



Huron Perth
Public
Health

Mini-meals

FOR SCHOOL NUTRITION BREAKS



Children learn and grow to their full potential with the right mix of healthy, satisfying food.

Look inside for mini-meal ideas, recipes and tips for packing food for the school day.

Top tips for packing food for the school day

Keep your child satisfied between nutrition breaks. Pack food with protein, fibre and healthy fats. These foods take longer to breakdown, which keeps us feeling full. Food with protein and healthy fats include eggs, yogurt, cheese, milk, tuna, chicken, tofu and legumes (beans, peas and lentils). High fibre foods are vegetables, fruit, whole grains and legumes. The **Eat Well Plate** from Canada's food guide is a good model to follow.

Pack nourishing food that your child likes.

If he wants the same foods in his lunch every day, that's OK. It's more important that he eats what's packed so he can focus and has energy to get through the day.

Help your child follow any 'litterless lunch' or environmentally friendly initiatives at school.

This can be done by limiting the amount of prepackaged, or single serving foods marketed for school lunches. Limiting these foods will also save money and reduce intake of added sugar, salt and unhealthy fat.

Make sure your child can open and close the containers that are in the lunch box. That way your child can easily get to the food that's packed and put the lid on uneaten food so it doesn't spill all over the lunch bag.

Understand that anything packed in the lunch box is fair game. If you pack a 'treat', expect it to be eaten! Don't stress if the treat is gone and the carrot sticks come back home – a treat at lunch once in a while won't derail an overall healthy eating pattern.

Send water in a reusable water bottle so it can be refilled during the school day. If your child participates in the school milk program, order white milk.

Involve your children in the lunch packing task. You get to spend time together while they learn about healthy food habits and develop basic food skills. They'll learn other life skills too, like responsibility and independence. Plus, it gives them some ownership over their lunch which may reduce food waste.



FAQs about school lunches

How do I know how much to pack?

There's no perfect answer. Children's appetites vary based on their activity level, growth spurts and how well rested they are. Also, food offered for classroom celebrations or school events will impact what kids eat from their packed lunch. A sign your child might not be getting enough is a lunch box that comes home empty on a regular basis. If that's the case, ask if they're hungry during the day and if so, pack more. If food is coming home regularly, pack less.

Are cereal bars and granola bars a good choice?

Not always. Some are more like chocolate bars, especially if they're covered in frosting and filled with chocolate chips and marshmallows. Check the ingredient list and look for 'rolled oats' as the first ingredient. Pack them once in a while, not every day. Try the granola bar recipe on page 8. Homemade granola bars have less packaging and are less costly than store-bought varieties.

What about lunchables and other convenience foods geared for packed lunches?

These items are appealing because they simplify the lunch making task. The downside to them is that they are costly and don't comply with environmentally friendly policies that many schools have adopted. Plus, no matter how the manufacturer spins it, most of these products aren't made with ingredients that keep kids satisfied between nutrition breaks.

Mini-meal ideas for school nutrition breaks

About the mini-meals

These are examples of mini-meals and ideas beyond sandwiches and that have the kinds of foods that will keep kids satisfied. Change up the suggested vegetable, fruit, protein and grain product to suit your child's taste.

Some foods show up more than once a week. That's been done purposely. Food can be re-invented to save time and reduce food waste. For example, peppers and cucumbers are veggie sticks one day and then combined with cheese and beans in a salad for later in the week.

There are no examples of hot food. For food safety reasons, hot food needs to be packed into the thermos in the morning which is a busy time in many households. Most schools offer a hot food option of some sort each week.

Recipes marked with * are found on pages 4 to 10. These recipes have been made by and taste tested with students in elementary school.

