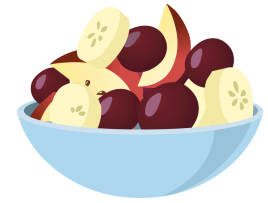


Healthy School Lunch Ideas



Bored of packing the same lunch for your kids day after day? Afraid that your kid's lunch might end up at the bottom of the trash can? Not sure if the lunch you are packing is nutritious enough? Tired of filling up lunch boxes with heavily processed food? Here are a few tips for making nutritious lunches which will appeal to kids and make busy parents' lives a little bit easier.

Getting started

Buy an insulated lunch bag and a few ice packs to prevent food spoilage. A thermos will keep hot foods like soups hot and cold foods cold.

Involve your kids. Discuss how healthy foods make them grow stronger, smarter and more energetic. Instead of asking "What do you want?", give them 2 or 3 options to choose from.

Let kids try new foods at home a few times before you pack them for lunch.

Introduce your kids to a range of dips and spreads like hummus, salsa, guacamole, pesto and green chutney.

Try to cook a few dinners which can be used as lunch the next day. Cook once, eat twice!

Think outside the lunch box

TRY

- Avocado or hummus
- Baked sweet potato fries
- Thinly sliced grilled chicken
- Lightly salted popcorn
- Water or milk
- A piece of fresh fruit
- Whole grain corn tortillas
- 100% whole grain bread (one or both slices of your sandwich)

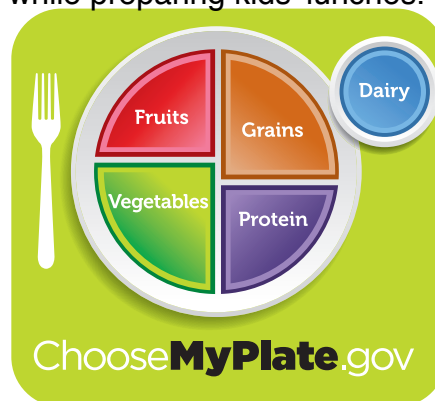
INSTEAD OF

- Cheese or mayonnaise
- Regular fries
- Lunch meat
- Chips
- Sugar filled juices
- Store bought fruit cups
- Wheat tortillas
- White bread

Planning a Nutritious Lunch

Try including a variety of nutrient dense foods like vegetables, fruits, seeds, whole grains, seafood, lean meat, poultry, eggs and dairy while preparing kids' lunches. The myplate icon can be used as a guide.

Healthy eating patterns which can be sustained over time will lead to a lifetime of wellness.



Try to steer clear of added sugar and limit intake of salt.

Stock up on healthy staples.

Helpful resources

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-style>

<http://www.peninsulahealthcaredistrict.org/wp-content/uploads/PHCD.NLfall15.print-single-pages.pdf>

Kid friendly soups and salads

Brown rice'n bean salad: Toss cooked and cooled brown rice and cooked black beans with olive oil, chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, green onions, red bell peppers, cilantro, salt and pepper.

Whole grain pasta salad: Toss cooked and rinsed short pasta (like Fusilli/Rotini/Farfellini) with chopped tomatoes, salt, pepper and homemade red pesto (pulse together 1/2 cup roasted red bell pepper, 1/2 cup basil leaves, 1Tbsp olive oil, 1Tbsp grated parmesan cheese).

Tips: You can use veggies like broccoli, bell pepper, onions sauteed with minced garlic in place of pesto. If your kids aren't fans of whole grain pasta, replace half with regular pasta and increase the proportion of veggies. Kids love halved/sliced cherry or grape tomatoes.

Rainbow fruit salad: Wash and dry blueberries, black berries. Add sliced green grapes, pineapple and cantaloupe chunks. Dressing (optional): 1/2 cup yogurt and 1 spoon honey. Pack some granola for garnishing.

Edamame, corn and tomato salad is another winning combination.

Soups like **chicken noodle soup** and **lentil soup** are enjoyed by most kids. Don't forget to add shredded or chopped vegetables. Whole grain crackers or baked tofu slices can be packed as sides.

The Un-Sandwiched Lunch

Use a whole wheat tortilla or pita to make a **wrap, burrito** or pita sandwich. **Pita pockets** are great too! Spread hummus or pesto. Add leftover chicken/ shredded carrots/ shredded cucumber/cheese/ red cabbage/baked tofu/ guacamole. Sprinkle a few dried raspberries or raisins and wrap it up. Pack some salsa as a side.

Leftovers Muffins: Saute chopped onions and add 2 cups leftover chicken/ fish/ veggies. Keep aside. Beat two eggs in a big bowl. Add the leftovers mix to the eggs. Add 2 cups whole grain flour/oats , 3 Tbsp olive oil , 3 tsp baking powder and mix. Add 1 cup yogurt and 1/2 cup grated cheese. Mix everything lightly. Spoon mixture into muffin tin and bake for 12 to 18 mins depending on size of muffins.

Fried Rice or Quinoa: Saute minced garlic, ginger and chopped onions. Move these to the side and scramble an egg or two in the same pan. Now add freshly chopped or frozen carrots, peas and green beans. Cook everything for two minutes. Add cooked brown rice and cook till heated. Add soy sauce (optional) and salt. Tip: Leftover or cold rice works best. Try replacing rice with quinoa.



Once in a while...

Oats'n Banana Cookies: Mash two small bananas in a bowl. Add one cup rolled oats, 2 Tbsp ground flaxseed, 1/2 tsp cinnamon, 1/2 tsp vanilla extract and combine all ingredients. Add 1/4 cup of dark chocolate chips/dried cranberries/fresh blueberries(optional). Scoop onto cookie sheet and bake for 15 to 20 minutes at 350 degrees, until golden brown. Cool down and store in fridge for 5 to 7 days.

Choco Date Balls: Place one cup pitted dates, 1/4 cup pumpkin seeds, 2 and 1/2 tsp cocoa powder, 1 tsp coconut oil , 1/2 cup coconut flakes in the food processor and blend well. Make small balls using clean hands and store in fridge. Tip: if dates seem too dry, place in warm water for 10 minutes before using. Optional additions: carrots, raisins, cinnamon.

Beanie Brownies: Place two bananas, 2 cups drained and rinsed black beans, 1/2 cup sugar, 1 and 1/2 tsp vanilla extract, 1/4 cup cocoa powder in a blender. Blend until smooth. Add 1/3 cup instant oats and bake in a cake pan at 350 degrees until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean (25 to 30 minutes). Cool down, slice and store in fridge for a couple of days.