



FAMILY MEAL TOOLKIT

Lunch Edition

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Simple lunch ideas to enjoy at home or school.

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Welcome!

Let's talk lunch! You've told us that lunch happens to be the hardest meal of the day for you. You're uninspired, you don't want to cook anything and you're getting sick of eating the same old foods, over and over. We hope this Family Meal Toolkit will inspire you to try something different and give you new ideas to help you use some of the foods you have on hand. Head to our [Breakfast](#) and [Dinner](#) Toolkits if you need help with those meals too!

This purpose of this Toolkit is to simplify your lunch life. ***We think lunch should be easy.*** We know that most people don't want to make a special recipe or spend lots of time in the kitchen cooking just for lunch, especially with little kids at home or when packing lunches for school or daycare. We hope the charts and resources in this Toolkit help you realize how easy it is to put together a tasty, easy lunch that the whole family will enjoy.

This toolkit applies to toddlers and older kids. It also applies to babies if you modify crunchier foods by cooking them. Your baby probably can't eat a sandwich or wrap, but they might be able to eat one that's deconstructed. If you need help knowing how to serve food safely to your child, check out our [online courses](#). You know your kiddo best – modify foods based on what feels right to you. Additionally, **check labels carefully if modifying for food allergies.**

Sending you love now and always,

Megan, Judy, and the Feeding Littles Team
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Allergies or intolerances? We tried to offer multiple top 8 allergen-free foods for families with allergies. However, we also included ideas that contain allergens. Modify for your family’s own dietary needs.

Finally, this Toolkit contains links to various blogs and websites. While we love the recipes, we do not necessarily align with the opinions on all of these sites, especially when it comes to nutrition and how they define “healthy eating.”

Build-a-Lunch

So what are the basics when building a lunch? We want a protein source + some fat to keep bellies full, some carbohydrates or energy sources to fuel busy play, and some plant foods to add fiber and micronutrients. **Ideally, try to serve more than one type of produce, like one veggie and one fruit, if possible.** You can also add a dip, some chocolate chips, a second protein food or carbohydrate source, etc. A lunch doesn't have to have an "entrée" to be balanced! Remember, ***protein foods + carbohydrate foods + produce foods (+ fat) = lunch!***

Protein	Carbohydrates (Energy)	Produce
Beans or lentils	Bread, toast (whole wheat, GF)	Carrot sticks (steamed/shredded for kids <4)
Hard boiled egg	Rice	Cucumber slices
Cooked chicken or turkey sausage*	Pasta (wheat-based, bean-based or GF)	Frozen peas or other veggies (cooked)
Yogurt (Greek, traditional)	Leftover cooked grains (quinoa, couscous)	Cooked beets, olives
Hummus	Cooked leftover butternut squash	Snap peas, snow peas
Leftover cooked fish, pork, chicken or beef	Pita bread or pita chips (avoid chips <age 4)	Mini peppers, quartered cherry tomatoes
Egg salad	Bagels, English muffin	Salad mix
Almond, sunflower, cashew or peanut butter	Tortillas	Green beans
Chicken nuggets cooked from frozen	Naan	Avocado
Lunch meat*	Pretzels	Leftover cooked veggies (broccoli, cauliflower)
Chicken salad (canned or from leftovers)	Beans, lentils (these are also protein foods)	Quartered grapes or cherries
Chickpea salad	Crackers (whole grain, grain-free, GF)	Berries
Cheese slices or grated cheese	Leftover roasted potatoes	Watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew
Nuts (over age 4)	Frozen hash browns	Mango slices, pineapple, papaya
Tofu or tempeh	Sweet potato tots or leftover sweet potato	Kiwi, banana
Salmon Salad	Corn	Mandarin/clementine oranges
Edamame	(Fruit and yogurt also have carbohydrates!)	Apple slices (steam/shred for kids <4)
<p>Fats: make sure fats are included in lunches. They help provide essential vitamins and energy for our bodies, help protect our heart and keep us full. Full-fat dairy, salmon, avocado, olives, oils, butter, nuts and nut butters are excellent ways to make sure you're offering fats!</p>		

*Choose nitrate-free options when possible

Build-a-Lunch

Below are some examples of tasty, filling and balanced lunch combinations:

