



Making the Grade at Lunchtime



Breakfast is often called the most important meal of the day, and lunch also plays a critical role in children's overall health and school performance. When children skip lunch, they are likely to have trouble concentrating in the classroom, lack energy for sports and overeat on low-nutrient, after-school snacks.

Whether children eat lunch at home, enjoy a school-provided lunch or pack a lunch box, the goal is a nutrient-rich meal to fuel their brains and bodies for the afternoon. The trick is to provide a lunch with a nutritional punch. Try the following ideas.

Put Your Kids in the Chef's Seat

- Plan lunches together, kids are more likely to eat their lunch if they helped pick it out.
- Review the school lunch menu and pick the ones that are appealing.
- Pack a lunch at home for them. Agree on what goes into every lunch: some protein, a grain, at least one fruit and one veggie, a calcium-rich food or beverage and perhaps a small sweet additional snack item.
 - Tips: prepare some items ahead of time to make packing lunch quick and easy before school.

Go for Gold Medal Food Choices

- Wraps (which now come in variety of colors and flavors)
- Cracker sandwich (whole-grain crackers)
- Little salads with protein (cheese, nuts, beans)
- Bread-free sandwiches (such as a slice of turkey or roast beef wrapped around a cheese stick and crunch slice of sweet bell pepper.)

Make Fruits and Veggies Fun

- Fruit kabobs: made with pineapple or kiwi chunks, strawberries, watermelon or cantaloupe chunks, and orange segments. Deliciously sweet plain, or add a small container of plain yogurt with a little cinnamon.
- Veggie kabobs: made with cucumbers, zucchini and cherry tomatoes are good together, and are delicious to dip in a small container of hummus.
- Raw vegetables to dip in ranch dressing, hummus, or salsa.
- For convenient packing and eating, add a package of unsweetened applesauce, or a clementine or mandarin for easy peel.
- Make a quick pasta salad: combine with cooked pasta, edamame or white beans, a vegetable of choice, and some pesto or homemade ranch dressing (half plain yogurt, half mayonnaise.)
- Sandwiches; include a vegetable like a handful of shredded carrots, sliced peppers, lettuce, or baby spinach.

Focus on Eye-Appeal

Kids, like adults, eat with their eyes first. They are attracted to foods by the packaging, so make sure your lunch can compete. Choose a reusable lunch bag or box with favorite cartoon characters or colors. Make foods as bright and colorful as possible. Have fun with shapes and sizes- use cookie cutters on sandwiches or make mini-muffins.



Kristi



Damian



Toni



Michael

Recipe of the Month: Bagel Gone Bananas

Directions

1. Stir together nut butter, honey and salt in a small bowl. Divide the mixture between bagel halves and top with banana slices.



Ingredients

- 2 tbsp. natural nut butter, such as almond, cashew, or peanut.
- 1 tsp. honey
- Pinch of salt
- 1 whole-wheat bagel, split and toasted
- 1 small banana sliced

Active: 5 min

Ready in: 5 min

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