

6 “Crazy” Nutritious Foods to Put in Your Kids' School Lunches

Stop stuffing your child's lunchbox with energy-sapping junk and instead power them up a few unexpected multitasking foods they will love.

By [Laurel House](#) | Tue Aug 24, 2010 17:06



The Original Smart Cookie

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Cookies, PB&J, chips, soda, maybe a box of raisins.... Sounds similar to what you fill [your kid's lunchbox](#) with? Do you really think that chocolate, fat, sugar, and a little fruit is the best mid-day meal to power your child through the rest of the afternoon? Think again. I know... "but that's what they like." That's why it's time to do two very important things when it comes to lunch food: 1. Hide healthy ingredients in seemingly junky "treats," 2. Introduce new things that- surprise- your kids will actually not just love, but ask for. I'm talking energizing, brain-powering, attention focusing, [organic, balanced](#) AND tasty "super," omega-rich, and multi-tasking foods.

[Sharon Richter](#); a registered dietitian and certified dietetic nutritionist who helps create personalized eating plans to fit anyone's lifestyle says that what is most important is getting kids involved. They are much more likely to eat the food if they help make. For lunch she suggests Quinoa, Edamame, Sunflower Seed Butter (instead of peanut butter), and Greek Yogurt- great sources of protein. For a vitamin boost, she likes Eboost instead of sports drinks. It's fun to add to water, filled with vitamins, and sweetened with all-natural stevia.

Here are a few of Sharon's healthy suggestions to give your child a healthy kick in the pants before and during school:

Breakfast

Whole grain English muffin (fiber helps keep full and cholesterol down- yes kids can have high cholesterol) with fun single serving squeeze packet of the most amazing all-natural [Justin's Nut Butter](#) (nuts provide good fats and protein, and they are just as good tasting if not better than pop tarts).



Lunch

Edamame is a great fiber-filled, protein-packed snack. Just put frozen edamame in a zip lock bag and by lunch they will be defrosted.

Parfait is a fun way to get your kids to eat healthy Greek Yogurt, Fruit, and Granola. It's a perfect lunch. How? Use a tall clear container. Start with fruit, layer yogurt, then granola (like organic [GrandyOats](#) OrganicGoji Agave Granola) fruit, yogurt, granola.



A nutritionist is definitely great, but want to hear it from someone who really knows? Reed Alexander is known for his role as "Nevel Paperman" on Nickelodeon's popular show "iCarly." He is also the creator of an interactive site called Kewlbites.com that offers kids "bites" of healthy information, including how to eat well, the importance of exercise and rest, and additional information to help them make the right choices about their health.

Why does Reed care about your health? With a family history of heart disease and diabetes, Reed realized the importance of taking health into his hands at an early age. In fact, he recently lost 15 lbs on a diet plan that he created for himself! He was so inspired by his own success that he decided to reach out to other tweens/teens via the Internet to share his knowledge.

Reed's Kewl Bites and Real Insight

Why is it important to eat healthy (and still tasty) food at school?

“Eating healthy and delicious during the school day is essential to feeling good and performing your best. A nutritious breakfast provides energy and helps us to concentrate. When we are able to focus on the tasks we have at hand, we are able to excel in our endeavors, thus helping us to build confidence and self-esteem. Studies have shown that eating breakfast plays a role in keeping us balanced and, therefore, we avoid overeating throughout the rest of the day.”

What motivated Reed to create his own food plan?

“In 2009, I was lacking energy, feeling tired, and was overweight. Additionally, my family has a history of heart disease and diabetes. I knew that I wanted to make a change and start living a healthier lifestyle which would be a long lasting change in my life as opposed to a short term diet or a temporary program targeted at adults. I also really enjoy food and cooking and needed to figure out how I was going to be able to make smarter and healthier choices while still enjoying delicious meals and snacks and having fun when going out for dinner or to a birthday party or any event in which I wanted to feel good about the edible presences in the room! Originally, I was extremely confused because there was nowhere for me to turn--there was no voice from a kid's perspective that would help me--a kid--along the way.”

So what did he do?

“I started reading and researching a ton of information and I combined two important passions of mine--one (an older one that had always been a part of my life) which was cooking, and the other (a newer one!) which was health. I began experimenting with foods and teaching myself how to substitute less-beneficial ingredients for healthier ones, learning about portion control, and reading food labels. I started to exercise and make fitness a regular part of my lifestyle, while developing methods to make it fun. Shortly thereafter, I began to see the results as I had more energy and I was losing weight. I was so thrilled and, after losing 15 pounds, I have so much more energy and feel better.”

