



Easily Make Your Child's Lunches Munchable

Article written by Jamie Goffena, (jgoffena2@unl.edu), Extension Educator.

The secret to making lunches munchable is variety: a variety of textures, colors, sounds and tastes. Keep changing the foods you include to keep lunches fun and ensure your child eats them!

Since children have small stomachs, they need every bite of their lunch to be nutritious. Following are 6 tips to make it easier to get healthy food from the store to your child's tummy.

1. At the grocery store purchase foods from MyPlate's five food groups: Protein, Dairy, Grains, Fruits and Vegetables. Children like color! Choose at least six colors of fruits and vegetables.
2. As soon as you return home from the store, wash the fruits and put them in a large bowl for quick access. Also prepare vegetables for eating. Let your child help you with the easier tasks like peeling carrots or using cookie cutters to cut fun shapes. Children who help prepare food are more likely to eat it².
3. Next divide foods into serving sized containers that are ready to pack in a lunch or serve quickly at home. Slice or cube blocks of cheese. Place relishes in sealable bags or in containers with dip at the bottom of the container.
4. On the weekend do cooking lessons with your child to prepare sandwiches, wraps or reheatable main dishes that can be frozen. Use whole grain bread, tortillas, pita pockets or left-over pancakes to hold the fillings. The upper right photo shows a homemade biscuit with browned hamburger and cheese layered in the middle before baking.
5. Cheese, diced ham or cooked hamburger, can be added to beaten eggs and baked in muffin tins at 350° for 25-30 minutes. Freeze these as egg sandwiches using whole grain English muffins or mini-bagels.
6. Make a simple hummus in a blender to serve with vegetables or vegetable chips. Use plain Greek yogurt to make homemade dip with spices your child likes. Hummus, guacamole and Greek yogurt dip can be used for sandwich spread rather than high fat mayonnaise.

Sources:

1. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>, United States Department of Agriculture.
2. Klazine van der Horst, Aurore Ferrage, Andreas Rytz. Appetite 2014. Involving children in meal preparation: effects on food intake.



For more information check out Food Fun for Young Children at:

<http://go.unl.edu/chi>

ALWAYS remember to include a cold pack in your child's lunch away from home to keep cut fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy and protein foods safe to eat.

