



Eat Well, Live Well

Brought to you by:



Dietitians of Canada
Les diététistes du Canada

Step Right Up

to Healthy Eating

Cool Lunches that Kids will Eat



A healthy lunch can be totally 'cool' with a little help from your children! Kids usually know what they like to eat, and what's cool to eat at school. Together, with your knowledge of what makes a lunch healthy and the tips below, the two of you can create totally cool lunches.

- **Set the parameters for a healthy lunch:**
Aim to include one food from each of the 4 food groups in Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide (www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide). Be sure you have foods your children like, from all the food groups, in your cupboard and fridge. Consult the "Cool Lunch Guide" at the end of this FAQ for ideas. From time to time, you might have to compromise. For example, if your child would like a hot dog, suggest that he/she try it on a whole-wheat tortilla shell or bun; if your child wants a chocolate bar for dessert, include a 'bite size' chocolate bar, instead of a full size bar – it'll satisfy the craving, without adding too many excess, empty calories.
- **Invite your child into the kitchen to become the lunch-making chef:** Some children have never made lunch and may be thrilled to have the chance. You could offer to clean up if you like!

- **Get the creative juices going:** Who says you can't eat green olives in egg salad or granola on peanut butter? If it's an item or a combination your child will actually eat, and it's within reason nutritionally, give it a try. Or have your child pick one food from each of the groups of the "Cool Lunch Guide", and come up with a way to prepare them to make them interesting. You can also create your own "Cool Lunch Guide". (www.dietitians.ca/child/pdf/Cool_lunch_guide.pdf)

For example:

- ✓ Try a cheese bagel topped with sliced ham, mustard and pickles, to make a new twist on ham and cheese.
- ✓ Stuff pita bread with cut fresh vegetables and sliced luncheon meats, and pack some salad dressing on the side.
- ✓ Make a 'mock' pizza by packing an English muffin, tomato sauce with added pepperoni, shredded cheese and favourite cut vegetables.
- ✓ Make your own fun and easy lunch by packing sliced meat and/or cheese, and crackers in a reusable container.
- ✓ Finish the lunch off with 100% fruit juice, or fruit with yogurt, for a healthy 'cool' lunch.



Eat Well, Live Well

Brought to you by:



Dietitians of Canada
Les diététistes du Canada

- **Go on a local food tour for inspiration:**
Check out the local farmers' market, visit an ethnic food store or have your child start their own garden – try growing some of the basics, and experiment with some less common foods as well.
- **Help organize a contest at school for the coolest lunch:** Set the rules for the type/amount of food to include, and then let the kids use their imaginations! Share the ideas with students and parents.

Resources for consumers:

- **Eat Well, Play Well**
www.dietitians.ca/child
- **Let's Make a Meal**
www.dietitians.ca/public/content/eat_well_live_well/english/menuplanner/overview.asp
- **Mission Nutrition** – Kellogg Canada Inc.
www.missionnutrition.ca

Resources for health intermediaries:

- **Eating, Physical Activity and Body Weight Trends in Canadian Children and Youth**
2004 Nutrition Month® Backgrounder for Dietitians, Educators, Parents and Community Leaders
www.dietitians.ca/child/pdf/backgrounder.pdf
- **Breakfast for Learning Canadian Living Foundation**
<http://breakfastforlearning.ca/english/index.html>



Cool lunches happen when kids get to plan and make the foods they love to eat. Having children take ownership of preparing lunches is a recipe for success!

Examples of “Cool Lunch Guide”

- **Starting with the grain**
Bagel; Pita bread; Hamburger/ Hot dog bun; Bread; Flatbread/ tortilla; Pasta/ noodles; Rice; English muffin; Muffins; Crackers; Breadsticks.
- **On top, in between, or on the side**
Cheese (shredded, cubed, sliced); Cream cheese; Cottage cheese; Luncheon meat; Peanut butter*; Hard boiled egg; Leftover chicken or turkey; Canned fish (tuna, salmon...); Tofu; Hummus; Canned beans.
- **Crunch!**
Carrots; Celery; Lettuce; Peppers; Cucumber; Apple; Pear; Strawberries; Oranges; Bananas; Broccoli; Cauliflower; Sunflower and sesame seeds; Peanuts*; Nuts; Salsa; Pickles.
- **Thirst quenchers**
Water; Milk, white or chocolate milk; 100% fruit juice; Vegetable juice or cocktail; Yogurt and fruit shakes.
- **Kid pleasing additions**
Yogurt – for eating or dipping fruit or vegetables; Cereal bar*; Pudding; Canned fruit; Snack size chocolate bar; Squares (date, rice cereal...); Raisins; Mini-cupcakes; Cookies (oatmeal, raisin...).

**Because of allergy concerns, check with your school if peanut products are allowed and beware of sharing peanut products.*

Dietitians bring you food and nutrition information you can trust. Find a dietitian in your area at www.dietitians.ca/find or call 1-888-901-7776.

©2008 Dietitians of Canada. All rights reserved. May be reproduced in its entirety provided source is acknowledged. For non-commercial use only.

This Factsheet distributed compliments of: