



Lunch and Snack Ideas

Brought to you by:

**The Laurelhurst Elementary Nutrition Advisory Committee
(LNAC)**

"Eat Smart, Get Smart"

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Lunch makers, have you ever felt frustrated and devoid of creativity when it comes to putting together interesting lunches for your children (or yourself)? This is an on-going list of creative lunch ideas, courtesy of my friends, family and others who are interested in unique lunch ideas.

In addition, I have been concerned with all of the waste that goes into packing a lunch, like the packaging of individual servings and the miscellaneous baggies used. I was hugely inspired by two moms in California who were also upset by the waste that occurs when using a disposable lunch. Instead of just talking about it, they actually DID something and created their own waste-reducing lunchbox. You can find their product at www.laptoplunches.com. They state that "it has been estimated that on average a school-age child using a disposable lunch generates 67 pounds of waste per school year. That equates to 18,760 pounds of lunch waste for just one average-size elementary school."

Their lunchboxes are based on the Japanese bento box, and have many different containers to hold foods that are all dishwasher friendly. I bought one as a trial lunchbox for my youngest child, and I enjoy making his lunch the best! I feel terrific about the fact that I'm not using wax paper or plastic bags, and because the whole thing is so colorful, it just makes the process that much more fun. And remember, adults use these lunchboxes too! I highly recommend that you check out the website if you would like to pep up the lunch making process, and reduce waste at the same time. The other added bonus is that you receive an excellent guide for "making wholesome, earth-friendly lunches your kids will love."

Another website for reusable, creative lunchboxes (that includes "Laptop Lunchboxes") is www.reusablebags.com.

Please email me with any comments or additions at elisemhart@hotmail.com, and enjoy!

Elise Hart

Main Lunch Items

- Bagels (try mini ones) with cream cheese
- Banana and peanut butter sandwich
- Sushi
- Pasta salad—whole grain pasta made with olive oil, butter, lemon pepper, garlic paste and salt. Add parmesan cheese, or bits of steamed broccoli to up the veggie quotient. Serve in a thermos for a hot lunch.
- Leftover chicken drumsticks
- Try using a whole wheat tortilla instead of bread when making the usual “sandwich”
- Pita bread with cream cheese and turkey
- Salmon with onion, mayo, and sweet pickle relish in a sandwich or in a container you can scoop out with a knife and spread on crackers
- Lunch meat rolled up with cheese in the center or whatever else kids like (thin sliced cucumber), then put a tooth pick through to keep it rolled up
- Amy’s brand frozen whole-wheat tortilla, bean, brown rice and cheese burritos. Heat them up in the microwave, wrap in foil, they are usually still warm by lunchtime. A great complete protein source and good portable food.
- Make your own snack pack: Sliced cheeses, whole-wheat crackers, good quality lunchmeats, etc. Let your child build its own cracker sandwiches.
- Nori—the strip kind, teriyaki flavor is popular. Kids will crunch them down—good vitamin and mineral source. If not straight nori, try nori wrapped rice crackers
- “Tiny finger food” lunch of garbanzo beans, cherry tomatoes, tiny crackers (such as gold fish or oyster), and small fruit chunks all in their own small containers
- Rolled up pieces of nitrate free (available at PCC and Central Market) ham or smoked turkey instead of sandwiches and then with toasted pita or whole grain crackers on the side

Fruit/Veggies

- Celery with peanut butter
- Carrots with ranch dressing or honey mustard dressing
- Carrots with the greens on top
- Fruit parfait—yogurt, granola, frozen blueberries
- Frozen grapes
- Cut up apples with lemon, cinnamon, and a bit of honey (lemon prevents browning so they can go in the lunchbox and actually get eaten!)
- Cut-up apples with peanut butter or try almond butter or cashew butter (make sure nut butter has no hydrogenated oils)
- Fruit skewers—grapes, kiwi, oranges, strawberries, melon wedges
- Cucumber coins sprinkled with a little bit of salt
- Dried fruit or freeze dried fruits
- Cantaloupe or honeydew melon, scooped out with a melon baller
- Orange slices or satsumas
- Small containers of cinnamon apple sauce
- Box of raisins
- Fruit smoothies with protein powder—mix fruit that’s in season with frozen fruit and some apple juice

Thermos Items

- Soup
- Natural brand of macaroni and cheese
- Oatmeal with raisins and blueberries
- Pasta salad—whole grain pasta made with olive oil, butter, lemon pepper, garlic paste and salt. Add Parmesan cheese, or bits of steamed broccoli to up the veggie quotient. Served in a thermos it makes a hot lunch.
- Turkey meatballs
- Chili

Carbohydrates (some with protein)

- Humus with carrots or crispy pita wedges
- Trail mix—homemade trail mix with almonds, organic dark chocolate chips, raisin, other nuts, limit or skip the peanuts. (Do this with your kids; think up fun additions/ variations such as Annie’s “cheddar bunnies” or Newman’s Own protein pretzels)
- Granola bars
- Dry cereal (with low sugar content)
- Graham crackers
- Salsa and corn chips
- Pretzels (try the Newman’s Own pretzels with protein in them!)
- Popcorn
- Peanut or cashew butter between crackers
- Peanut butter pretzels
- Robert’s “Pirate Booty”
- Cheese bread sticks from Great Harvest Bread Company (local Seattle company) or make your own pizza dough.
- Baked chips
- Oyster crackers

Protein

- Cheese (cut into fun shapes) and crackers
- Horizon yogurt tubes—put in freezer so they’re semi-frozen once they’re pulled out to eat
- String cheese sticks
- Sunflower seeds (sunflower seed butter can be found at Trader Joes)
- Salmon jerky (the one from Whole Foods Market is reportedly very good) and cream cheese between crackers
- Peanuts in the shell
- Beef jerky (SnackMasters Range Grown Natural Turkey Jerky – Teriyaki flavor is a favorite with some kids. All natural, no antibiotics and no preservatives. Found at PCC)

Sweet, But Wholesome, Treats

- “Laura’s Wholesome Junk Food”— one flavor is “oatmeal chocolate chip” (7.5 grams sugar for 1 serving)
- Barbara’s “Organic Wild Puffs”—a multi-colored, “fruity” cereal. Put some dry cereal in a container for a crunchy, colorful, healthy treat!
- Fig Newtons
- Homemade fruit bars

Drinks

- Organic milk (Horizon produces a single serving that doesn’t need refrigeration)
- Water, of course
- Fizzy water with a bit of "Pom" in it (pomegranate juice - there are many flavors: pom/mango, pom/blueberry) Delicious and tastes like a soda!

The "not so good stuff" to avoid putting in your child's lunchbox (according to the “Seattle Post-Intelligencer” article, "Lunch Lessons," November 14, 2005:)

- Juice boxes of any kind
- Say no to soda or money for vending machines
- No deep-fried potato or corn chips
- Skip processed cookies, except whole-wheat fig bars
- No crackers with hydrogenated oils
- No squeezable yogurt with artificial kid flavors like berry bubblegum