Two weeks of mini-meal ideas

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
W E E K	FIRST BREAK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> zucchini loaf* yogurt blueberries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> granola bar* apple slices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bagel with cheese cherry tomatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> muffin* canned peaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> raisin bread with cheese banana
O N E	SECOND BREAK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chicken pasta salad broccoli and dip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mexican bean wrap* cucumber and pepper sticks with dilly garlic dip* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> broccoli salad* yogurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> red, white and green salad* crackers with hummus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mexican bean dip with pita crisps* grapes
W E E K	FIRST BREAK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hard-boiled egg bread with butter/margarine clementine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> naan bread hummus grapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> muffin* yogurt pineapple chunks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apple-cheddar wraps strawberries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> yogurt parfait*
T W O	SECOND BREAK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quinoa salad* chocolate chip banana muffin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hawaiian tuna salad wrap snap peas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mini pitas with egg salad zucchini sticks with dip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pita crisps* salsa mixed with grated cheese apple slices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moroccan couscous and chickpeas salad* maple blueberry loaf

Food Safety Tips

Pack food so it doesn't go bad. Three important steps:

1. BE CLEAN.

Clean hands, a clean working area and clean utensils are a must to prepare food that is safe to eat.

2. KEEP COLD FOODS COLD.

- make sandwiches the night before and keep them in the fridge
- pack items like coleslaw, potato salad and bean salad in a thermos
- use an insulated lunch bag and include an ice pack.

3. KEEP HOT FOOD HOT.

Pack hot foods in a thermos in the morning. First fill the thermos with boiling water and let stand for a few minutes. Heat the food that will be packed in the thermos so that it is piping hot. Empty the water and then fill the thermos with the hot food.

Lunch Packing Tips

- Bake double batches of muffins and freeze the extras for mini-meals.
 - Bake breads and loaves (banana, pumpkin and date are some ideas) then slice, wrap and freeze individually. They can be added, frozen, to the lunch bag and will thaw by break.
 - Make extra pancakes on the weekend and freeze individually on cookie sheets. Wrap in packs of two so they're ready to add to lunch bags.
 - Cut up extra veggies when making dinner to use with veggies and dip at mini-meals for the next day.
-

"KID-TESTED, KID-APPROVED" RECIPES

Homemade Pita Crisps

Ingredients

Whole wheat pitas

Vegetable oil

Seasoning (use your favourite, i.e. dill, cumin, chili powder, salt, pepper, rosemary, Mexican spice mix, etc.)



Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F. Split pita bread in half horizontally. Brush rough side with oil. Sprinkle with seasoning and cut the pita halves into triangles. Place on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet.

Bake 10 minutes until golden brown, checking at 5 minutes. Let cool and store in an air tight container.

Quinoa Salad

Ingredients

1½ cup water

1 pkg cherry tomatoes

1/3 cup quinoa

3-4 green onions (chopped)

1 red sweet pepper

3 tbsp lemon juice

1½ tbsp olive oil

1/4 tsp pepper



Directions

Bring water and quinoa to a boil. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes then let cool. Chop pepper, onions and cherry tomatoes and mix all ingredients together. Serve chilled.

Dilly Garlic Dip

Ingredients

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup plain, thick yogurt
- 1 tbsp garlic paste, or 3 cloves garlic chopped, or 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tbsp dill flakes
- 2 tbsp cider vinegar

Directions

Mix all the ingredients together until well blended.

Serve with vegetable sticks, crackers or pita wedges.



Mexican Spice Mix

Ingredients

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 tbsp chili powder | 1 tbsp ground cumin |
| 1 tbsp onion powder | 1/4 tsp garlic powder |



Directions

Stir all the ingredients together. Store in a covered container until ready to use. Use the mix to flavour beans, chili, dips, tacos, chicken, beef, pita crisps (see *recipe on page 4*).

Mexican Bean Dip

Ingredients

- 1 can (540mL) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tbsp Mexican spice mix
- 1 tsp cider vinegar (or lemon juice or water)
- 1 cup of grated cheese (optional)



Directions

In a bowl, mash the beans with a fork or potato masher. Sprinkle the cider vinegar over the mashed beans and mix together until blended. You can make a chunky dip or mash it more to make a smoother dip. Add the Mexican spice mix and cheese (if using) and mix again. If the dip is too thick, you can mix in more water.

Serve with crackers, pita wedges or naan bread. Or, use to make Mexican Bean Wraps.

