

Raw Transcript

Welcome to today's episode of the veggies and virtue podcast. Today, we are diving deep into a common challenge that I hear parents facing when their children want more of a particular food before they finished, what's already on their plate. We're going to explore these real life scenarios shared by parents, starting with Erica's experience. Erica opens up about the battle that she had with her two and a half year old, where her daughter insisted on having more bites without completing their preferred food.

First, we together unraveled the complexities of family style meals and the introduction of new rules like using separate utensils and how many is acceptable to have one, say a child asks for 10 different spins. We navigate through these scenarios and in doing so, I want to highlight the importance that. Consistency has you all hear me talk about this a lot, but particularly when recent changes in mealtime routines occur, it's especially important for us to remain consistent in how we approach these.

So today's episode, we're going to go through, what are some of those practical insights and strategies that you as a family can utilize to better handle boundary testing. And to proactively set expectations with your kids, including everything from portion sizes, to addressing some of those common concerns that our children have, when it comes to favoring one food over another. So stick around and discover these practical approaches and effective strategies as we navigate these mealtime struggles with our little ones together.

Hey mama, I'm Ashley and welcome to the Veggies in Virtue podcast. In this podcast, you will find simple menu ideas, kitchen organizational systems spelled out for mom life and feeding tips and tricks that are both evidence based and grace laced. I believe that you can find flexibility when it comes to feeding your family so that you can feel calm, capable, and connected in the kitchen.

As a registered dietitian and Christian mom of three myself, I want you to break free from the mealtime battles and to feel equipped while feeding your kids all day. a long. Pull up a stool at my kitchen counter and let me pour you a cup of coffee and say a quick prayer for you. It's time to chat about the mealtimes, messes, moments and ministry of motherhood.

So the first question came from Erica, but it was echoed by a few others in the group and that was my two and a half year old will ask for more of an item of food after she's taken one bite or hasn't finished what she is asking for more of. Do I give her more or ask her to finish what she's first has then refill? If we try to encourage her to finish what she has first, we are met with tears. And again, this is a sentiment echoed by others.

So Erica, it looks like you're there. Hi, nice to see you. I had a few questions and again, it just kind of helps me to kind of clarify, understand what's going on so this is say it's a love it food and your child wants more, but she hasn't finished what she already has. Am I understanding that correctly? , I've had different versions of this happen. We've had different

versions of this where you know it's a love it food like green peas are an easy green food for us to go to and we love them and we've gone to family style so she'll you know spoon some on her plate and it's really fun. She'll take a few bites and then she'll want more and you know I'm happy to give her it's when is it Getting to that point of me serving her rather than her making the choices to serve herself.

And even today a new one came up where my older daughter wanted a different utensil for each of her foods. You know, she had a spoon for mashed potatoes, but she didn't want to use the same spoon for her broccoli, or whatever. And I'm, and she never seemed to have that problem before, but she did tonight, and so, you know, I felt myself pausing, like, I'm trying to make this.

Meal enjoyable. I don't want to put any barriers up. But so I was like, oh try cleaning it off with your mouth And it just didn't really work and so then we compromised and I got her a paper towel because I didn't want to continually bring 10 spoons to the Table or wash it off because I just thought that was going a good So those are kind of the things where it's they're pushing the boundaries because they see me putting up new rules.

So I feel they're just testing me. But yeah, I was just curious.

I love the things you're saying you're very observant, you're totally seeing what's happening here with the boundary pushing. And so a few different things I would say, we'll talk about the spoon situation in a minute, but in terms of the Lovett foods something that I would say first is one, my first question was going to be, are you doing family style already?

Because again, you kind of want to dive into what is the child trying to get out of it? Are they just trying to test boundaries and kind of see like, what can they control? So if a child isn't already involved in family style meals, which we'll talk about in module three. So if you're not doing family style meals, don't worry about it.

But if you are, that can often kind of dissipate some of this power struggle. But if you're already doing that, it is completely appropriate to set the precedence. If you've eaten what you had, then you may have more. And I know each of you are saying that there, it's met with tears, but my guess and speculation would be the reason that there's tears is because there might be a lack of consistency.

And I think Susie even mentioned probably hasn't given in too much. And so the child's going to push those boundaries until they know that boundary is firm. If they know it's a firm, hard, no boundary. Then they're going to kind of give up, they'll probably pick a new boundary to push.

So it's not we're ever just going to get to sit back and, you know, fully relax and assume that they're not going to be testing any boundaries. But it's important to think about how consistent am I being with this, but also as parents to recognize Is this a hard no, because if we say no, we need to make sure it's something that we want to stay consistent with, or we want to show there's flexibility here.

