

4 Healthy Lunch Box Suggestions

It's hard enough to get kids to eat healthy, especially at school when junk food or sugary snacks seem to magically sneak their way into the cafeteria. Try these easy, nutritious lunch box ideas that your kids will actually enjoy instead of toss in the trash.

1. Switch out the traditional unhealthy white bread sandwich for something a little more interesting. One of my favorites is a vegetarian bagel sandwich, which you can re-create each week with new toppings.

Bagel Sandwich

1 whole grain seeded bagel

$\frac{1}{4}$ large ripe avocado, sliced

Pinch of sea salt

1 tablespoon sprouted sunflower seeds

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sprouts

4 thin slices cucumber

- Slice the bagel in thirds horizontally and save the middle slice for another use – smear with nut butter for your own mid-day snack. Bagels have ballooned in size over the years so the top and bottom part are plenty for a sandwich.
- Mash avocado into the bottom part of the bagel and sprinkle with sea salt, sunflower seeds and sprouts. Arrange the cucumber over the sprouts and cap with the bagel top.
- Cut in half. Wrap well or store in a snug container.
- *This is best made in the morning before school to keep the bagel fresh and soft, not soggy.*

2. Innovate classics, like PB&J, with ingredients that are so

yummy, your kids won't know they're good for them. My Nut-Butter Pinwheels, for example, get their sweetness from apples and honey, not sugar-laden jelly, and the nuttiness from natural nut butters. The roll-up lavash makes them a fun finger food.

Nut-Butter Pinwheels

1 whole wheat lavash

2 tablespoons unsweetened almond, peanut or pumpkin seed butter

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup apple, chopped and unpeeled

1 teaspoon honey

2 teaspoons unsweetened granola (optional)

- Cut the lavash in half crosswise and spread both halves with the nut butter. Drizzle with honey and top with apple and granola.
- With the shorter edge of the lavash toward you roll up into a wrap. Do the same with the second half and cut each roll into four pinwheels.
- Store in snug container or reassemble each half and wrap in parchment paper.
- *This can be made a day ahead, but it's really best made in morning before school.*

3. Add a side of veggie sticks. Adding one cup of veggies to meals will help prevent the blood-sugar swings that may make them feel tired and cloud their thinking mid-day. By adding zucchini, celery, carrots and cucumbers to their snack bags, your child can benefit from more energy and better focus. If they can't bear to eat "plain" veggie sticks, add a tablespoon of hummus for dipping.

4. Surprise them with blueberries for dessert. These berries soothe their sweet tooth while boosting their brain power at the same time. The bold color of this fruit comes from anthocyanins, antioxidants that studies have shown activate brain neurons. A recent report from Tufts University suggests

that 1 cup of blueberries can increase brain energy by approximately 45 percent. Your kids can enjoy them fresh, dried or frozen all school year long.

8 Fast, Easy Snacks for On-the-Go

When your schedule gets hectic, it's tempting to reach for the vending machine or whatever's nearby to satisfy your hunger, but that's often the worst thing you can do. My rule for snacks is combine protein with carbs to help manage blood sugar levels, and to avoid dairy.

Here is a round up of portable healthy snacks that feed your hunger, not your waistline:

1. Raw nuts mix. Whether store-bought or homemade, a nut mix that includes raw varieties is better than roasted ones, which lowers the nutrients. Make a batch on Sunday and store them in the refrigerator for the week. If you have a sweet tooth, add dried, unsweetened fruit. If your palate leans to savory, sprinkle with spices like rosemary or cayenne.

2. Mason jar dips. You know those glass containers you're saving when you clean out your kitchen (see "9 Ways to Get Organized for Fall")? Fill the bottom with two tablespoons of nut or seed butters or all-natural hummus, then add vegetable sticks, like carrots, celery, zucchini, jicama or peppers. Pop on the top and you're ready to go.

3. Smoothies to go. On Sunday night, make twice your normal amount of breakfast smoothie. Pour the drink into 8-ounce glass jars and freeze. Store them in the fridge at the office

and by the time you're ready to drink, it's thawed.

4. Seasoned kale chips. If you're the domestic type, making these at home is a cinch, or if you haven't used your oven in years, don't worry, store-bought varieties can be just as healthy. To make, trim kale stems, make sure they're completely dry and sprinkle with your favorite seasoning. Personally, sea salt does the trick for our family. Bake at 275 degrees for 20 minutes, or until crisp and dry.

5. Homemade granola bars. Often I'll read snack bar recipes that sound a lot like candy bars, but when made with the right ingredients, you'll have a energy powerhouse that will get you through an afternoon. Most granola bar recipes, especially the raw ones, take less than a half an hour to make and can last your family a week. Even better, they're highly portable and don't require refrigeration. I love this one from Food 52. The biggest challenge you'll have making these is keeping up with the demand.

