

Free Preview

The Healthy LUNCH BOX

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Sandwich-Free Secrets to Packing a Real Food Lunch

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KitchenStewardship.com

Thank you for viewing this sample of The Healthy Lunch Box!

If the only thing more frightening to you than “lunch packing” is “school hot lunch...”

If you feel like you pack the same old thing day in and day out...

If you're bread-free and not sure what to do about it...

Or if you feel like you're in a sandwich rut, ditch the 'wich – [The Healthy Lunch Box](#) to the rescue!

The Healthy Lunch Box: Sandwich-free Secrets to Packing a Real Food Lunch is loaded with strategies to streamline your packing process, stock your pantry with emergency backups for your backups, and send healthy, delicious food in the lunch box, no matter how old your eater is.

And there's not a sandwich in sight.

Whether you need to pack a healthy lunch for work, school, or lunch on the go anywhere, the portable ideas in *The Healthy Lunch Box* will inspire you to avoid packaged and processed foods and go with the real thing every day.

If you'd like to buy the complete copy of *The Healthy Lunch Box* visit www.kitchenstewardship.com/HLB

Thanks for looking!

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What is a Healthy Lunch?

Anyone can grab a processed pre-packaged lunch with meat, cheese and crackers and toss it into a lunch box. They even come with drinks included now, so there's no thinking involved.

That person is just lip synching compared to the live-in-concert performance of someone who makes food from scratch, chooses ingredients with care, and prioritizes whole foods over boxes and bags of unknown ingredients.

One is a postal carrier who delivers books bought on Amazon; the other, an author who creates fantastical worlds out of thin air, nourishing the imagination like the real food cook nourishes the body.

I want to be the author, the live rock band, the mom who chooses healthy food – no matter what it takes.

I want to pack a healthy lunch box.

In my world, what does that involve?

A healthy lunch is made up of (mostly) whole foods, things with one ingredient or recognizable single ingredients.

Examples:

- One ingredient = “carrots”
- Recognizable single ingredients, like the ingredients in the butternut spice bars on p. 109: “squash, eggs, butter, cinnamon.”

Once a lunch box is following those guidelines for the content, then it just needs to be balanced:

1. **Vegetables are good.** The more, the merrier. A healthy lunch should include vegetables, with bonus points for a veggie-centric meal. (And more bonus points if your kids *eat* the vegetables!)
2. **Fruit is good too.** Vary the colors from day to day, and don't be deceived by processed foods *labeled* with the word “fruit.” Most fruit snacks and fruit juices (and even some fruit cups) are so saturated with sugars that there's not enough fruit content to count for anything but dessert.
3. **Healthy fats are important for kids.** Omega 3s in fish are super brain foods, and real saturated fats like butter, coconut oil, eggs, and full fat dairy really help kids be satiated and get through the day at school. Avocados, olive oil, lard and nuts round out the healthy fats in the monounsaturated category. (More on healthy fats in this series <http://bit.ly/11XV4xr> and a quick printable on how to use various fats here: <http://bit.ly/1KtJ5y>.)
4. **Carbohydrates give kids energy.** The low carb craze may have demonized carbs for adults, but kids really need a source of energy. The carbs don't have to come from grains and certainly shouldn't be from refined (white flour) baked goods or added sugars, but don't exclude them

entirely – just use them judiciously . Think whole grains, whole fruits, potatoes, legumes and even dairy.