So something with the utensils, for example, I would agree. I wouldn't want to set this precedence of. You get a new utensil for every item on the thing that said, maybe they get to put a spoon in each serving dish at a family style meal and each item for the family gets its own spin. You know, you can kind of set different precedences or, you know, each person gets a utensil and gets to pick like a novel food pick or toothpick or some other tool that might be where you allow some leniency.

But there's still some bit of structure and expectation around what's allowed versus what's not. So my guess would be with your daughter, if she wants to see like, can I have more? It is kind of the limit testing that comes with that age. I don't hear this in your situation necessarily but some other things for other parents to consider that could be at play. Again, if you're not doing family style meals, it could be a matter of they're trying to kind of see where they can have some control or independence and autonomy. Additionally, they might want to know if there's enough.

This can be something where if children are used to being restricted, they might want to know, and I mean peas, all of us are like, oh great, eat as many peas as you want. But this often comes in with like. Fruit or bread or starches or things like that if a child feels they might be restricted or it's all gonna go away if they don't hoard it, they might have a sense of insecurity around is there enough for everyone or do they have this scarcity effect so kind of think through some of those there can be different dynamics

Erica with yours I would think I would just try and stay consistent and again, I love that you picked up on you're trying to make it positive because we can see how some of these like, we just say, oh, okay, fine this time, well then it creates some of that added spiral effect of stress and then we're frustrated and then it's annoyed and then you got 10 spoons and you got peas everywhere it just kind of perpetuates this cycle so I think it's important for us to kind of see where that consistency can help prevent some of that Mealtimes stress that many families are dealing with.

Does that help? Do you feel like it's a consistency thing? I think you hit the nail on the head because, you know, we just introduced family style, I want to say, a week or two ago, and we're still trying to find our rhythm and establish the new norm, so I think that's really fair, and before we got the same question, but we were just giving them a pre plated plate of food, And they would be asking for more waffles.

Like to what you hit on before the food wasn't on the table for them to see so they didn't know if there was more available. So I really like that. And, and even thinking in situations where, like, we might only have. certain amount of food table, they'll gravitate to that first and we'll want to make sure that everybody has one.

So maybe even setting trying to avoid those questions or tears ahead of time by setting a precedent everybody's just going to have one cinnamon roll or whatever piece of bread. Yes, I love your thinking on that because we'll talk about that more when we talk about love it foods.

It's the question every parent asks. It's probably the most common question I get, like, my kid only eats the Leavitt foods or, to your point, the family style meal, like, everyone wants

the cinnamon rollers, fighting over, you know, who gets it and stuff. So I think one, I think it's very common and to be expected that right now your children are probably boundary testing a little bit because there's been a change in, What the mealtime structure looks like.

I think it's awesome that you guys are already going ahead and making that change, but very common for kids to test the waters out a little bit to see kind of like, how does this look? And then yeah, to go ahead and up front, set those expectations, whether it is, there's enough for everyone to have one or something of a precedence up front of, hey, when we do meals this, we want to make sure there's enough for everyone.

I'm gonna do my best to make sure that I make enough that everyone can have what they want. But the rule is you may have you may always have more if you've eaten what you had But we're not going to waste food and that's just a basic fundamental food waste teacher our kids, you know that basic principle So I think that's totally appropriate.

Thanks for sharing that erica.

Susan, are you on?

Hi, this is, hi, this is Susan's husband, Jim. Susan's actually putting our daughter to bed. She had a question. I don't know if you see it here on the slide

yeah. Yeah, we talked about it. Okay. , well, you basically answered it for me that concisely there at the end where it was the basic rule of, you know, you eat what you have and then, you know, you can always have more. I think that's a really good policy. Okay, great. Well one, thanks for being here.

I hope that one of the key takeaways that you took from this segment. Is how the crux of managing mealtime challenges really lies in us having proactive solutions. So for parents like Erica setting, those expectations upfront becomes especially paramount for our kids and our families transitioning into new ways of feeding or engaging at the table. And some of these preemptive measures, like ensuring that there are enough peas for everyone to go around or establishing limits on certain items.

Say if maybe you have bread rolls and there's only a set amount of them. Help to minimize those tears and those challenges or questions that your kid may have about availability and is there enough for them to have their fill?

So as parents, something that we can do is really reinforce the principle of there being enough. And yet also communicating in a way that helps them understand the manners of you can eat what you have first before helping yourself to more giving others a chance to serve themselves from what's available and taking that time to tune in with our bodies before spooning more of a given item on our plate.

So the more that we can be really proactive about these conversations.

Can help us as parents to better navigate mealtime contentions with confidence.

Now area, because experience with a child wanting more Lovett foods, either before they've eaten what's on their plate or preferentially over all the other things offered is not uncommon in my own home and in any of those homes of the families that I work with.