Build-a-Lunch Examples
Hard boiled egg + whole grain crackers + snap peas + guacamole
Chicken nuggets + ketchup + leftover cooked sweet potato + sliced bell pepper
Bagel + cream cheese + blackberries
Whole grain tortilla wrapped around a banana with peanut butter + shredded carrots
Whole grain crackers + sun butter + cooked from frozen peas + orange segments
Leftover beef and broccoli + rice + jarred peaches
Chicken salad on whole wheat pita + watermelon + chopped celery + chocolate chips
Cheese cubes + whole grain crackers + kiwi + cooked peas
Baked tofu + leftover quinoa + leftover cooked mixed veggies + berries
Grilled cheese + vegetable soup
Toasted whole grain English muffin + almond butter + smashed raspberries + cucumber slices
Chicken sausage + roasted potatoes + green beans + sliced grapes
Breakfast burrito: whole grain tortilla + beans or eggs + shredded cheese + hash browns + pico de gallo
English muffin + pizza sauce + cheese + sliced tomatoes + mangoes
Naan + leftover vegetarian curry + pineapple
Leftover chili + shredded cheese/avocado/chopped tomato/sour cream/plain Greek yogurt as topping options + strawberries
Leftover pasta + marinara sauce or pesto sauce + chopped leftover chicken + cooked from frozen green beans with olive oil or butter
Chopped leftover burger patty (beef, turkey, bison, black bean or vegetarian) + BBQ sauce + baked beans + watermelon + cucumber
Yogurt + whole grain O's cereal + blueberries in a bowl with chopped tomatoes on the side
Quesadilla (add black beans, cut up leftover meat, roasted veggies) + sour cream, salsa + plum
Whole grain pita + hummus or tzatziki (cucumber yogurt dip) + cucumber + quartered cherry tomatoes + quartered olives
Banana muffin (see our Breakfast Toolkit for muffin ideas!) + nut or seed butter + kiwi + baby carrots (shred or soften for kids <4)
Cubed leftover ham or other meat (or tofu) + pretzels + shredded cheese + mini salad with dressing
Leftover salmon, shrimp or white fish tacos (shredded lettuce or cabbage, salsa, avocado) + orange segments

Sandwich Inspiration

Many people think “sandwich” when they think “lunch.” Do you? Sandwiches are so versatile and can make up a tasty part of lunch, but we tend to make the same sandwiches over and over again. Here are some fun options if you want to up your sandwich game. Check out [this post](#) if your kiddo needs help learning to eat sandwiches!

Variations on peanut butter & jelly:

Change up the bread:	Change up the peanut butter:	Change up the jelly:
Whole grain bread	Sunflower seed butter	New jelly flavor
Whole grain tortilla	Almond butter	Chopped strawberries, blackberries
Whole grain English muffin	Mixed nut/seed butter	Smashed raspberries, blueberries
Whole grain frozen waffle	Granola butter	Thinly sliced peach, sliced banana
Pancake	Cream cheese	Applesauce, shredded apples or pears
Bagel	Cashew butter	Drizzled honey (> age 1)

Additional sandwich ideas:

Kebab “sandwich” – skewer fruit + veggies + cheese + toast cubes or pita with hummus or a yogurt dip (cut sharp end of skewer)
Chicken pesto sandwich: leftover cooked chicken + premade pesto + slice of tomato (optional: mozzarella); broil to melt cheese
BLT (Bacon, Lettuce, Tomato): great with avocado and on multi-grain toast - save bacon from Sunday breakfast
Caprese sandwich: French roll or toast, sliced mozzarella, sliced tomato, fresh basil and a drizzle of olive oil and balsamic vinegar
Sliced veggies and hummus on a bagel
BBQ sandwich: heat up BBQ sauce with leftover shredded chicken or pork + snow peas + strawberries + pickle
Breakfast sandwich: egg, bacon, avocado, cheese, tomato etc.
Build-your-own sandwich: offer a few protein options + veggies + sauces and help your child build their own sandwich
Turkey roll-up (turkey + cream cheese or guacamole + lettuce on a tortilla) + shredded apple + cucumber

School Lunch

At the time of publication of this Toolkit in July 2020, a lot of families are not sure how school lunch will transpire in the fall during the COVID-19 pandemic. We've heard that some daycares are already requiring fully non-perishable, disposable lunches or that cafeteria lunch will be very different if (and when) school goes back into session. We wanted to offer some general guidance around food safety with packed lunches, understanding that it's impossible to predict what school districts, preschools and daycares will require with packed lunches. Use the same guidance listed in this Toolkit: **at least 1 protein, 1 carbohydrate/energy source and 1 produce food + fat!**

Our recommendations:

- Pack lunch in reusable containers if possible. Check out our [Amazon shop](#) for various bento box options!
- According to the [USDA](#), any perishable foods will need at least 2 ice sources to stay cold until lunchtime. Pack in an insulated bag. Some schools allow for refrigeration, in which case no ice packs are needed. In our [Amazon shop](#) we have multiple ice pack options plus lunch bags that have ice packs built into them – just freeze the entire bag and pop the lunch box into the it in the morning.
- Foods that do **not** require refrigeration or ice packs according to USDA:
 - o Whole, uncut fruits
 - o Whole, uncut vegetables
 - o Hard cheese
 - o Canned meat and fish
 - o Chips, crackers, bread
 - o Peanut butter, jelly
 - o Mustard, pickles
- If your child's school only allows for non-perishable, disposable foods, the options are pretty limited since vegetables and fruits have to be in their whole, uncut form. Many foods you serve your child are likely perishable. However, here are some foods to consider:
 - o Whole, uncut fruit like berries, soft pear, banana, orange (if your child can peel it), plum, peach, nectarine.
 - o Fruit cups, dried fruit, applesauce cups.
 - o Veggies are difficult since most need to be cut. Consider mini bell pepper, mini cucumbers, and whole celery sticks (kids >4). Also consider freeze dried veggies like peas and corn.
 - o Crackers with hard cheese, PBJ (or other nut/seed butter if allowed), dry cereal, canned tuna or salmon, canned chicken, tortillas, bagels.