s healthy to eat them with the skin on, because it’s very rich in vitamins. Of course, we need to wash them well before eating them,” Mia added with a smile.

“Exactly! Now we’re left with protein-rich foods - meat, milk, dairy products, fish, eggs - which we place on level 3, and on level 4, vegetable oils, healthy fats, along with nuts and seeds. That would be the hierarchy. See how nicely the foods have arranged themselves?”

“Yeees, nice!” came Mia’s response while she admired Rof Nutrilosoph’s work of art. “It’s so interesting to study nutrition, I really like it. I don’t even know when the time passed. But now, I feel even more confused when I think about my healthy food stand. What could I prepare that would be balanced, tasty, and healthy?”

“Don’t worry, Mia,” Rof Nutrilosoph reassured her. “I’ll tell you what a healthy plate should contain, and you’ll choose the foods and become a little Master Chef. You’ll create your own healthy plate that everyone at the festival will enjoy. Now you have all the necessary knowledge.”

“Excellent! Thank you, thank you! You’re my hero, dear Rof Nutrilosoph!”

Touched, the friendly digital assistant bowed again on the screen as a sign of appreciation.

“The healthy plate has a simple formula, dear Mia.” The magic formula had already appeared on the screen:

Healthy Plate = food eaten as a meal = $\frac{1}{2}$ fruits and vegetables + $\frac{1}{4}$ whole grains + $\frac{1}{4}$ protein-rich foods



“The healthy plate is the magic formula for a balanced meal. Here’s what it looks like: half of the plate should be filled with fruits and vegetables. Then, a quarter of the plate should be occupied by whole grains, such as whole grain bread, rice, or pasta. And the last quarter should be occupied by protein-rich foods, such as lean meat, eggs, or fish.”

“So, it’s simple! Half fruits and vegetables, a quarter whole grains, and a quarter protein,” Mia exclaimed. “And do I need to add anything else?”

“Yes!” said Rof, raising a virtual finger. “Don’t forget about healthy fats, such as olive oil, nuts, and seeds. And very important: include water in your menu! Hydration is essential.”

Mia smiled and nodded in approval.

“Wow, it really is easy! I can do this! I think I know what I’ll prepare for my stand at MosaicFest Junior. It’s going to be a healthy and super delicious plate!”

“I’m glad! Good luck, Mia! I’m sure you’re going to have a wonderful experience.”

“Thank you, Rof Nutrilosoph! Just so you know, I’m really nervous.”

The two said goodbye to each other. The laptop screen filled again with fruits, vegetables, and seeds, each one more bouncy than the next. After a few moments, however, they began to arrange themselves obediently and formed two words - **GOOD LUCK**.

Rof Nutrilosoph strolled leisurely among the colorful letters, making all sorts of encouraging gestures. Mia, surprised, burst into laughter. She knew she still had a lot to learn, but she was no longer afraid. On the contrary, she was confident and full of energy.



Chapter 5 - Harmony in the NutriPlate

The festival day arrived. Mia had worked hard on her stand, which she named “Harmony in the NutriPlate,” and was eager to welcome her visitors. The stand looked fabulous, and the beautifully arranged healthy plates were patiently waiting to be tasted.

Daria was the first to savor a NutriPlate.

“Mmmm... delicious, dear Mia! And it looks great, too - you know you eat with your eyes before you taste,” said Daria between bites.

“I’m so glad you like it! It seems I managed to put Rof Nutrilosoph’s teachings into practice.”

“Rof... who now?” asked Daria, puzzled.

Mia smiled broadly while imagining Rof introducing himself and bowing to Daria.

“I’ll tell you later, let’s get ready, look, the first visitors are arriving.”



The entire day was bustling with activity at Mia's stand. Children, parents, neighbors, teachers, all were attracted by the appearance and aroma of the healthy snacks.

"You did a great job, Mia!" said the biology teacher from school, tasting the food from the plate. "It's delicious and very healthy!"

Mia thanked him politely. At that moment, she knew that all her efforts had been worth it. She had learned so much about healthy food and managed to transform it into a fun and delicious experience.

At the end of the day, Mia looked delightedly at her stand. "Thank you, Rof!" she said to herself, knowing that her digital assistant had been there, in her mind, to support her.

Above the stand, the words that had inspired Mia were shining:

GO! GROW! GLOW!

