



LUNCH AND SNACK IDEAS

REMINDER: We are a Peanut, Tree Nut and Sesame Seed FREE school

Please make sure that no Peanuts, Sesame Seeds or any other tree nut are brought to School. This includes the oils from the products listed.

Thank you for keeping all of our children safe.

Several websites that you may find helpful are:

Laptop Lunches (www.laptoplunches.com)

Meals Matter (www.mealsmatter.org)

The Nut-Free Mom (www.nut-freemom.blogspot.com)

What's Cooking Blog - Easy, Delicious, and Peanut Free
(whatscookingblog.wordpress.com)

WASTE FREE LUNCH POLICY

A reminder to all that River Montessori has a waste free lunch policy. All items brought to school as lunch should either be consumed or returned in the lunch bag/box that they came in; all packaging and uneaten food (unless composted at school) will remain in the lunch boxes and return home.

This policy not only helps the school by reducing our waste but also helps the children understand that by composting and minimizing waste they are helping the natural environment. Lastly, you get to see what your child is eating and not eating at school.

ALLERGY FREE RECIPES

Allergy-Safe Gazpacho

From [Victoria Groce](#), former About.com Guide

Gazpacho, a cold Spanish soup, is the epitome of summertime fare. It depends on vegetables that hit their peak in mid- to late-summer and should be made with the best-quality ingredients you can find, since the soup is raw. I prefer a mellow, very chunky gazpacho. If you like your soup smooth, blend all the tomatoes and add more tomato juice. Similarly, if you prefer a spicier dish, add some seeded jalapeno peppers.

This quick gazpacho, made without bread, is safe for all "big eight" food allergies (read labels on the hot pepper sauce) and most others, save tomatoes, onions, and peppers.

Prep Time: 0:20

Cook Time: 0:0

Ingredients:

- 2 to 3 large ripe tomatoes
- 2 cucumbers
- 2 scallions
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 avocado
- 1/4 c tomato juice, or as needed
- juice of one lime
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- salt (to taste)
- cayenne pepper or hot pepper sauce to taste (Sriracha or Tabasco; optional)

Preparation:

1. Dice tomatoes. Core, seed, and dice bell pepper. Cut cucumbers in half lengthwise, remove seeds with a paring knife, and dice. Slice scallions (all of the white parts and about half of the green).
2. Reserve a small handful of tomatoes. Using an immersion blender or standing blender, blend remaining tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, scallions, and tomato juice until you are satisfied with the texture of the soup. Add more tomato juice as needed or desired.
3. Taste soup for flavor and add salt and pepper to taste. Stir in lime juice, honey, olive oil, and cayenne or hot pepper sauce (if using). Taste again and adjust salt if necessary. Stir in the reserved tomatoes.

To serve: Serve cold, with slices or chunks of avocado to garnish. Serves four.

Cranberry Chicken Salad

From [Victoria Groce](#), former About.com Guide

Chicken salad is versatile and easy to make. It's good for entertaining, quick solo meals, sandwiches, and even eating on its own.

I always make chicken salad when I have leftover chicken on-hand, either from making chicken stock or from roasting a whole chicken. But if you want to prepare this from scratch, you can cook chicken breasts thoroughly under the broiler or sauté them in a nonstick skillet using a small amount of oil until fully cooked.

Water chestnuts, despite their name, are nut-free; almonds are a possible substitution for people without nut allergies.

Prep Time: 0:15

Cook Time: 0:10

Ingredients:

- 2 to 3 large chicken breasts, fully cooked, cut into 3/4-inch dice (about 3 cups)
- 1 1/4 c mayonnaise (add more if salad seems dry)
- 1/2 c dried cranberries
- 1 small can water chestnuts, diced (8 oz.)
- 3 sprigs fresh tarragon, minced (approx. 3 Tbsp.), or 1 Tbsp. dried tarragon
- salt and pepper (to taste)

Preparation:

In a serving bowl, combine chicken, [mayonnaise](#), cranberries, water chestnuts or almonds, and tarragon. Mix thoroughly; add more mayonnaise if needed. Taste for salt and pepper and season as desired. Serve chilled. Will keep in the refrigerator for about one week.

Serves four to six as a main dish or appetizer salad; makes six to eight sandwiches

Allergy-Safe Sandwich Fillings

- [Red Pepper Puree](#)
- [Tomato Bruschetta](#)

Nut-Free Trail Mix

From [Victoria Groce](#), former About.com Guide

GORP--good old raisins and peanuts--is obviously not so good for nut allergies. Packaged trail mixes use a variety of nuts, and even versions that don't contain nuts often pose cross-contamination risks.