Mexican Bean Wraps

Ingredients

8 – 10 small whole wheat tortillas

Mexican Bean Dip recipe (*page 5*)

1/2 cup of salsa

1 clove garlic, chopped or 1/2 tbsp garlic paste or 1/4 tsp garlic powder

Toppings such as grated cheese, corn, cooked rice, chopped lettuce or spinach.

Directions

Make the bean base: Add the salsa and garlic to the Mexican Bean Dip and stir together.

To make the wraps: divide the bean mix evenly among the tortillas. Add the toppings. Wrap it up and enjoy!

Broccoli Salad

Salad Ingredients

4 cups fresh chopped broccoli

1 cup halved seedless grapes (optional)

1/3 cup grated cheese

1/3 cup sunflower seeds

Dressing

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1/2 cup plain, thick yogurt

1 1/2 tbsp cider vinegar



Directions

In a large bowl, put the broccoli, grapes, cheese and sunflower seeds. In a small bowl, whisk the mayonnaise, yogurt and cider vinegar together. Pour the dressing over the broccoli mixture and stir gently.

Hawaiian Tuna Salad

Ingredients

1 can of tuna

4 tbsp mayonnaise

Salt and pepper

1/2 cup crushed pineapple, drained well

2 tbsp onion diced small (red, white or green onion)



Optional add-ins:

1/4 cup chopped walnuts

2 tbsp shredded coconut

1/2 small apple chopped

1/2 small carrot grated

Directions

Drain the tuna in a colander and press out as much liquid as possible. Put the tuna in a small bowl. Add the mayonnaise, salt and pepper, crushed pineapple and onion. Stir together. Stir in any add-ins.

Make a sandwich or put in a pita or on a bun or bagel. Or, use it as a dip with veggie sticks, crackers or naan bread.

Chickpea, Carrot and Pineapple Salad

Ingredients

1	14 oz can pineapple tidbits	1/4 cup mayonnaise
2	19 oz can chickpeas, drained and rinsed	1 tbsp lemon juice
1	large carrot, peeled and grate	1/2 tsp ground cumin
1/4	cup plain yogurt	

Directions

Drain pineapple tidbits, reserving juice. In large bowl, toss chickpeas, pineapple and carrots. In small bowl, mix yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon juice and cumin. Stir into chickpea mixture, adding some of the reserved pineapple juice if desired.

Remaining pineapple juice can be frozen in ice cube trays and used in smoothies or to flavour plain water.

Moroccan Couscous and Chickpea Salad

Ingredients

1	cup quick-cooking couscous	3	tbsp oil
1	cup boiling water	2	tbsp lemon juice
1	small zucchini - washed and diced	1	garlic clove - minced
1	carrot - peeled and grated	1	tsp ground cumin
1/2	red pepper - diced	1	tsp ground coriander
1/4	red onion - finely diced	1/2	tsp ground ginger
1	19 oz can chickpeas - rinsed and drained		Dash of salt and pepper
2	tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley or 1 tsp dried parsley (optional)		

Directions

Make the couscous and put in a bowl. Pour the boiling water over the couscous and combine gently. Cover the bowl to seal in the steam (use a tea towel, plate, tin foil or plastic wrap) for 5 minutes.

While the couscous sits, dice the zucchini, pepper and onion and grate the carrot. Rinse and drain the chickpeas. In a small bowl mix together the oil, lemon juice, garlic, cumin, coriander, ginger, salt and pepper.

Fluff the couscous. Add the vegetables and chickpeas. Pour the dressing on top and gently mix everything together. Sprinkle with parsley if using.

Red, White and Green Salad

Ingredients

1	red pepper	4	radishes
1	green pepper	3/4 cup	chopped feta cheese
1	small English cucumber		

Salad dressing – use your favourite store bought salad dressing OR, use the dressing from the Broccoli Salad recipe OR, use the Dilly Ranch Dip as a dressing.

Directions

Wash the peppers, remove the seeds and chop into chunks about 1 inch. Wash the cucumber and chop into 1/2 inch chunks. Wash the radishes and dice them.

Combine the peppers, cucumber, radishes and feta cheese in a bowl. Top with the salad dressing and gently mix together.

