



October 2008

Dear Colleagues,

Fall greetings and welcome to the tenth issue of *It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Play Hard, Rest Well*. Our monthly media release celebrates Montana's two new **GOLD** winners in the USDA HealthierUS School Challenge. Our handouts focus on healthy fun for children's parties with easy tips for home and school: **Enjoy Tasty (and Healthy) Party Treats** and **Enjoy Active Fun at Kids' Parties**. Our nutrient-rich recipe - **No Bake Cookies**, reprinted from *The American Cancer Society* - is a deliciously perfect fit with this month's theme.

School wellness issues continue to be in local and national news. Rapidly rising food costs are an additional challenge to school nutrition programs committed to improving meals and other food/beverage options on campuses across the country. Fortunately, there are many successful examples and resources to help schools continue to focus on what children need to be fit, healthy, and ready to succeed. **USDA Team Nutrition** offers great fact sheets for school foodservice at [www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/dgfactsheet\\_hsm.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/dgfactsheet_hsm.html)

Creating healthier school environments is not the sole responsibility of any one department or program. Effective community partnerships and coalitions are necessary for permanent, sustainable changes. **Action for Healthy Kids** ([www.actionforhealthykids.org/](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/)) offers a thought-provoking new report - *Progress or Promises? What's Working For and Against Healthy Schools* - on its web site along with a gold mine of tools and resources.

Working together to meet the criteria for an award is an effective way to collaborate and increase awareness of healthy schools at the same time. Any **elementary** school in the US is eligible for gold, silver, or bronze awards in the HealthierUS School Challenge (details at [www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html)). All Montana schools may apply for the Healthier Montana Menu Challenge at <http://opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/healthiermt.html>

As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions about our **Healthy Families 2008** packets. Although we have a general outline for each packet (and twelve pretested recipes), we are eager to incorporate your input whenever possible. Just send your thoughts along to me at [EatRightMT2000@gmail.com](mailto:EatRightMT2000@gmail.com) - and remember: Past issues of **Healthy Families** and other ERM materials are available at [www.eatrightmontana.org/](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/)

*Dayle Hayes, MS, RD*

**Healthy Families** packets are made possible with generous support from agencies, organizations, and individuals. Please join us in thanking the 2008 sponsors listed on the right. If you use this packet and can make a donation to support positive, practical messages for families, please contact ERM Chair Katie Bark at 406-994-5641 or [kbark@mt.gov](mailto:kbark@mt.gov)

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**It's All About Balance** | Celebrating Healthy Families 2008

## 4 Easy Ways to Enjoy Active Fun at Kids' Parties

Want to throw an awesome children's party at home or at your child's school? Want to give parties where kids beg to stay for "just a little longer?" The simple secret to successful kids' parties isn't tons of foods or expensive goodie bags. It's plain old running-around, bouncing up-and-down, silly, giggling, physical fun. It's the kind of fun that every child knows how to enjoy naturally (and the kind that adults can get into once they relax a bit). It's easy and cheap to have fun at any children's party. All you have to do is pick the right games for the ages of kids - and make sure you have a safe place and any necessary equipment. Here's how to have a ton of fun for almost no money:

### Have fun with OLD-FASHIONED FAVORITES.

The list of possibilities is long on fun and easy on wallets. With little or no equipment, kids (and adults) can have hours of fun with old-time games: kick the can, red rover, tug of war, leap frog, dodgeball, kickball, four-square, hopscotch, and all types of tag - freeze tag, flashlight tag, and Ultimate Tag (everyone walks in a circle; a few people have signs with activities - hop on one foot or walk backwards; tagged people must do the activity for 10 seconds; then resume walking).

### Have fun with CREATIVE INDOOR ACTIVITIES.

Some traditional favorites - such as red light-green light and follow the leader - can just as easily be played in a classroom or living room. Many ball games can also be adapted for indoor play using foam balls. Creative team games are great for "indoor Olympics" with events like a shoebox relay. "Racers" take turns skating a set distance with shoeboxes on their feet, then passing a baton to the next team member. (Shoeboxes skate well on carpet, tile, or wood without scuffing.)

### Have fun with HIGH-ENERGY BOX GAMES.

The oldie-but-goodie in this category is *Twister*® - fun for all ages since 1966. The game that "ties you up in knots" is fun for families or groups, and is played in tournaments around the world. Use multiple *Twister* mats for more laughs or try to beat the world record (hundreds of mats and thousands of players!). *Hullabaloo*, a creative combination of Simon says and freeze tag, is the popular new kid on the block. Both can be found for \$20 or less at retailers and online merchants.