HEALTHY PLATE

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY I

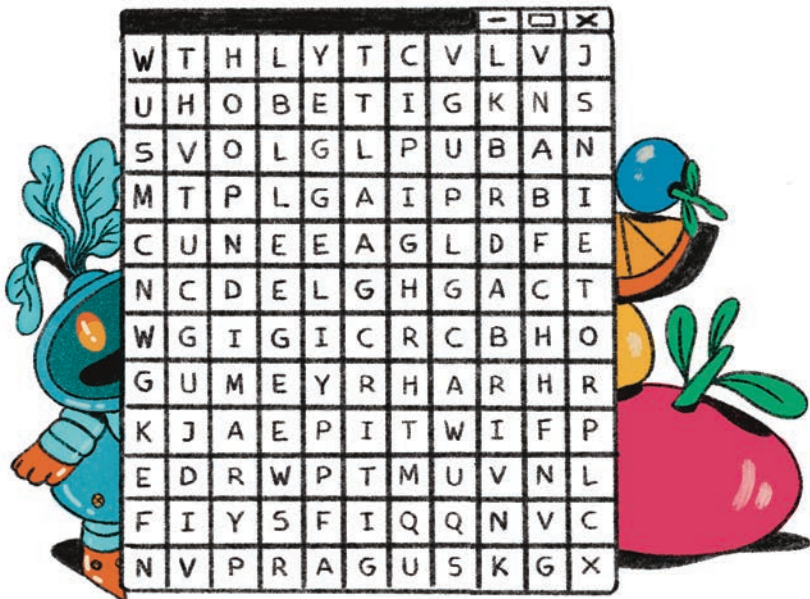
Rof Nutrilosoph has prepared a new challenge for Mia - a word puzzle. He mixed many letters, arranged them in a grid, and challenged Mia to find eight hidden words. Try to find the solution too. You can find all the words in the story.

1. Read the statements on the next page carefully and discover the words.
2. If you don't remember them, read the story once more.
3. Look for the words you've discovered in the letter grid. You can find them horizontally, vertically, or even diagonally. Circle them when you find them.

GOOD LUCK!

DEFINITIONS

- Foods rich in micronutrients (singular, 5 letters)
- Geometric shape used to represent the ideal proportions of food for a healthy meal (7 letters)
- Category of unprocessed, healthy grains (9 letters)
- Food rich in protein (3 letters)
- Ultra-processed food products, preferred by Mia (5 letters)
- Unhealthy food, located at the top of the pyramid (5 letters)
- „Precious substances” from foods that are assimilated by the body (9 letters)
- A quarter of the healthy plate (macronutrients, 8 letters)



ACTIVITY 2

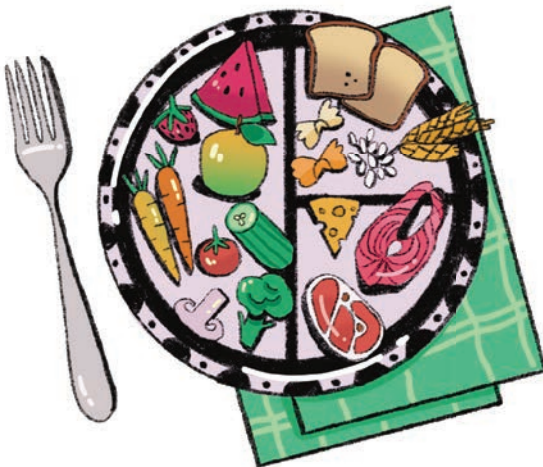
NutriPlate Gallery

(It is recommended to carry out this activity in teams of 2-4 children)

Prepare a delicious and appealing NutriPlate, following the „magic formula” for a balanced meal:

Healthy Plate = food eaten as a meal = $\frac{1}{2}$ fruits and vegetables + $\frac{1}{4}$ whole grains + $\frac{1}{4}$ protein-rich foods

1. On a large sheet of paper, draw a Healthy Plate that includes three sections for the food groups from the „magic formula.”
2. Discuss with your colleagues and agree on which foods are most suitable for creating a NutriPlate that represents the team.
3. Be creative! In each section of the plate, describe in words (foods, dishes) or present in images your team’s choices.
4. Stick your creations on a wall in the classroom.
5. Take a tour of the NutriPlate Gallery. Exchange ideas, discuss and discover the healthy food preferences of colleagues from other teams.
6. The NutriPlate Gallery resembles a real nutrition festival. If your class were to organize such a festival, what would you call it?



Pocket Nutri-Vocabulary

Nutrition — the totality of physiological processes through which organisms obtain the necessary food for growth and development, as well as obtaining energy for carrying out vital processes and tissue repair.

Nutrients — substances from food necessary for the body's growth, development, and normal functioning.

Macronutrients — category of nutrients that the body needs in relatively large amounts for proper functioning (carbohydrates, proteins, and fats)

Micronutrients — category of nutrients that the body needs in relatively small amounts for proper functioning (vitamins and minerals)

Ultra-processed foods — food products that have gone through many stages of industrial processing and contain various ingredients such as: food additives, artificial flavors, preservatives, and sweeteners. Examples of ultra-processed foods: soft drinks, energy drinks, chips, packaged cakes, candy, processed meats, instant soups, sweetened and flavored cereals.

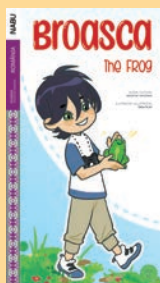
The Healthy Eating Plate — a visual representation, in a simple form, of a balanced and healthy meal. It was created by the Harvard School of Public Health.

Food Pyramid — a graphic representation of the quantities and types of food that should be consumed daily to maintain health and reduce the risk of developing various diet-related diseases.

Go, Grow, Glow! — a simple and efficient tool used in nutritional education. It provides support to more easily remember the main functions of foods and their role in the proper functioning of the body.



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