

Healthy School Lunch Ideas

Packing a healthy lunch your child will enjoy isn't always easy. Some days it may be difficult to come up with fresh ideas for lunch without relying on packaged meals that may require a long time to microwave. On the days that you send leftovers for your child for lunch, consider purchasing an insulated bowl from Extra Foods (it's just a short, wide thermos). You can heat the meal up in the morning, transfer it to the thermos, and at lunch time it's still warm and your child doesn't have to waste time standing in line for the microwave.

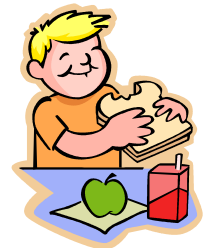
Here is a collection of healthy, fresh and fun non-microwaveable lunch ideas and recipes:

Quesadillas

Place on soft tortilla in a hot frying pan. Spread with tomato sauce or pizza sauce. Sprinkle grated cheese on top and other fillings like ham, bacon, peppers, onions and tomatoes. Place another tortilla on top and heat until cheese melts. Cut into pizza triangles.

Create Your Own Snack Mix

Use a selection of small flavourful crackers, cereal, dried fruit or pretzels. Just about anything goes. For an occasional kid lunch box treat toss in a few M & Ms or yogurt or chocolate covered raisins. Experiment with different mixes and pre-package in individual zip lock bags.



Try Different Sandwich Fillings

Alter the sandwich fillings. Consider combinations like diced chicken and corn, ham and avocado, grated carrot and cheddar cheese, or jam and cream cheese.

Don't Forget The Veggies

To ensure your child gets her daily requirement of vegetables cut up a selection of carrot sticks and celery sticks. Consider also other veggies like cucumber, ears of baby corn, cherry tomatoes, and zucchini. Pack a small container of dip.

Change The Bread

For a change from everyday sandwich use soft tortillas for wraps, bagels, English muffins, pita pockets or fresh baked rolls.

Fruit Cubes

Cut up different pieces of fruit and package in a plastic container. Use fruit or vanilla yogurt as a tasty dip.

Mini Muffins

Kids love things that come in small packages. So think 'mini' – small muffins and bagels. Vary flavors to avoid boredom.

Beyond Sandwiches

If your child is tired of bread in any form consider crackers. What about packing a few crackers in your child's kid lunch box along with a side of cheese and ham slices? Kind of like a homemade lunchable only healthier. You can even cut the ham and cheese slices into

fun shapes using cookie cutters. Be sure to package the crackers, cheese and meat separately.

Mini Subs

Turn a hot dog bun into a miniature submarine sandwich. Use pepperoni slices and other deli meats your child favors. Slice regular sized deli meat into thin strips. Add cheese and shredded lettuce. Pack a small container of salad dressing to pour on top at lunchtime.

Mystery Lunch

For a child who loves a good mystery, consider wrapping up her lunch items in foil and making her guess what each individual package holds.

Meat & Cheese Cubes

Cut up a variety of your child's favorite meats and cheeses (chicken, ham, Kielbasa, cheddar, Monterey Jack, Gouda etc. into cubes and pack in a multi-sectioned plastic container. Send along some toothpicks or pretzel sticks to spear the cubes or a selection of crackers.



Fruit Kabobs

Cut melon, apples, pears, grapes, strawberries (or whatever is in season) into big chunks, and spear them on short bamboo skewers with the sharp ends snapped off for safety. If your child likes cheese consider adding chunks of cheese.

Taco Salad Recipe

- 1 head lettuce, shredded
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 lb. hamburger, browned
- 2 cup Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 3 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 bag Doritos, crushed (taco flavored preferred)
- 1 bottle French dressing

In individual serving containers layer each ingredient starting with lettuce and ending with tomatoes. Pack a small container of dressing and a small sealer bag of Doritos which can be pre-crushed with a rolling pin or let your kids do it themselves with their fist. Just before eating, have them pour on the dressing and top with the crush Doritos.

Adapted from www.school-lunch-ideas.com

Wicked–Good Pizza Muffins

- 2 cups (500 mL) all–purpose flour
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) baking powder
- 1 tsp (5 mL) each salt and dried basil
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) baking soda
- 1 cup (250 mL) tiny cubes old orange cheddar
- 1 cup (250 mL) plain yogurt
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) butter, melted
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) finely chopped red or green pepper
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) pizza sauce
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) shredded mozzarella

Directions

- 1. Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C). Line 12 muffin cups with paper liners. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, basil and baking soda until combined. Stir in cheddar cubes.
- 2. In a medium bowl, whisk together yogurt, eggs and butter until smooth. Stir into flour mixture just until well combined and no dry spots remain; stir in sweet pepper (batter will be very thick). Spoon batter into muffin cups, dividing evenly. Spoon 1 tsp (5 mL) pizza sauce on top of each muffin; sprinkle each with shredded mozzarella.
- 3. Bake about 20 minutes, until golden and a toothpick inserted in centre of one of middle muffins comes out clean. Let muffins cool in pan at least 5 minutes before removing, then let cool completely on a wire rack. (Freeze muffins in an airtight container for up to 1 month; defrost at room temperature.)

Inside–Out Sandwich Wands

- 4 slices roast turkey
- 1/4 cup cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 4 thick grissini bread sticks, about 6 inches long
- 1 piece fruit leather, cut into 4 strips

Directions

- 1. Lay a turkey slice on a clean, dry surface. Spread 1 tablespoon cream cheese on it. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon cranberries.
- 2. Lay breadstick across short side of turkey. Roll turkey around breadstick and secure with fruit leather tied in a knot. Repeat.

Cheesy Ham and Spinach Muffins

- 4 cups cubed whole wheat bread (for extra flavour, bread cubes may be toasted)
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 4 oz. cooked ham, divided into 1/4-inch cubes
- 1 3/4 cups milk
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/2 cup roughly chopped baby spinach
- 5 eggs
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Directions

- 1. Toss bread, cheese, spinach and ham together in a bowl. Divide evenly between 12 greased muffin cups.
- 2. In a bowl, whisk remaining ingredients together. Pour egg mixture evenly over bread. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.
- 3. Bake in a 350-deg. F oven for 20–25 minutes or until set. Let cool 5 minutes before removing muffins.

Recipes from www.canadianfamily.ca