### Have fun with LOW-TECH EQUIPMENT.

Children of the video game generation still get quite excited about some very low-tech toys, such as Frisbees® and hula hoops; Koosh®, Nerf, and foam balls; noodle pool toys (in and out of the water); and play tent parachutes (less than \$30). This equipment usually comes with cool ideas for activities. If you need some guaranteed games for a specific age group, check with an expert - the physical education (PE) or health enhancement teacher at your child's school.

**NEED SOME CREATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR A PARTY?** Eat Right Montana members and subscribers suggest *Games Kids Play* at [www.centerofweb.com/kids/games/default.htm](http://www.centerofweb.com/kids/games/default.htm) for 250+ mostly active games and variations (with basic descriptions and rules where appropriate). The mission of *Streetplay* ([www.streetplay.com/thegames/](http://www.streetplay.com/thegames/)) is "to document the great city games that we know and love." While these games have their beginnings in urban playgrounds, streets, stoops, and walls, they are universally appealing to young people and can be played anywhere children need something to do.

## 4 Easy Ways to Enjoy Tasty (and Healthy) Party Treats

Too many parties are focused on food with piles of cupcakes, cookies, candy, chips, and sugary drinks on the menu. While all foods or beverages can be part of a healthy eating style, **in moderation**, high-calorie celebrations have become almost daily norms rather than special events. However, savvy parents and teachers know that, when it comes to parties, children are usually not as concerned about the food and drink choices as the adults are. What kids want most is to share time with their friends and important adults. That's why smart families and schools are finding easy ways to make healthy food so much fun that children don't even know that it is good for them!

### Enjoy **SMALLER PORTIONS** of traditional treats.

In a balanced eating style, there is always room for reasonably sized portions of desserts and other higher fat, higher sugar foods. The secret is to start with plenty of nutrient-rich options, such as sandwiches, crackers and cheese, veggies with dip, or slices of sweet fruit. Then include small cupcakes, mini-candies, or bite-size cookies - enough for a everyone to have something sweet. Serve chips, nuts, and other salty snacks in small cups rather than gigantic bowls.

### Coordinate **BRIGHT COLORS** to the celebration.

"*Eat your colors*" is awesome advice for good health, great taste, and party fun. Fruits and veggies come in all colors to coordinate with holidays (a selection of green spring veggies with Ranch dip for St. Patrick's Day), a school mascot (orange slices and blueberries), or a child's favorite colors (red + green = strawberries + kiwi kebobs on a plastic straw). Want a sparkling substitute for pop? Mix bright-colored juice (pomegranate or blueberry) with club soda or seltzer water.

### Feature **FUN SHAPES** of everyday foods.

When it comes to special occasions, cookie cutters are a cook's best friend. Kid-pleasing sandwiches can be cut into every imaginable shape - hearts at Valentine's, bunnies for Easter, pumpkins for Halloween, or trees at Christmas. Other foods can easily be cut into fun shapes too, like ghosts cut from white and yellow cheese slices or small gingerbread people cut from fruit slices (apples, pears, or watermelon). All it takes is a few inexpensive cookie cutters and a tiny bit of creativity.

### Create **SILLY FACES** with a variety of foods.

This theme has unlimited variations, because kids (of all ages) love to play with their food. Start with a bread slice, a rice cake, crackers, pre-made pizza crust, or clean plate. Spread on a little nut butter, light cream cheese, or pizza sauce. Then everyone creates faces (human, animal, or make-believe) using pre-cut foods: shredded cheese, spaghetti, or pretzel sticks for hair; grapes or cucumber slices for eyes; carrots or pickles for a nose; sliced oranges or apples for a mouth; and so on.

**NEED SOME CREATIVE IDEAS FOR YOUR NEXT PARTY?** Eat Right Montana members and subscribers recommend *Family Fun Magazine* for easy, low-cost ideas. It's available on many magazine racks or at <http://familyfun.go.com/>. The site itself is packed with party ideas and recipes (many of them are easy and healthy), and it also offers a free newsletter. For more tasty and fun celebration ideas, check out the USDA's new resource, *Create Healthy, Active Celebrations*, ready to download at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhardhealthylifestyle/QuickandEasy/celebrations.pdf>

# For Immediate Release



**EAT RIGHT MONTANA**

*A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles*

[www.eatrightmontana.org](http://www.eatrightmontana.org)

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**MT Department of Public Health & Human Services**

October 1, 2008

## Montana Schools Celebrate Gold Medal Performances

Two Montana elementary schools are joining an exclusive national group this month. Ponderosa School in Billings and Hawthorne School in Bozeman have received Gold Awards in the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) HealthierUS School Challenge program. Administered by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the program recognizes schools that are creating healthy environments by promoting excellence in nutrition and physical activity.