Fruity Nut-free Granola Bars

Ingredients

1	cup rolled oats	1	tsp ground cinnamon
1/2	cup toasted wheat germ	1/4	tsp each ground nutmeg and ground allspice
1/2	cup whole wheat flour	1/3	cup pure maple syrup
1/2	cup shelled pumpkin seeds	2	large eggs
1 1/2	cups chopped dried fruit (eg. dried apricots and dried cranberries)	1	tsp vanilla



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F degrees. Grease an 8 x 8-inch baking pan.
2. In a large bowl, mix oats, wheat germ, flour, pumpkin seeds, dried fruit, nuts, and spices. Set aside.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the maple syrup, eggs and vanilla. Pour wet mixture over the dry ingredients and mix until everything is well blended.
4. Spread the thick batter evenly into the prepared pan, gently pressing it into the bottom and sides of the pan.
5. Bake until lightly browned, about 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to cool on a wire rack, and then cut into bars.
6. Store these healthy, whole-grain granola bars in an airtight container for up to 3 days or wrap them individually and store them in the freezer.

Yogurt Parfaits

Ingredients

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 cup plain yogurt | 1 cup vanilla yogurt |
| 2 cups fresh or frozen fruit (example, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries or a combination) | |



Directions

In a medium bowl, blend the plain yogurt and vanilla yogurt. Put 1/3 cup of the blended yogurt in the bottom of 4 containers. Add 1/2 cup fruit on top of the yogurt and top with 2-4 tbsp of granola.

Tips:

Yogurt: Use any yogurt you like instead of blending plain and vanilla yogurt OR use all plain yogurt and mix with some maple syrup for flavour.

Frozen fruit: Thaw it before making the parfait (check the bag for thawing instructions).

Granola: Granola makes a crunchy topping. You can use other food to make a crunchy topping if you don't have (or like) granola, such as toasted coconut or dry cereal.

If you're packing the parfait for lunch at school, put the crunchy topping in a separate container and sprinkle it on top at break time. That way the topping won't go soggy.

Muffin Mix

This base mix can be used to make muffins and loaves.

Ingredients

- | | |
|--|--|
| 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all purpose flour | 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups whole wheat flour |
| 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups natural bran | 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup skim milk powder |
| 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar | 2 tbsp baking powder |



Directions

Stir everything together in a large bowl. Transfer to airtight container. Store in cool, dry place. Stir well before using. Makes about 12 cups.

For recipes that can be made using this muffin mix, see page 10.

Banana Muffins

Ingredients

- 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups base Muffin Mix (*page 9*)
- 1 cup mashed banana (about 3 small)
- 1/3 cup water
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp vanilla

Directions

Measure Muffin Mix into large bowl. In a small bowl, whisk together banana, water, oil, egg and vanilla. Pour over dry ingredients. Stir together just until moistened. Spoon into greased or paper-lined muffin cups. Bake in 375°F oven for about 25 minutes or until tops spring back when lightly touched.

Makes 10-12 muffins.

Variation: Chocolate Chip Banana Muffins: stir $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chocolate chips into Muffin Mix.

Zucchini Loaf

Ingredients

- | | |
|--|---|
| 3 cups Muffin Mix (<i>page 9</i>) | 1 cup water |
| 1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans (optional) | 1/3 cup vegetable oil |
| 1/4 cup packed brown sugar | 2 eggs |
| 1 tbsp cinnamon | 2 tsp vanilla |
| 1/2 tsp baking soda | 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups coarsely shredded zucchini |
| 1/4 tsp ground cloves | |

Directions

In large bowl, combine Muffin Mix, nuts (if using), sugar, cinnamon, baking soda and cloves. Whisk together water, oil, eggs, vanilla then stir in zucchini. Pour the liquid ingredients over the dry. Stir together just until moistened.

Pour into greased 9" x 5" loaf pan. Bake in 350°F oven about 45 minutes to 1 hour or until tester inserted in centre comes out clean. Let cool in pan about 15 minutes then turn out on rack, right side up, to finish cooling.



For more lunch ideas, visit: www.unlockfood.ca



Thank you
to the students at
Holy Name of Mary
Catholic Elementary School
in St. Marys, who helped test
the recipes provided in this booklet.



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