

Wellness Advocate

THE ART OF THE HEALTHY LUNCH

School starts soon, which makes it a perfect time to do a lunch reboot, for kids *and* adults. If you've gotten a little off track with vacations and varying schedules, now is a wonderful opportunity to rethink that midday meal.

A lunch that's portable, healthy and delicious is worth the prep time and will energize you throughout the afternoon. (Editor's note: some prepared frozen dinners are not that great for you. Check the nutrition label, especially for sodium).

That being said, read on for some great power lunch ideas!

Portland food writer Califia Suntime's book, *Bring Your Lunch*, is an entertaining, well-researched guide with more than 60 tasty, healthful, easy-to-make recipes for office workers, cubicle dwellers, students and anyone who has ever resorted to a vending machine "lunch" or a mad dash for fast food. It includes clever recycling ideas for leftovers and some downright delicious fare for lunch.

Taking a healthy lunch to work is also one of the simplest ways to trim your budget. Most people think nothing of spending \$10 or so for a restaurant lunch, but over the course of a month—or a year—the expense can really add up.

Beyond the cost savings, most meals packed at home are healthier than foods at restaurants. When we eat out, we're often faced with huge portions and fattening extras, like the french fries that routinely come with sandwiches. When you pack lunch at home, you can control your portions and choose healthier ingredients.

"First of all, make sure your lunch is balanced. Lunches that include some lean or low-fat protein, along with carbohydrates, will keep you feeling full," says Connie Diekman, RD, president of the American Dietetic Association.

If you love sandwiches, use a variety of whole-grain breads, pitas, and wraps. Choose lean fillings like sliced eggs, tuna fish, low-fat cheese or lean meats. Then jazz up your sandwiches with assorted greens, fresh basil, sprouts, sliced cucumbers, onions, and/or tomatoes.



But sandwiches are far from your only option when you're brown-bagging it. Last night's dinner, hard boiled eggs, vegetarian wraps, cereal—anything you enjoy at home can be packed up and eaten for lunch.

In fact, you might want to make extra food for dinner so you'll have leftovers to bring for lunch. "Leftovers are the perfect food to pack and take for lunch because you can control the portions and calories in the meal to ensure it will be nutritious, filling and delicious," says Diekman.

For the kids (and adults, too) presentation can make a big difference. "There is no magic trick to getting kids to eat a healthy lunch," says Maryann Jacobsen, MS, RD. But, that's no reason to give up. Instead, rethink everything about it, including how it looks. The way food is presented can have a big effect on acceptance.

Young children prefer small foods and may lose interest when served larger portions of healthy foods. Serve bite-size cubes of cheese and chicken, small melon balls or tiny globes of mozzarella cheese as part of snacks or lunch. Bake whole-grain mini-muffins, and prepare smaller pizzas by using a whole-grain English muffin for a crust.

Remember, the most important tip for getting kids to eat healthy food starts with you. All the food styling in the world won't help kids form these healthy habits unless you follow suit. Parents are the biggest influence on children's eating habits so you need to eat right, too!

(Content courtesy of the San Jose Mercury News, Parents.com and eatright.org.)



Herbal Supplements: What to Know Before You Buy

Echinacea to prevent colds. Ginkgo to improve memory. Flaxseed to lower cholesterol. The list of herbal remedies goes on and on.

Herbal supplements, sometimes called botanicals, aren't new. Plants have been used for medicinal purposes for thousands of years. Although makers of herbal supplements must follow good manufacturing practices—to ensure that supplements are processed consistently and meet quality standards—they don't have to get approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) before putting their products on the market.



Yet all herbs—including herbal supplement products labeled as "natural"—can have drug-like effects. Anything strong enough to produce a positive effect, such as lowered cholesterol or improved mood, is also strong enough to carry risk. So, it's important to do your homework and investigate potential benefits and side effects of herbal supplements before you purchase them. And be sure to talk with your doctor, especially if you take medications, have chronic health problems, and are pregnant or breast-feeding.

How do you know if the claims of herbal supplements are true?

Manufacturers of herbal supplements are responsible for ensuring that the claims they make about their products aren't false or misleading and that they're backed up by adequate evidence. However, they aren't required to submit this evidence to the FDA.

Don't just rely on a product's marketing. Look for objective, research-based information to evaluate a product's claims. To get reliable information about a particular supplement:

- ▶ Ask your doctor or pharmacist. Even if they don't know about a specific supplement, they may be able to point you to the latest medical guidance about its uses and risks.
- ▶ Look for scientific research findings. Two good sources include the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the Office of Dietary Supplements. Both have websites that provide information to help consumers make informed choices about dietary supplements.
- ▶ Contact the manufacturer. If you have questions about a specific product, call the manufacturer or distributor. Ask to talk with someone who can answer questions, such as what data the company has to substantiate its products' claims.

(Article courtesy of the Mayo Clinic)

Recipe: Turkey & Tomato Wraps

Fresh bell peppers, tomatoes and lettuce fill these hearty turkey wraps. This wrap is great for picnics or when you need to have dinner on the run. Add a bit of crumbled feta or shredded cheddar cheese for another layer of flavor. Serve with carrot sticks or other crunchy vegetables, plus your favorite low-fat dressing.

Ingredients

- 1 cup chopped bell pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh tomato
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar or cider vinegar
- 8 slices low-sodium deli turkey (about 8 ounces)
- 4 8-inch whole-wheat tortillas
- 2 cups chopped romaine lettuce

Directions

1. Combine bell pepper, tomato and oil and vinegar in a medium bowl.
2. Divide turkey among tortillas. Top with equal portions of the vegetables and lettuce. Roll up. Serve the wraps cut in half, if desired.

Nutrition Information per serving (makes 4 servings) : 350 calories | 12 g fat | 400 mg sodium
35 g carbohydrates | 19 g protein | 35 mg cholesterol | 325 mg potassium