5. **Do kids need grains?** Not necessarily. Some families choose to live a Paleo or Primal lifestyle and live grain-free without any problem, and for many, going grain-free solves a lot of health problems. If you eat grains, whole grains are preferred, and our family soaks them as often as possible. (On soaking grains: <http://bit.ly/cpGvrl>) Grains should not be the majority of the meal, however. One goal of this “sandwich-free” focus is to help you get away from relying on an abundance grains for the midday meal.
6. **Protein adds balance.** In America we tend to think that meat has to be the center of every plate. I think a balanced meal can have either a huge portion of meat or no meat at all. Cheese, legumes, nuts, and yogurt are superb options for protein as well. I'm not afraid of eggs in the least, but use the whole thing, please. Here is an article on how we don't need to be protein-centric: <http://bit.ly/PBmclc>
7. **Keep food allergies in mind.** Obviously you know how to handle your own family's food allergies, but part of a healthy lunch box is helping to keep the other kids in your child's community safe, too. If you have a peanut-free school or other restrictions because of food allergies, there are so many ways to work around one or two foods (or even food groups) and still pack a healthy, satisfying, varied, tasty lunch. (More on p. 42)
8. **Need a beverage?** Water is fantastic. Milk is fine, but don't feel like you're depriving your children if the school milk doesn't fit your food philosophy. Any nutrients in milk can be found in other ways (including fermented dairy like yogurt or kefir, a much preferred way to deliver the milk anyway).
9. **Sugar is bad.** I try to be positive and focus on what we *should* eat rather than what we have to avoid, but there's no getting around it: sweeteners have no place in a healthy lunch box. If you are packing something with a little sweetness, stick to natural sweeteners like honey and real maple syrup.
10. **Non-food has no place in a lunch box.** Before you think I'm talking nonsense or referring to happy-meal-style toys, consider this: Numbered food dyes are made from petroleum, commercially shredded cheese is dusted with what might as well be sawdust, some artificial sweeteners (in more kids' foods/drinks than you'd expect!) were originally medicines, and plenty of the preservatives in processed foods are linked to all sorts of problems like hormone disruption, cancer, and more. There are *plenty* of non-foods in the average lunch box. Pledge to never settle for average.

Meat Muffins (Pizza)

My husband says these are one of the best breakfasts he's ever had, and they really do taste like pizza. Cold or warm, breakfast or dinner, veggie heavy or light, plus other variations (like the next recipe), these meat-based main dish muffins are truly a versatile recipe that I know you'll love.

Ingredients

1 lb. ground beef
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
dash cayenne (optional, or up to 1/4 tsp. for spicy)
2-4 tsp. pizza seasoning blend, OR
OR 2-3 tsp. Italian seasoning + 1/2 tsp. ground or whole fennel seeds
1/2 c. red pepper, chopped (optional)
1/2 c. onion, chopped (about 1 medium)
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2-6 c. fresh spinach
optional: other finely diced vegetables
4 eggs
1 c. pizza sauce
1 c. shredded mozzarella ✓
cheese

Method

Brown the beef, seasoning with salt, pepper, cayenne and Italian/fennel or pizza seasoning. Add onions and peppers for the last 5 minutes.

While this is cooking, put muffin cup liners in your pan. You'll want them! Preheat the oven to 375F and wash and roughly chop the spinach, along with any other veggies. The spinach cooks down a *lot*, so don't be afraid of using all 6 cups.

When the onions are getting translucent, add the crushed garlic and fresh spinach plus any other veggies you're trying, stirring over medium heat for 1-2 minutes until the spinach is all wilted. Turn off the heat and give everything a chance to cool for a few minutes.

Alternate spinach methods: You could also very quickly steam the spinach separately OR use frozen spinach, about a pound package, but you'd need to thaw and thoroughly drain it first.

In a medium sized bowl, beat the eggs, then mix in all the meat and veggie mixture. Either add the cup of pizza sauce to the mix OR put a tablespoon of sauce directly on top of each muffin individually.

Transfer to lined muffin cups with a heaping quarter cup measuring cup and gently press down with the bottom of the cup. Bake at 375F for 25 minutes, then top each muffin with cheese and bake another 10-15 minutes. For mini muffins, put cheese on right away and bake 15-20 minutes.

Makes 12 muffins or 24 mini muffins (or more if you add more veggies)

Notes and Variations

- ✓ You can use this recipe to create many other flavor variations. Delete the pizza sauce, Italian seasoning and cheese for a base recipe that can be adapted with just about any veggies or spice blends.
- ✓ Serve with extra pizza sauce for dipping.
- ✓ The muffins freeze just fine.

