

Solutions for 3 Common Lunch Packing Dilemmas

By Andrea Holwegner BSc, RD

It is back to school time and parents and caregivers are scrambling to figure out lunch ideas that are both nutritious and delicious. Here are three common lunch packing issues and some healthy solutions to try:

Issue #1: Not enough time to eat

If you have a pokey or distracted eater that just doesn't have enough time to eat or get through things, especially without coaching, investigate the reasons why.



- Check with your school and if possibly supervise a lunch to see how long kids have to eat lunch and why your child is struggling. Some kids are encouraged to finish quickly to go out to play leaving pokey eaters in a tough predicament. Hold your school accountable by advocating for adequate lunch eating time (at least 20 minutes before *anyone* is dismissed). After all, limited nutrition means limited ability to learn.

Pack easy to eat, nutrient dense lunch items that give lots of nutrition in a condensed volume:

- Pasta salad with leftover meat or black beans, cheese, veggies and dressing; side of grapes or sliced fresh fruit.
- Thermos filled with a smoothie (made with milk, yogurt, and frozen fruit); cold pizza bagel with veggies and cheese.
- Leftover pancakes or waffles served cold with cream cheese and jam; dried fruit and hard cooked egg.

Issue #2: Lunch bag returns full

If packed lunches are coming back with only a few foods eaten it may be that your child is bored and some fresh ideas of kid friendly foods might help:

- Try a bento box full of nutritious snack foods such as: hard cooked egg, seeds (if permitted), muffins/mini-muffins, whole grain crackers, fruit (such as grapes, berries or sliced apple with lemon juice to prevent browning), dried fruit, raw veggies (such as grape tomatoes, snap peas or carrots), cheese cubes, yogurt or cottage cheese.





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- Get them involved! After supper, get the kids involved in lunch packing. Don't ask them what they would like to have, as you may not like the answer. Instead, offer them two healthy choices and let them decide. For example would you like mini pita pockets or rye crackers? Would you like cantaloupe or strawberries? Should we put the meat on your sandwich or in a container on the side.?

Issue #3: Gluten sensitivity, peanut allergy or lactose intolerance

Three of the most common food restrictions include gluten sensitivities, peanut allergies and lactose intolerance. Here is an idea that works around all of these concerns:

Make ahead French toast squares:

- Make [Udi's Fantastically Fluffy French](#) toast using rice/soy milk. Once cooled cut into squares and skewer on kabob sticks threaded with grapes, berries and melon.
- Alternatively serve this bento-box style with toothpicks: once large container that fits a collection of smaller containers: one filled with the French toast bites, another filled with cut up fresh fruit and another filled with maple syrup or jam for dipping.

For more information visit:

- Andrea's website www.healthstandnutrition.com
- Anaphylaxis Canada www.anaphylaxis.org
- Udi's Gluten-free www.udisglutenfree.com

Andrea Holwegner, known as the Chocoholic Dietitian, is founder and president of Health Stand Nutrition Consulting Inc., a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and a media expert for the Dietitians of Canada. For nutrition counselling information and to sign up for a free monthly newsletter loaded with nutrition tips, recipes and more visit www.healthstandnutrition.com. Twitter @chocoholicRD.

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