

Love Your Lunch



By Theresa Decker

Do you eye your friend's lunch with relish? Are your kids trading their lunches for baseball cards? Don't get in a pickle - try some of these healthy lunch alternatives instead.

Plan ahead and ask your family for some ideas. Some outlandish suggestions may become favourites at your house. Strawberry jam with cheddar cheese on raisin bread might sound odd, but one mom I know heartily recommends it. Remember, Elvis loved peanut butter and bacon sandwiches!

A variety of foods from each of the four food groups - breads/grains, milk/milk products, fruits/vegetables, and meat/meat alternates - will give you a balanced diet. For example, soft tortillas with grated cheese, lettuce, tomato and green pepper with a dash of salsa, along with yogurt and fresh fruit makes a balanced lunch.

Ontario peanuts can add crunch and variety to family lunch-boxes. A handful of peanuts is a quick, high protein snack. Try peanut butter quick bread or cookies, or peanut butter cup-cakes or muffins with a surprise of jam or jelly inside.

Kids love bite-size snacks, and may eat their veggies raw with a dip. Try combining pureed cottage cheese with plain yogurt and fresh herbs. Or use fruit yogurt as a dip, or plain yogurt mixed with a little brown sugar. Wedges of fresh apples and pears can be dipped too. But soak in

orange juice first to prevent browning.

Cut cheese into cubes or sticks to tempt bite-sized appetites. Serve with whole grain crackers, bread sticks, melba toast or crusty bread. Mild cheeses are best for little ones, but adults may enjoy a change from the usual. How about tangy Ontario-produced chevre (goat cheese) with fresh greens or farmers cheese spiced with pepper or pimentos and served with whole wheat rolls, fresh fruit or salad.

And don't forget the most popular fast food around - pizza! It can be healthy too. Use low fat mozzarella cheese and top with lots of veggies. Zucchini, peppers, onions, tomatoes, even small broccoli florets are delicious on pizza. Cut into easy-to-eat squares for less mess. Many

schools and offices have microwave ovens to heat up lunches, but pizza is great cold too!

Other left-overs can add pizzazz to lunch-time. Who could turn down cold barbecued chicken or potato salad? Make extra and have "planned-overs." Just be sure to keep perishable foods cold until serving time. Some foods can be frozen and will thaw in time for lunch. Or include a frozen container of juice to keep foods chilled.

There's no need for brown bag blues, if you just use a little creative thinking!

Theresa Decker is a Food and Nutrition Inquiries Officer with the Consumer Information Centre of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Toronto.

A Cookbook for Canada's Kids: Traditional, Nutritional, Sensible, Cents-able

By Lynn Lodge

A new cookbook - an effort of both the Halton and Wellington District Education Committee - is now available. This one, however, can't be bought. One thousand cookbooks were printed and put in all the food banks in Wellington and Halton Counties.

This cookbook is aimed at young cooks and stresses good nutrition using economical and available foods. The recipes are nutritious and simple with easy to follow methods, using both metric and imperial measurements.

Resulting from concern over the growing number of families relying on food banks and the many young children preparing their own meals or helping working parents by starting meals, the cookbook was compiled from recipes submitted by the 45 Branches of the Women's Institute in Wellington and Halton Counties.



Pictured above is the Halton and Wellington District Education Committee. From left to right is Glenda Benton (Secretary/Treasurer), Marg Aitken, Maisie Lasby, Glenna Smith (Chair), and Wendy Purvis.

A winning recipe was selected from each of the four food groups included in the recipe book. Morriston Women's Institute won for their Vanilla Pudding Mix, Arthur Centennial for their Turnip and Apple Casserole, Mimosa for "Create-a-Cookie," and Nelson for their Tuna Casserole.

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