

10 Ways to Make Your Kids' Brown Bag Lunches Simpler



School lunch, while getting a serious overhaul in some areas of the country, is still horrible in others, with schools usually serving such creations as pressed together nuggets of animal parts and pizza for the vegetable requirement.

Until our schools start offering real food and not science projects to our children, I suggest sending them to school with a good ol' brown bag of goodies rather than subjecting them to the food we commonly know as "school lunch."

Here are ten really practical ways to make brown baggin' it a little easier and more appealing:

1. Use leftovers as much as possible. I like to use dinner from the night before for lunch the next day. That way I don't have to do any more work.
2. Use reusable sandwich bags. They're safer for your kid's health, more economical, and better for the environment.
3. Always add a piece of fruit and a veggie. This rounds the meal out, fills your kids up and helps ensure they're getting their fruits and veggies. I like apples, oranges, grapes, carrots, broccoli, snap peas and cauliflower.
4. Make it a part of your kids' jobs/chores/responsibilities to make their own lunch the day before. You'll get them in the kitchen and you've delegated out one more "mom" job.
5. Nut butter and jelly / honey sandwiches freeze really well. Make several on a Saturday and freeze them in individual bags to make packing a snap.
6. Sauces or dips make for a fun lunch. Purchase 2 oz. disposable or reusable portion cups and fill them with things like peanut butter, soy sauce, creamy dips for veggies, healthy chocolate sauce for fruit dipping, etc.
7. Create meals that kids assemble themselves. Slice cheeses and healthy meats and sandwich veggies like onions, peppers, lettuce and tomatoes, on a weekend and portion out into bags or

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containers. Do the same with crackers and you've got your meals for the week: cheese, veggie and (optionally) meat cracker sandwiches.

8. Cut small circles out of good quality tortillas and place in a bag. Spoon refried beans into a container and package them both along with sliced tomatoes and avocado for a burrito on-the-go that kids can put together themselves at school.
9. Invest in a really cool lunchbox. Let your kids pick their own. It'll make them feel a lot hipper about taking home-lunch to school.
10. Kids adore novelty. Chinese take-out containers are very easy to find online and are quite inexpensive. Fried rice also happens to be one of the easiest meals to make and freeze. Fill take-out containers with finished fried rice (use veggies and tofu for a safe out-of-the-fridge combination), place the filled and closed containers in freezer bags, and freeze. Thaw take-out boxes in the fridge the night before and pair them with some fortune cookies, (which also happen to be a low fat, low sugar snack) for a terrifically fun lunch.

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