



Partners In NUTRITION

Making Kids' Lunchtime VEGGIE-LICIOUS

Tips for Making Fun and Nutritious School Lunches



Smiles With Veggies!

For another easy and original way to incorporate veggies into a meal or snack, have some fun and make Bagel Smiles!

You'll Need:

- ▲ Whole-wheat bagels
- ▲ 1/4 cup light or fat-free Ranch dressing*
- ▲ 1/4 cup whipped low-fat cream cheese

Instructions:

Split bagels in half; lightly toast. Mix ranch dressing and cream cheese in small bowl; spread even amounts of mixture over each bagel half. Use imagination to assemble faces. Example: Cut American cheese into shape of hat, bell pepper strips for a scarf, raisins for eyes, shredded carrots or broccoli florets for hair.

Face Decoration Ideas:

- ▲ American cheese slices
- ▲ Asparagus spears
- ▲ Shredded Cheddar cheese
- ▲ Shredded carrots
- ▲ Red bell peppers
- ▲ Raisins
- ▲ Broccoli florets
- ▲ Canned beans (black, garbanzo, pinto)
- ▲ Grape tomatoes

When it comes to lunching at school, parents often struggle to encourage their kids to make nutritious meal selections, but also to choose something that won't get left uneaten on the lunch tray.

Experts say that lunch contributes one-third to one-half of a child's nutritional intake. With about 80 percent of adolescents not eating the minimum recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables, it's important that parents encourage their kids to incorporate healthy foods, specifically vegetables and fruits into their lunchtime choices. But there is good news! Helping kids reach their dietary recommendations is easier than you'd think...



Tips to Wake Up Your Taste Buds During the Lunch Hour

Increased produce consumption is instrumental in improving a child's long-term health. Meeting USDA guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake can help with weight control, decrease risk of heart disease, some types of cancer and diabetes, and help address issues with lack of fiber, potassium and other important nutrients. Since lunch is so significant to a student's diet, parents can suggest the following ideas to help get kids to love their veggies. And the best part is these tips can be used when bringing lunch from home or picking it out at the school cafeteria!

DIP IT. Find single-serve cups or packets of veggies and dip—a kid-friendly favorite is baby carrots and Ranch single-serve cups.

STUFF IT. Fill a whole-wheat pita pocket with turkey or ham strips, lettuce, grated carrots, and cucumber slices.

SHAKE IT. Fill a plastic container with cooked pasta, grape tomatoes, diced bell peppers and onions, broccoli florets, grated Parmesan cheese, and your child's favorite salad dressing; shake and eat.

SPREAD IT. Puree garbanzo beans, garlic, and a splash of lemon juice and olive oil in a blender for a quick hummus; spread on crackers.

MIX IT. Toss finely chopped red bell pepper, celery, and green onion into tuna salad; serve on a whole wheat English muffin topped with a slice of cheese.

SLURP IT. Vegetable soups like minestrone, beef vegetable and split pea are packed with flavor and healthy vegetables.

SNEAK IT. Bake a loaf of pumpkin or zucchini bread and top with whipped cream cheese.

TOP IT. Take a baked potato and top with salsa, grated cheese and other veggies.

CUT IT. Use a crinkle-cutter to slice jicama, celery, or carrots—the veggies will look fancy and have wavy ridges; serve them with ranch dip.

Insider Scoop:

Young Cooks Dish on Getting Kids to Eat Their Veggies



Isabella and Olivia share some simple and tasty kid-to-kid lunch recipes to get children everywhere eating their vegetables:

Millions of students nationwide consume lunch at school daily, including the Gerasole Girls. But Isabella (age 11) and Olivia (age 8) Gerasole are not your average veggie-dodging youngsters. Co-hosts of the James Beard Award-winning cooking Web site for kids, Spatulatta.com, Isabella and Olivia understand the importance of incorporating healthy foods into your diet and also know a few secrets for making those veggies taste delicious too!



Funshine Ranch Dip

You'll Need:

- ▲ 1 3.5 oz bag sun dried tomatoes
- ▲ 1 stalk (or one half cup) celery, diced
- ▲ 2 or 3 large carrots
- ▲ 2 cucumbers
- ▲ 1/3 cup bottled light or fat-free Ranch dressing

Instructions:

1. Place the sun-dried tomatoes in the processor bowl! (Make sure to have a parent help you!)
2. Add the bottled Ranch dressing. Process until creamy.
3. Add the celery and process again.
4. Place a small bowl of the Funshine Ranch Dip in the center of a colored plate.
5. Slice cucumbers and carrots into sticks, and arrange like the sun's rays around the dip.

Serves 4-6 hungry kids

*"We love this recipe for after school. It looks like a kid's drawing of the sun!" —
Isabella and Olivia Gerasole*

FACT

For most moderately active 4-14 year-olds, three to five cups of fruits and vegetables each day will meet the recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005.

FACT

A recent study conducted by the University of California Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program found that children consumed 23% more vegetables when paired with a moderate amount of ranch dressing.

**Watch the Gerasole Girls in action by visiting
<http://www.spatulatta.com>.**



Rock N' Rollups

You'll Need:

- ▲ Bottled light or fat-free Ranch dressing
- ▲ Flour or whole wheat tortillas
- ▲ Veggies cut in strips, such as red peppers, matchstick carrots, shredded lettuce, olives and tomatoes
- ▲ Shredded turkey or ham (leftovers are good here)
- ▲ Plastic wrap

Instructions:

1. Center tortilla on sheet of plastic wrap.
2. Spread Ranch dressing* on tortilla, almost to edges.
3. Pile meat and veggies in an oval in center of tortilla.
4. Take one edge of tortilla and turn 1/2 inch of it in toward the center. (This will keep veggies from squeezing out bottom when you bite it.)
5. Take a side edge and roll across the tortilla.
6. To complete, move Rock n' Rollup to edge of plastic wrap and roll it up in the wrap.
7. Twist ends tightly. Pack into your lunch bag.

LEARN MORE ONLINE

The Web is full of great resources to learn about nutrition and plan healthy meals. These Web sites will help you get started:

- www.discoveryeducation.com/hiddenvally
- www.NutritionExplorations.org
- www.mypyramid.gov
- www.kidnetic.com
- www.ActionForHealthyKids.org
- www.fns.usda.gov/tn
- www.3aday.org
- www.schoolnutrition.org



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