

COOL SCHOOL SNACKS & LUNCHES

Let's face it, it's hard to override the coolness factor of prepackaged Dora the Explorer cheesy crackers and Sponge Bob's sliced packaged apples with caramel dipping sauce, but there are many ways to make healthy lunches "cool" at school. Here are four simple steps for making lunches fun and enjoyable for kids.



1. **Get Kids Involved!**

Allow children to help make their sandwich, package up leftovers, or put fruit and veggies in their lunchbox. Cutting the fruits/veggies into fun shapes is another great way to make preparing and eating meals fun and cool. If they help prepare their food, they will look forward to eating it later.

2. **Provide lots of choices**

Everyone likes to have a choice when it comes to meals and children feel extra special when parents trust them to make their own choices. Set out bowls containing various items in each food group. Allow children to pick one thing from each bowl/category. For example, there may be a veggie bowl that contains individual servings of sugar snap peas, cherry tomatoes and carrots. The child can pick any one of the three from that category or mix and match! Another option would be to create a "trail mix buffet bar" and allow children to select which items they would like to include in their own personal trail mix snack.

Tip: Involve your children in grocery shopping and allow them to pick out one new item they would like to try.

3. **Make packaging fun, unique, and colorful!**

Allow children to pick out their own cool lunch box and get creative with containers. Remember to keep serving sizes in mind when choosing containers.



4. **Don't give up!**

It may take several tries for a kid to acquire a taste for new food that they may have not liked the first time around. Try different variations of packing the same thing, and find which way they like best, like dipping sauces for veggies or spreads on sandwiches.

Here are some fun, funky and fresh ideas for making a child's snacks and lunches healthy at home and at school.

Fruits and Veggies - With a little creativity, these can be the most anticipated part of your child's lunch! Involve kids in making fun shapes and foods such as:



Carrot and cucumber chips made with a wavy cutter



Use cookie cutters to cut shapes out of apple quarters, pineapple slices, cucumbers, etc.



Serve mini melon balls as finger food or let kids eat them with chopsticks or toothpicks



Large melon balls can be created with an ice cream scoop, topped with shredded coconut and served in wafer cones



"Ants on a Log" can be created by filling a celery stick with peanut butter and topped with raisins or crasins

Wraps – Use whole wheat tortillas and be creative with children's favorite ingredients! Try filling wraps with ingredients like:



Lettuce, turkey, and string cheese



Hummus, sliced carrots, and fresh spinach



Tomatoes, fresh basil, mozzarella cheese, and balsamic vinegar



Avocado as a spread for extra added flavor, right fats, and protein.

Always on the Go? Choose fun ready-to-go finger fruits and veggies such as:



Cherry tomatoes



Sugar Snap Peas



Edamame



Jicama



Nectarines



Apples



Plums



Star Fruit

Creative Ideas for kids AND the kid in you!



Recreate **leftovers** – sautéed veggies are great cold in a wrap or on a sandwich for extra flavor.



Pretzel Kabobs - roll turkey, veggies, cheese, whatever you want together and skewer with a pretzel stick.



Custom make a **mini pizza kit** – start with mini pita bread (whole grain), and add his/her favorite toppings.



Two-toned sandwiches –are a fun way to transition from white to whole grain bread. Use a cookie cutter to cut out a shape from a piece of white bread, and cut the same shape out of a piece of whole grain bread. Replace the shape from the white bread with the piece from the whole grain bread to create a fun contrast. Kids think this is cool and you know they are getting whole grains!



Homemade Trail Mix – raw nuts and dried fruits mixed together at home are a great snack, and fun for your kid to make. Pre packaged trail mixes can have extra additives and “sticky stuff” that aren’t good for kids (or us!).



Try a Whole grain **pasta salad** with veggies (cucumber, tomato, etc.) or a **fiesta bean salad** (variety of any beans and corn with tomatoes, maybe cheese, and some mild spices) can be a yummy addition to both adults and children’s lunches!



Fruit salad with a dollop of plain or vanilla yogurt and a sprinkle of sliced almonds or a kids favorite nuts



Go Nuts! Have a fun container to carry them in. For example, (have fun and ensure proper portions) and repurpose an empty altoid container into a pocket nut carrier. Personalize it with stickers or bubble paint for added fun. This allows kids the right portion and it’s a fun new container.

Walk on the wild side!

Be creative! It is easy to get into the habit of serving and eating the same dishes because you know kids liked it, but don’t hesitate to switch it up! Cucumbers in a smoothie adds a light, fresh taste, plus added nutrition. Spinach is also a very easy food to throw in smoothies, or cut up in tiny pieces to toss in tomato sauce or in a stir fry if you need to disguise the veggie. Shish Kabobs are also great fun for kids to poke the stick through some veggies of their choice. The possibilities are endless, go explore them!

Wishing you happy and healthy eating,

The Dr. Sears L.E.A.N. Team