Enough talk, what should you stock your kid’s lunchbox with?

1. FISH

Yes, fish. Instead of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, use canned tuna (with greek yogurt, mustard, and relish), pita wedges, and cucumber slices for a make-your-own sandwich (or make it for them) and bag it up! Don’t like tuna? How about Salmon? Pouched Salmon mixed with diced apples and chopped almonds is not just a tasty alternative, but one filled with omega 3s.

Why?

Fish is brain food, and its chock-full of powerhouse nutrients that help kids stay full and focused. Rich in omega-3 DHA, fish has been proven to contribute to healthy brain development and heart health, improved circulation, reduced inflammation and improved energy levels.

Don’t think your kid will eat fish? Pick up the book “My Two-Year-Old Eats Octopus: Raising Children Who Love to Eat Everything.” It has tons of tips for how to raise non-picky eaters.

2. SEAWEED

Also known as Nori, [sheets of dried seaweed](#) are not just a tasty treat, but also uber-nutritious. I know, sounds weird, but the crunchy, flaky, dark green sea vegetable (yes the same stuff that’s wrapped around sushi) is actually raw, organic algae pressed into thin sheets (similar to paper making) and a part of daily life in Japan. It is a low calorie superfood filled with bioavailable nutrients, lean protein, minerals (including ten times more calcium and iron than dairy products, ounce per ounce), vitamins, antioxidants, and lignans. Put the sheets in your kid’s lunchbox as is, or wrap them around rice with a dash of soy sauce (moistening the edges so it sticks together) for a fuller sandwich-like snack.

SUPERFRUITS to the Rescue



Forget about boring raisins. Spruce up your kid’s lunch with something she’ll love (actually eat), that has multi-tasking benefits to enhance the learning experience. Like what? Superfruits and [berries](#).

3. Goji

One of the most potent superfoods, the goji berry has a perfect balance of macronutrients, carbohydrates, high-quality protein, healthy fat, soluble fiber, 18 amino acids, free-radical-devouring antioxidants, zinc, iron, phosphorus, riboflavin (B2), vitamin E, and carotenoids which include beta-carotene, plus vitamin C- great to support the immune system and longevity. To put its power into perspective, they contain more vitamin C than oranges, more beta carotene than carrots, and more iron than soybeans or spinach. Did I mention that they taste good too? The flavor is something like a dried cherry and a cranberry, and it's perfect in trail mix, cookies, or just eaten by the handful.

4. Mulberry

This sweet superfruit is filled with protein, is an excellent source of iron, calcium, vitamin C, and fiber, plus it contains a high concentration of Resveratrol- an free-radical fighting antioxidant shown to promote a healthy heart and longevity. The flavor is similar to a sun-dried fig, but better (if that's even possible). Try [Nativas Naturals organic](#) dried superfruits.

5. Goldenberries

Not your average dried fruit, Goldenberries are super-high in carotene and bioflavonoids shown to produce anti-inflammatory and antioxidant activity, an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C, plus protein, fiber and pectin. Unlike most fruits, Goldenberries also contain protein and phosphorus. It has a sweet raisin-like flavor that is heightened with a citrusy zing and a great crunch that comes from the strawberry-like seeds. Yum!

6. CAULIFLOWER, SPINACH and BEETS oh my!



So that might be misleading, but these veggies come in cookie form. But not just any cookies, [Smart Cookies!](#) Your kid will wonder what they did to get such a tasty treat in their lunch box... when really the beyond tasty chocolate and peanut butter cookies disguise the vitamin-packed carrots, raspberries, spinach, yams, cauliflower, parsnips, beets, zucchini, peas, squash and other produce that fill every delectable bite. Not to worry, not all of nature's goodness are in each cookie. There are 4 flavors to choose from, each with its own array of fruits and veggies.

If your kid has more of a salty tooth than a sweet, ditch the fried corn chips and instead stick a bag of [Hot Veggie Stixs](#) in their lunchbox. They come in 3 fun colors thanks to the all natural potatoes, tomatoes and spinach, plus pure sea salt for flavor. They are crunchy, insanely tasty, low fat, and delivering a healthy dose of healthy goodness.