6. two-ingredient bites. I love pairing two ingredients – sweet and savory or sweet and salty – for an easy quick fix that satisfies hunger and sugar cravings. My favorite combinations:

- organic dates stuffed with almond butter
- sliced green apple with nut butter
- organic brown rice cakes drizzled with brown rice syrup.

7. Salty crunches. On afternoons when stress is high and time is short, the only thing that does the trick are snacks with crunch. I love:

- *roasted chickpeas.* Drizzle in olive oil and toss with your favorite ground spices, then bake 30 to 40 minutes at 400 degrees. If you buy them pre-made, read the nutrition label to know what you're getting.

- a handful (5 to 8) of *whole-grain or sprouted chips*, such as Garden of Eatin' brand, with freshly made salsa, pico de gallo or guacamole.
- *hummus and baby carrots or celery sticks*. Note: read the nutrition label on hummus to be sure the brand contains no preservatives or additives.
- *nori chips*. Cut these seaweed sheets into strips, drizzle with olive oil and top with seasonings. Bake for 20 minutes or until crispy. If you've got more time, create mini "sushi" bites with leftover brown rice or quinoa and vegetable sticks, no refrigeration required.

8. Healthy pudding. Chia seeds aren't just for smoothies anymore. Make them into a creamy and sweet (or savory, depending on your add-ins) treat in minutes with this delicious and highly addictive pudding recipe:

Chia Pudding:

- 3 tablespoons chia seeds
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Liquid stevia to taste (optional)
- Add cocoa powder or pumpkin pie spice for flavor

Combine all ingredients and let sit for 10 minutes stirring occasionally.

S.H.E. Motivates!

Last month, I attended the S.H.E. Summit in New York City. This two-day event was organized by women's leadership and

lifestyle expert Claudia Chan. The conference was attended by women of all age groups, ethnicities and professional backgrounds. The speakers included 40 women in successful positions who reflected upon their achievements and shared practical leadership advice about how women can grow their business or career, make shifts in their life to achieve greater balance and happiness, and expand their networking with other amazing women. The “sisterhood is powerful,” said one speaker, an observation that resonated through the attendees and experts.

High off the energy of thousands of women who participated in the S.H.E. Summit, who gathered to celebrate, collaborate and share, I was particularly inspired by Dondeena Bradley, VP of design and development, nutrition ventures, at Pepsico, who said, “Your best self requires your whole self.” Often women feel guilty about cultivating their careers, business, family, health or spirituality. It is as if devoting time to our personal goals is somehow overindulgent. What I learned from my experiences as a mother, spouse and career woman is that I am at my best when I attend to all my goals, all my needs and all my aspirations.

I am at my best when I am everything I need to be me. Lubov Azria, chief creative officer at BCBGMAXAZRIA, said, “Inspire people to be better than they can imagine for themselves.”

This is my goal at Smart Life Health Coaching. I want to inspire you to be your best, to be your whole self! I can imagine that. And I hope you can imagine that for yourself, too. You deserve it.

Society for Research on Child Development

SRCD Biennial Meeting in Seattle, WA, April 19-20, 2013.

The SRCD Biennial meeting provides an opportunity for thousands of child development professionals and researchers worldwide to share the latest findings about the field. Participants present multidisciplinary research in the area of human development based on empirical research, intervention and teaching. Many of the topics addressed this year were relevant to child health and obesity.

Two of my presentations focused on emotional development in ethnically diverse children. My research showed that the development of emotion understanding in young toddlers and the parenting strategies used to scaffold these emotional skills vary across ethnic groups and reflect the unique cultural values and goals of each group. What can we learn this type of information? One important lesson is how the design and implementation of programs designed to impact a child's emotional, social and overall health must fit his ethnic diversity. One message or strategy will not fit all kids. Similarly, when designing successful health-related programs that address overweight and obese children, we need to consider their unique cultural background.

SRCD Presentation Titles:

Kahana-Kalman R., et al. (2013). Mother's Regulation Strategies in Response to Children's Disappointment in Ethnically Diverse Groups.

Shee, E., Kahana-Kalman, R. & Tamis-LeMonda, C. (2013). The Development of Emotion Understanding in Ethnically Diverse Children.

Ronit's Fruity Green Juice for Kids

This juice is great for kids or anyone new to green juices. I adapted this recipe from Reboot With Joe and it's a hit!

- 15 strawberries
- 1 apple
- 1 pear
- 12 kale leaves
- 4 celery stalks

Wash all ingredients well and put through a juicer.

Enjoy!