However, just because it's common does not mean that it needs to be problematic. So if you're seeing this power struggle exist in your home, or particularly in the situation that Erica alluded to with each of her kids, she was seeing some pushback. That's really common, particularly in transitional phases where you might be implementing some new feeding rules in your home, or you might be trying out new feeding approaches such as family style meal.

And so the key takeaway here is really to think about how you can be proactive in the conversations and in the things you communicate with your kids, but also consistent and how you reassure them that there's always more available. The things you expect of them in terms of eating what they have on their plate before getting more and offering them other productive opportunities to exert some of that independence in desire for autonomy.

And so the application of things like a family style meal, or getting them involved with helping serve the items at the table. Allowing them to have a separate utensil or novelty item to engage with their food. These can be all opportunities that we give them some appropriate applications for where they can express their interests and their opinions about things without it creating tension at the table. However, the reoccurring theme with all aspects of responsive feeding. Require us as parents to set limits in love. So whether we offer them an opportunity to use a separate spoon or have a novelty item, there are still limits to what that looks like. And personally, and as we talked about with Erica situation, that often means that we're not going to allow our child to clear out the silverware drawer at a given meal. Each and every night. When it's maybe not something that's a sensory need or an adaptation that's required, but instead it's just a child trying to push the boundary to see how far they can get.

So as parents, it is within your role in a responsive feeding relationship to set limits with love. We can allow our child to be in charge of if, whether and how much they eat, have a preferred food. In this case, the green peas, while still setting limits and expectations. About how to do so politely and also in a way that's going to continue to promote their own eating competence.

So while confidence with this type of consistent communication does take time and practice. You can begin to explore what boundaries are of utmost importance and are an expectation for eating within your home that are pretty cut and dry and non-negotiable. And what areas can you incorporate opportunities for increased independence or autonomy or opinions from your kids that doesn't derail some of your families feeding goals or put at risk, as Erica said, That time at the table and is a tantrum going to ensue. If I set a limit here, the more you can practice being consistent, being confident in those limits that you've set, and yet reinforcing these messages and the overarching themes of responsive feeding approach in love.

The more you will continue to help your family progress forward so that while some of these challenges can be common with having kids, you no longer see them becoming problematic.

If you're listening to this episode and you're thinking I really could use help being consistent in these areas. Please go ahead and use the link in my show notes, or go to [veggies and virtue.com](https://veggiesandvirtue.com) forward slash work with me all one word, and you'll have a chance to grab a spot on my calendar for a free 30 minute strategy session.

This gives us the opportunity to begin mapping out what some of the challenges you're facing are, but also how I suggest you navigate through these. So as you heard with Erica, there is a process and there is a path toward your family success. So that you're not just throwing a bunch of ingredients in the blender and hoping it turns out, but instead you're seeing that there's a systematic way of setting up this responsive feeding approach for your family so that you are feeling meals become more positive and pleasant.

They're less pressure full and more playful and ultimately all the efforts that you're going to as a busy mom to meal plan and grocery shop and put food on the table, feels like it's going further. I want your meal times to feel really productive and helping your kids learn to like new foods. And yet I know firsthand from the clients that I work with is a lot of times we struggle to be consistent with our kids because we're just not sure that we can really stick to it ourselves. Especially if the efforts that we're putting in are not sustainable, or the approaches that we're trying to implement are something that are really ambitious, but not conducive with our family's lifestyle that can add to your feelings of frustration and defeat when it comes to raising kids who have healthy relationships with food and are eating nourishing diets. Pet also can set up some of the confusion that your kids might have with that lack of consistency, because it's kind of all or nothing, but on that day-to-day basis of what are the rhythms and routines for your family? What you aspire for is not necessarily in place.

So I would love to help you establish this for your family. I would love to be that accountability partner who can continue to give you that expert level advice, but also on a real mom to mom level, understand what you're going through and walk through this in a way where we can customize it. So your approaches are specific to your family's life wants needs and demands. To get one of these free 30 minute strategy sessions. All you have to do is scroll down on the show notes, click the link to sign up for a free strategy session. Oregon, you can go to [veggies and virtue.com](https://veggiesandvirtue.com) forward slash work with me.

It has been a joy having you on the podcast today, and if you've enjoyed it as well, I have a quick favor to ask. Do you mind hopping over to Apple podcasts and leaving me a written review? This will only take you a hot second, but it truly blesses me every time I get to read one of you right over there.

And it allows me to bless others through this podcast and the episodes to come. The other thing that you can do is to take a screenshot of this episode and tag me over on Instagram at [veggies and virtue](https://veggiesandvirtue.com). I would love to see what action steps that you're taking from this episode and also to support your family in the journey moving forward until next time, thanks for coming over to chat at my kitchen counter.

Remember that you will always have a seat and a snack waiting for you here.