Inspired by Well Fed by Melissa Joulwan: <http://bit.ly/sPw6Rs>



Greek mini muffins

Pizza muffins



Notes and Variations

- ✓ Canned or home-cooked beans work fine. I recommend soaking and cooking a pound or two of beans at a time, then freezing the rest: <http://bit.ly/H3GwjP>
- ✓ If you opened a can, what do you do with the rest of the garbanzo beans? Either toss them onto a salad or open another can and make 2/3 batch of hummus (<http://bit.ly/14BKqtp>) or this soup: <http://bit.ly/91vG8J>.
- ✓ This is a great way to use up feta that you've had around too long. Also, feta can be frozen quite nicely for use in baked dishes.
- ✓ Need lower carb? Take the chickpeas right out and just use a whole pound of ground beef.
- ✓ Adding a starter salad for the meal? Try this yummy homemade Greek dressing: <http://bit.ly/14BJp4k>

Inspired by Well Fed by Melissa Joulwan: <http://bit.ly/sPw6Rs>

Potato Salad

This potato salad “recipe” is more of what I call a “framework recipe.” I’ll show you basically how to mix things up, and then you can work within that framework and proportions to tweak the recipe to your liking and add all sorts of goodies to it.

Ingredients

Use an equal number of:

hard-boiled eggs
whole medium potatoes
dill pickle spears (if whole pickles, use a 2:1 ratio)

Plus approximately these measurements per potato:

1-2 tsp. yellow mustard
1 Tbs. homemade mayo
(<http://bit.ly/cqNGkb>)
salt and pepper (about 1/4 tsp. salt per 4 potatoes)

Method

Cut raw potatoes into bite-sized chunks, then boil for 15-20 minutes *with at least 1/2 tsp. salt* until just soft (not too mushy) OR bake whole potatoes at 400F for about 45 minutes or until soft when squeezed. Potato salad tastes best without potato skins, but nutrition is best with them - your call. Sometimes I’m too lazy to peel them!

Peel eggs and chop into bite-sized chunks. (See tips for hard-boiling eggs on p. 52.)

Dice pickles.

Mix everything together with homemade mayo and mustard.

Note: If you can mix up the salad while the potatoes are warm, they'll take on the flavors better. If you've ever thought your potato salad tasted “flat,” this may help. You can still hard boil the eggs in advance if that helps streamline the process.

Remember that you can always add more after tasting, but you can't take away, so go lightly and pinpoint your personal proportions.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Potato salad will keep up to 5 days in the refrigerator.

Notes and Variations

- You can sub about half the mayo with plain yogurt, and some folks love sour cream in place of all or half the mayo too.
- If you don’t or won’t make your own mayo, look for a brand that doesn’t use soybean oil (yuck), and especially don’t get “Light” Miracle Whip – it has [artificial sweeteners!](#)
- Toss in a splash of pickle juice to add zing!
- Many people add chopped raw onion, radishes, or celery as well.
- Make it pretty with a sprinkle of any fresh herb or paprika.

Homemade Whole Wheat Tortillas

Tortillas are a classic source of trans fats, even if you're trying to buy "healthy" whole wheat versions. They're one of the first soaked whole wheat bread products I tried during our real food conversion, and I haven't bought them at a store since.

Ingredients

2 c. *white whole wheat flour*
¼ c. *coconut oil, butter, palm shortening, or lard*
1 Tbs. *whey*
(<http://bit.ly/hacZi2>) + *water to equal 1/2 cup*
1 tsp. *salt*

Method

Cut fat into flour with a pastry blender or two knives.
Add water and whey a bit at a time.
Toss with a fork to make stiff dough. Knead thoroughly until smooth and flecked with air bubbles. (Just a few minutes.)
Allow to rest, covered, at room temperature 8-24 hours.
When ready to cook, sprinkle the salt on top and knead thoroughly to combine.
Divide dough into 8-11 balls, depending on how big you want your tortillas. Roll as thinly as possible on a lightly floured surface. Heat an ungreased electric griddle or cast iron skillet very hot (400F).
Cook the tortillas about 20-30 seconds, until lightly flecked with brown on one side, then flip and cook until brown spots appear on the other side, about 20 seconds.
The cooked tortillas will keep each other warm and soft on a plate while you finish the rest; keep them warm in a low temp oven if not serving right away.
Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container; they also freeze well and come apart easily to thaw individually in a minute in the toaster oven.

