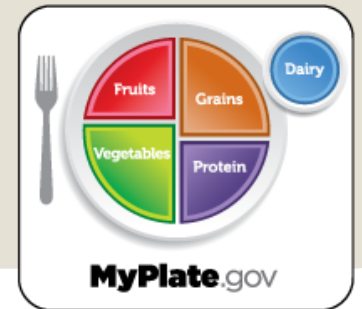


## PACKING

# Smart School Lunches

### Think beyond sandwich, chips, and cookie: components

Use MyPlate to pack a healthy school lunch. When packing lunches for school, remember to include each food group. This will help your child do better in school and keep them healthy. To make lunch satisfying, include a variety of tastes, textures, and colors. Ideas for each group are listed below:



### DAIRY

- Cheese (slices, cubed, string), cottage cheese, milk, pudding, yogurt

### FRUITS

- Fruit slices; unsweetened applesauce; dried fruit like apricots, cranberries, and raisins
- Whole fruits like blueberries, cherries, oranges, and strawberries
- Dip cut apples in orange juice as a sweeter alternative to lemon juice to prevent browning

### GRAINS

- Whole wheat bread, bagels, crackers, English muffins, pita bread, popcorn, rolls, tortillas
- Brown rice, whole grain pasta salad, whole grain spaghetti
- Whole grain pizza muffins or fruit muffins, oatmeal, waffles



### VEGETABLES

- Vegetable slices – carrots, celery, cucumbers, peppers
- Broccoli florets, cherry tomatoes, sugar snap peas
- As a sandwich topping or wrap filling – lettuce, spinach, tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers

### PROTEIN

- Beans, chicken, ham, hummus, meatballs, nuts, peanut butter, peeled hardboiled eggs, tuna, turkey

### COMBINATIONS

- Black bean salad or taco salad
- Chicken or egg salad sandwiches
- Fruit yogurt parfaits with granola
- Fruit yogurt smoothies with spinach and/or peanut butter
- Macaroni and cheese topped with vegetables (like tomatoes) and chicken
- Meat, veggie, and cheese kabobs or fruit kabobs
- Vegetable & bean, chicken, or cheese quesadillas
- Vegetables with hummus, peanut butter, yogurt

Learn more at  
**MyPlate.gov!**



## SUCCESS TIPS

With a little planning, your child will happily look forward to opening their lunch boxes.

- Prep the night before to make mornings easier.
- Involve your child in the planning and prepping.
- Make food ‘finger friendly.’
- Create your own snack-style lunches with cheese cubes, crackers, fruit slices, and rolled lunch meat.
- Use a variety of fruits and vegetables.

## SAVE TIME AND MONEY

Providing your child with nutritious lunches they love can be both easy on the budget and on your time.

- Use reusable containers instead of disposable bags. Freeze a bottle of water to use as an ice pack.
- Buy in bulk and make your own individual portions.
- Batch make items and freeze extras in individual portions – just pull out when ready to use.
  - Example: casseroles, sandwiches, waffles
- Use an insulated bag. It will protect food better than a paper bag or plastic box.
- Use dinner leftovers.
- Pack for lunch while prepping dinner. Cutting veggies for dinner? Set some aside for lunch tomorrow.

## MAKE THE GRADE: FOOD SAFE

Packing a school lunch often means food can be out of the refrigerator for an extended period. Bacteria grows quickly when foods are at room temperature, and bacteria in food can make us sick. Remember these food safety tips, so your child’s lunch stays safe.

- When prepping, wash hands, surfaces, and food.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
  - Ice packs, frozen water bottles, frozen smoothies, and frozen entrees all help keep foods cold.
  - Keep bags away from the sun and radiators.
  - Packing a cold lunch the night before will keep it cool longer in the morning.
  - Use an insulated thermos for hot foods. To help maintain heat, fill the container with boiling water and let it stand five minutes. Then, empty the container and insert the heated food.
  - Keep hot foods and cold foods separate.
  - Pack only the amount of perishable food that will be eaten at lunch. Extra food will spoil.
- Use an insulated bag. It will protect food better than a paper bag or plastic box.
- Clean lunch bags regularly with soap and warm water.
- Consider replacing foods that can spoil with more shelf-stable options.

Perishable Food Items		Non-Perishable Food Items	
Cottage cheese	Chicken or tuna salad	Beef/turkey jerky	Applesauce
Cut fruits or vegetables	Leftovers	Canned tuna	Bagels
Lunch meats	Eggs	Peanut butter	Dried fruit
Milk	Fish or poultry	Trail mix	Whole vegetables
Opened canned fruits and vegetables	Yogurt	Whole fruits	Whole grain bread or crackers

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For more information, call MU Extension’s Show Me Nutrition line at 1-888-515-0016. Running out of money for food? Contact your local food stamp office or go online to [mydss.mo.gov/food-assistance/food-stamp-program](http://mydss.mo.gov/food-assistance/food-stamp-program)



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