

Make Your Child's Lunches Munchable

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! Because 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 breaking cauliflower into pieces 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.
5. Cheese, diced ham or cooked hamburger, can be added to beaten eggs and baked in muffin tins at 350 °F 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.



Sources:

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

Jamie Goffena originally wrote this newsletter. It was peer reviewed and updated in 2025. For more information check out the Food Fun for Young Children Newsletter at: <https://go.unl.edu/food-fun>