

# Young cooks appreciate healthier school lunches: food expert

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fun you can make it, the more kids love getting messy."

With another school year almost here, it's time for parents to consider what to put in their children's lunches.

And while many give in to temptation and load up lunchboxes with pre-packaged foods and sugary snacks, food experts like Dana McCauley say encouraging a child to help in the kitchen will ensure healthier lunchtime habits.

"I'm a big fan of fresh stuff," the Richmond Hill

cookbook author and food editor said.

"They can assemble their own fresh fruits and veggies and I think you have a higher chance of those things not coming back bruised and battered if they have a sense of ownership."

Deciding when a child is old enough to help in the kitchen, where sharp and hot things tend to act as safety hazards, can be tough.

But Ms McCauley says even a preschooler can help by spreading mustard on bread, pouring their own

milk into their cereal bowl or counting the number of marshmallows needed for a recipe.

"My son, who is now eight, last year decided he wanted to learn to chop things," she said.

"So I bought a small, lightweight knife for him to use. You know your kids; some are clumsy, others mature more quickly. When you see where they're at, go with something you're comfortable with.

"Get them involved in little things; it's amazing how eager they are to help."

## RECIPES

(Source: Allrecipes.com)

### ALMOST EGGLESS EGG SALAD

- 1 lb. firm tofu, sliced and drained
- 1 tbsp. minced onion
- 2 tbsp. minced celery
- 2 tbsp. mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp. sweet pickle relish
- 1 tsp. white vinegar
- 1 tsp. prepared mustard
- 1 tsp. white sugar
- 1/2 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1/4 tsp. dried dill weed
- 1 tbsp. dried parsley
- Salt to taste
- Ground black pepper to

taste

1. In a small bowl, combine eggless mayonnaise (use soy mayo for a vegan variation), sweet pickle relish, vinegar, mustard, sugar, turmeric, dill and parsley. Mix well, and reserve.

2. Place drained tofu in large bowl, and crumble with a fork. Stir in onion and celery. Mix in reserved mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Chill for several hours to allow flavors to blend. Yields four servings.

### MEXICAN CREAM CHEESE ROLLUPS

- 1 8-oz. package cream cheese, softened
  - 1/3 cup mayonnaise
  - 2/3 cup pitted green olives, chopped
  - 1 can chopped black olives
  - 6 green onions, chopped
  - 8 10-inch flour tortillas
  - 1/2 cup salsa
1. In a bowl, mix together cream cheese, mayonnaise, olives and green onions.
  2. Spread cream cheese mixture in a thin layer onto each tortilla. Roll up tortillas. Chill about 1 hour, or until the filling is firm.
  3. Slice chilled rollups into 1-inch pieces. Serve with salsa for dipping.

### APPLE DIP

- 1 8-oz. package cream cheese
- 1/2 cup brown sugar

1 tbsp. vanilla extract

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine cream cheese, brown sugar and vanilla. Mix well until all of the brown sugar has been blended into the cream cheese and vanilla. If the mixture is too runny for your taste, add a small amount of brown sugar to the mixture.

If the mixture is too thick for your taste, add a small amount of vanilla extract. Enjoy with apple slices.

### CHEWY GRANOLA BARS

- 4 1/2 cups rolled oats
  - 1 cup all-purpose flour
  - 1 tsp. baking soda
  - 1 tsp. vanilla extract
  - 2/3 cup butter, softened
  - 1/2 cup honey
  - 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
  - 2 cups miniature semi-sweet chocolate chips
1. Preheat oven to 325F (165C). Lightly grease one 9x13-inch pan.
  2. In a large mixing bowl, combine the oats, flour, baking soda, vanilla, butter or margarine, honey and brown sugar. Stir in the chocolate chips.
  3. Lightly press mixture into the prepared pan. Bake 18-22 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool for 10 minutes, then cut into bars. Let bars cool completely in pan before removing or serving. Yields 3 dozen.



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