

10 Add-in Ideas for School/Day Care Lunches

Each idea listed is not a full lunch. These are ideas you can use to compliment any lunch and also to add variety.

What am I going to make for lunch? I think that's the most popular question as the school year begins. Here are some tips that are healthy and quick to make to fill those hungry little tummies.

Idea#1- Wraps. I find wraps are so much easier to prepare than a sandwich is. Here's what you do: Buy small whole wheat wraps. Spread a thin layer of mayo or butter, lay your child's favorite meat on top of the mayo or butter, spread whatever condiments they like on top and roll into a tight log. Cut width-wise on angles. Your children will think it's so neat eat their sandwich in a cool new way. If your child likes cheese, you can even do a cheese log for a surprise one day. Shred marble cheese into the wrap and follow the wrapping and cutting directions above.

Idea#2- Fall approaches quick with the new school year. To keep them full throughout the day, pack their lunches with hearty, stick to their ribs, snack ideas. Example: Buy oatmeal based cookies, buy granola and oatmeal based bars. For a special treat, make hearty oat based squares or even trail mix, nuts and bolts, etc. (simple recipes can be found on our recipe pages).

Idea#3- Pack a yummy soup in a thermos and add cheese and crackers as a side.

Idea#4- For a surprise on an exceptionally chilly day, send a thermos with some nice warm hot chocolate they can enjoy with their lunch.

Idea#5- Instead of a sandwich everyday, change it up by sending some of their favorite meat rolled up in a baggie with a side of some yummy seasoned bread sticks and some cheese.

Idea#6- Send some super fast cheesecake for your child as a special dessert. Spread one graham cracker with cream cheese, spread some strawberry jam on the cream cheese and top with another graham cracker. There you are----cheesecake to go!

Idea#7- Change up your child's lunch easily by mixing up different food on different days: One day pudding, one day have yogurt, one day have fruit bars. Your child won't be bored with their lunch and they will look forward to checking what they will get each day.

Idea#8- Sending veggies and dip doesn't have to be an all-night chopping job. Choose one veggie per day. Slice up some cucumber one day and send with a small container of dip. The next day send carrots. The next day send broccoli. Then the next week try a fruit and dip one day, and another kind the next day. As adults we forget how simple we

can make things. Your child doesn't need every kind of fruit or vegetable at every serving. As long as they eat healthy every day, you can keep it simple by sticking to one fruit and vegetable at a time. A popular dip I find that kids really enjoy is as simple as ranch salad dressing.

Idea#9- Ever try bagels with cream cheese for lunch? We don't need to send meat with every lunch we make. Cream cheese has protein and it is hearty enough to keep them full and will provide them with the energy they need to get through the afternoon. Some hit combinations are: Cheese bagels with herb and garlic or plain cream cheese, everything bagels with onion or plain cream cheese, plain bagels with pineapple or plain cream cheese, blueberry bagels with strawberry or plain cream cheese, whole wheat bagels with light cream cheese, poppy seed, or sesame seed bagels with any of the cream cheeses listed above. A bagel can help make preparing lunch a snap once or twice a week. A great compliment with bagels are watery based fruits and veggies. (grapes, cucumbers, oranges, clementines, watermelon, celery, peaches, etc.)

Idea#10- Never forget to send along with your child a small water bottle. Milk and juice are nutritious and delicious for our children to consume, but when they get playing, their bodies will be asking for water. They should have time to take a sip of it before or after recess when they go to their cubbies. If your child attends daycare, ask to keep a water bottle with your child's name on it in the fridge and ask that they make it available to your child throughout the day. If you are an at home day care provider, make sure you ask children throughout the day if they would like to have a glass of water. Especially after periods of physical activity.

*Added Bonus Tip: If you don't like spreading mayo or butter on your child's sandwiches because of the high fat content, try spreading a thin layer of cream cheese on the bread instead. It is delicious and is so much lower in fat than the spread mentioned above. It also adds variety to sandwiches if your child enjoys the different flavors they offer with cream cheese. Be adventurous with food, experiment, it's so much fun!

*Of course for daycare and home care settings, you would omit thermoses, baggies and other packed lunch utensils as you would be providing the food directly to the children at lunch time.