



Fact Sheet



Packing Lunches To Go

WHY PACK YOUR LUNCH?

Economics, nutrition, and weight management! Packed lunches are usually less expensive than eating out. Packing your lunch also allows you to control the fat and calorie content of that meal. When you eat out, you typically do not know exactly how much fat and calories you are consuming.

When you pack your lunch you have control over the

nutritional quality of that meal. You should select, prepare, and pack foods that will be safe, flavorful, and nutritious.

You can also save time when you pack a lunch. You will not have to spend time standing in line at the cafeteria or waiting for your food to be served.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK?

A good lunch includes four parts. A protein, a grain serving, fruit and/or vegetable, and calcium source such as milk or yogurt. Dessert can be optional and can be fruit. If milk is not your beverage try to pack foods like yogurt, cottage cheese, or cheese chunks. Lunch ideas can include using whole wheat bread or bagels for sandwiches, stuff pita bread with your favorite filling, pack canned sandwich spreads, pack pretzels, granola bars, graham crackers, or boxes of juice.

Be sure foods are safe as you pack your lunch. Bring foods

straight home from the grocery store and store them properly. Wash your hands as you prepare the foods and clean all work areas and utensils. If you pack your lunch in a brown bag be sure it is a bag that is made for that purpose. Don't use grocery store bags. They

Just as breakfast gets you through the morning, lunch will keep you going throughout the afternoon. People who do not eat a good lunch may have trouble concentrating on their afternoon work. Nutrition problems are less likely to occur when a varied diet is eaten.

may be contaminated from other foods, such as raw meat juice. Use the bags only once. Lunch boxes are another option for packing lunches. Insulated bags could also be used. Be sure to clean the bags before and after each use. Thermos bottles are good to keep hot foods hot or cold foods cold. Other equipment you may need would be plastic containers with tight fitting lids, plastic forks and spoons, blue ice packs that are frozen to be put into lunch boxes.

To save time, sandwiches can be prepared ahead of time and frozen. You can take the sandwich out of the freezer in the morning and pack it. You can pack non-perishable foods the night before. You can pack other parts of the lunch and refrigerate until the morning.

TIPS FOR PACKING APPETIZING LUNCHES:

- Gently toss steamed vegetables left from the night

before in Italian dressing. Refrigerate them in a "toss away bowl". Serve as a salad with crackers and cheese.

- Line pita pocket bread with Swiss cheese and stuff with your vegetables just before eating a delicious sandwich.

- Try a combination of peanut butter, honey, and banana slices on whole wheat bread...or use peanut butter

with apple chunks on raisin bread.

- Marinate some cut-up fruit in orange juice. Add dried mint to suit your taste. Pack into an "edible bowl" like a melon half. Top with a dollop of yogurt and serve with graham crackers.

Source: Oklahoma State Extension Service. Prepared by Dawn L. Price, County Extension Agent.