"I am very proud that four Montana schools have been honored for their leadership in student health and wellness," says State Superintendent of Public Instruction Linda McCulloch. "Hawthorne and Ponderosa now join Box Elder and Lolo Elementary as USDA HealthierUS School Challenge winners in Big Sky country. Our office salutes the efforts of Montana's School Nutrition and Team Nutrition staff in supporting these schools and we look forward to celebrating their success at events in Bozeman on October 9th and Billings on October 10th."

To qualify for Gold awards, Ponderosa and Hawthorne schools submitted detailed applications documenting adherence to HealthierUS School Challenge criteria for their lunch menus, nutrition education, opportunities for physical activity, and guidelines for foods and beverages sold outside of the National School Lunch Program. The schools also maintained an average daily participation in the lunch program of 70 percent or greater. By meeting these required standards of excellence, Ponderosa and Hawthorne schools are enhancing both their students' health and their academic performance.

"We recognize the importance of school meals in children's lives," says Billings Food Services Manager Bette Hunt. "Our foodservice staff carefully plans breakfast and lunch menus that provide the nutritional balance which helps our students be fit, healthy, and ready to learn. Over the past few years, we have made many improvements, like adding fresh spinach to our salad mix and reformulating our pizza to be lower in fat." The Bozeman School District has also made significant nutritional changes, including more 'from scratch' entrées, an increased variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, the addition of skim milk in place of 2% milk, and a freshly baked whole wheat roll offered daily in all of the district schools.

"When children are well-nourished and physically fit, they are better able to pay attention in class and do well on tests," says Registered Dietitian Sherri Pearson, Assistant Manager of Food Service in Bozeman schools. "In addition to teaching smart eating habits with classroom lessons, we are working hard to raise family and community awareness of the positive changes in our local school nutrition program." In Billings, the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) is also looking at cost-effective ways to improve the nutritional quality of food and beverage options in vending machines and fundraisers.

Innovative programs to increase students' physical activity were another key reason for the gold recognition of Ponderosa and Hawthorne Elementary Schools by the USDA. Outstanding health enhancement teachers - Deb Kewer in Billings and Lynda Stuber in Bozeman - have been instrumental in creating fun ways to get kids up and moving, such as recess walking programs, playground dance contests, and school-based teams for Big Sky Fit Kids ([www.bigskyfitkids.org/](http://www.bigskyfitkids.org/)).

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at

[www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm)

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## No-Bake Cookies

### Ingredients:

- ½ cup reduced-fat peanut butter, almond butter, or sunflower butter (smooth or chunky)
- ½ cup honey
- ½ cup low-fat granola
- ½ cup crispy rice cereal
- ½ cup raisins or other dried fruit
- ½ cup crushed graham crackers

### Instructions:

- 1) Heat nut butter and honey in a saucepan over low heat until creamy. Remove from heat and pour into a bowl to cool.
- 2) Add granola, cereal, raisins, crushed graham crackers, and extras to the nut butter mix and stir well.
- 3) Roll into tablespoon-sized balls and set on wax paper.
- 4) Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving.

Yield: 32 cookies

### Ideas/Substitutions

- **Need a fun snack to send to your child's class? Kids will love these quick-to-make, crunchy treats!**
- **Involve your kids in preparing the cookies. They can help measure, mix, shape, and enjoy.**
- **Customize your cookies: Add your favorite nuts, seeds, or dried fruits, such as cashew pieces, sunflower seeds, raisins, or dried blueberries.**
- **Enjoy cookies with sliced apples and a refreshing glass of low-fat milk.**

### Nutrition Analysis

Serving Size: 1 cookie

Calories: 65

Total Fat: 1.6 g

Saturated Fat: 0.3 g

Trans Fat: 0.0 g

Total Carb: 12 g

Dietary Fiber: 0.3 g

Sodium: 29 mg

Protein: 1.7 g

Iron: 0.3 mg

Calcium: 5.3 mg

### Recipe Source

Adapted and reprinted with permission,

#### **American Cancer Society**

**Celebrate! Healthy Entertaining for Any Occasion.**

Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society (2001)

[www.cancer.org/bookstore](http://www.cancer.org/bookstore)