Notes and Variations

- Why soak grains? It increases the digestibility of the whole wheat, which is inhibited by compounds in the bran. For this recipe, it's so easy to soak that I'm not even sure how to explain the non-soaked method since I've done it this way for so long. (More here: <http://bit.ly/cpGvrl>)
- White whole wheat flour is made from the whole grain, just like regular (red) whole wheat flour, but it works immeasurably better in tortillas. You can find it in larger grocery stores, often under the King Arthur brand. Do NOT attempt this recipe with 100% traditional whole wheat flour.
- You can also use whey entirely in place of the water (you may need up to 1/4 cup extra flour).
- An electric tortilla press works fine for this dough, but the end result will be much thicker than hand rolling.
- For other variations, including half corn and half white flour, see here: <http://bit.ly/4cpJEr>

Power Balls

A homemade snack that is nutrient-dense, easy to make, easy to eat *and* shelf stable for a really long time is a great find. These reverse-engineered Larabar-style treats are made into balls for easy serving and eating, and even though there's no sweetener other than the dried fruit, they're definitely sweet enough for a lunch box dessert or a perfect mid-morning snack to fuel your child's brain at school.

Ingredients

PBJ

(Especially kid-friendly)

1/3 c. peanuts

1/2 c. dates (can use raisins, but will change the taste)

1/4 c. dried cherries

scant 1/4 tsp. salt

Coco-shew (Date free!)

My personal favorite; sweet and salty

1/3 c. cashews

1/2 c. raisins

1/4 c. shredded coconut

1/2 tsp. vanilla

Sunny Vacation (Nut free!)

An allergy-friendly option

1/4 c. sunflower seeds

1/2 c. dates

1/4 c. dried apricots

1/4 c. shredded coconut

1/2 tsp. vanilla

1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon

Method

Using a food processor or blender, pulse or process nuts until chopped finely, a "meal" consistency at the smallest.

Add dried fruit and process until everything is sticky and there are no large chunks.

Add any other dry mix-ins (like coconut) and pulse briefly until combined.

While the food processor is running, stream any spices or vanilla through the top.

If the mixture doesn't come together in a ball easily, add water or coconut oil while the food processor is running, 1/2 tsp. at a time. (PBJ and Sunny Vacation are very good with unrefined coconut oil.) When the mixture just starts to swish around in a blob instead of being crumbly, that's enough. Test a hunk in your fingers to see if it holds together easily. If it seems crumbly, turn the machine back on and add a bit more water.

Roll the mixture into balls, 1/2"-1" wide. Store at room temperature for weeks on end.

Makes about a dozen balls.



Notes and Variations

- In my original eBook, *Healthy Snacks to Go*, one of the most popular recipes is the 15 variations of these power balls (or bars). I'm pleased to share a selection with you in *The Healthy Lunch Box*, with some options you should be able to make even if you don't have dates or can't eat nuts. If your interest is piqued, here's a coupon for \$3 off the snacks book – use LBdealSNACKS to get the deal right here: <http://bit.ly/cijhxd>
- These are small batches so that you can test to see which flavor you like; most food processors can handle a double or maybe triple batch. Most blenders should stick with a single batch.
- If you're an athlete and need an electrolyte boost, you can incorporate additional unrefined sea salt into the balls.
- You can also form the dried fruit and nut mixture into bars by pressing into a container, refrigerating to solidify well, then cutting with a sharp knife.
- Use pitted dates or cut the pit out before processing (don't buy chopped dates, as they include flour to keep them from sticking together).
- Try crispy nuts for best digestion: <http://bit.ly/sPmrmV>

If you liked these recipes, you'll love [The Healthy Lunch Box](#)

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[Buy The Healthy Lunch Box Now](#)

About The Author

I'm Katie Kimball, a Catholic wife and mother of three who wants the best of nutrition and living for her family. My educational background is actually in elementary education and English, but as I began cooking for my children and reading about nutrition, I quickly became a home chef and researcher. In early 2009 I began my journey as an online writer, and I'm head over heels in love with the tangled web that is the blogging career.



I believe that God calls us to be good stewards of all His gifts as we work to feed our families: time, finances, the good green earth, and of course, our healthy bodies. [KitchenStewardship.com](#) seeks to share with others ways to balance all four and be prayerful in the call to vocation in the kitchen.

I'm far from perfect: my kitchen is often a mess, I lose my patience with family members, and I certainly spend too much time on the computer. But I do my best to provide optimal nutrition and health for my loved ones, which means I spend a lot of time in the kitchen. I make everything from scratch and talk about food all the time. I also strive to make things taste good, which is where you benefit. Thank you so much for downloading this freebie!

What if Your Kids Could Make and Pack Their Own Lunches?

Learn about how Katie taught her kids how to cook and then created the [Kids Cook Real Food eCourse](#).