Sunflower and pumpkin seeds work well in trail mix. Be careful, however, to buy a brand without cross-contamination concerns. For the utmost safety, [roast your own pumpkin seeds](#). Many national brands of chocolate chips are not nut-free; I've suggested a brand from an allergy-safe manufacturer. Dried fruit and raisins are a less likely source of allergens but they, too, should be checked.

Prep Time: 0:5

Cook Time: 0:0

Ingredients:

- 2 parts sunflower seeds or roasted pumpkin seeds
- 2 parts raisins
- 2 parts Enjoy Life Nut-Free Granola, or similar nut-free cereal
- 2 parts dried fruit of your choice (e.g., apricots, cherries, or dates)
- 1 part Enjoy Life Choco Chips, or other nut-free chocolate chips (optional)

Preparation:

Combine all ingredients in an airtight container. Dried fruits will get sticky after a few days in warm weather, but trail mix will keep at room temperature for quite a long time.

Top 9 Substitutes for Peanut Butter

From [Victoria Groce](#), former About.com Guide

About.com Health's Disease and Condition content is reviewed by our [Medical Review Board](#)

If you were playing *Family Feud* and you had to name something that someone might spread on a sandwich, peanut butter would surely be at the top of the list. The ubiquitous peanut butter and jelly sandwich is still a lunchbox staple. But if your child has been diagnosed with a [peanut allergy](#), packing a lunch may have gotten unexpectedly complicated. Here are nine alternatives you may not have thought of to the old standby PB&J.

1. Cream cheese

Not for the dairy allergic, of course, but cream cheese has several virtues as a sandwich spread. It's got a thick, spreadable texture; it acts as a moisture barrier to keep bread from getting soggy; and it comes in flavors from fruit (to go with jelly) to chopped vegetable (to go with cold cuts).

2. Guacamole

Guacamole is hearty enough to stand on its own as a sandwich topping. It goes especially well in pitas and tortillas and makes a nice counterpart to chicken.

3. Whole berry cranberry sauce

Many families buy cranberry sauce once a year: at thanksgiving. But it's a lovely counterpart to turkey or chicken sandwiches throughout the school year. I suggest adding mayonnaise to keep your bread from getting soggy.

5. Vegetable Purees

Many kids who won't eat vegetables in their whole forms will eat them if they're cleverly disguised. Vegetable purees, like [Red Pepper Puree](#), are colorful and tasty, betraying little hint of their healthful origins. They make excellent sandwich spreads, though you'll want to add a moisture barrier like cream cheese, butter, or oil to prevent soggy bread.

6. Salad Dressing

Salad dressings are a potential source of hidden allergens, so do check labels closely. But your child's favorite dressing might be delicious on a sandwich. Try bleu cheese, ranch, or thousand island.

7. Bean Dips

Mexican-inspired bean dips make hearty sandwich spreads. Serve them with Colby-Jack or Asadero cheese and some salsa.

8. Soy and Sunflower Butters

Two items specifically created for kids with peanut allergies (or who might be attending [peanut-free schools](#)) are "soy nut" butter and sunflower seed butter. You'll find these in the health or specialty food aisle of your grocery store, at specialty retailers like Whole Foods or Trader Joe's, or at health food stores. Both are peanut and tree nut-free, although soy nut butter is obviously not safe for children with [soy allergies](#).

"Egg"cellent Eggplant Sticks

DESCRIPTION

An healthier version of the Italian staple.

INGREDIENTS

- Butter-flavored cooking spray
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tbsp cry bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp grated parmesan cheese
- 1/8 tsp garlic powder
- 3/4 tsp Italian seasoning
- 2 egg whites
- 2 tsp water
- 1 small eggplant (about 1 lb)
- 1 1/2 cups spaghetti sauce

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Spray baking sheet with cooking spray and set aside.

Combine breadcrumbs, cheese, garlic powder and Italian seasoning in a shallow dish. Stir well and set aside.

Combine egg whites and water in shallow dish. Beat with whisk until frothy. Set aside.

Trim off eggplant ends. Cut lengthwise into 4 pieces. Cut each piece into sticks 1/2 inch by 3 inches.

Roll sticks in crumb mixture. Dip in egg mixture and roll in crumb mixture again to coat.

Place sticks on baking sheet. Coat with cooking spray. Bake 15 to 18 minutes or until golden brown and tender. Meanwhile, heat sauce.

Place sticks in serving dish. Serve with sauce.

ESTIMATED PREPARATION/COOK TIME

30 minutes

Antipasto Italian Roll-Ups

DESCRIPTION

A low-sugar appetizer or anytime treat.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp fat-free sour cream
- 1 tbsp sun-dried tomato spread
- 2 whole-wheat tortillas (6 inches)
- 1/2 cup chopped, bottled, roasted red bell peppers
- 2 oz part-skim mozzarella cheese, thinly sliced
- 1 oz thinly sliced reduced-fat salami

PREPARATION

Combine sour cream and sun-dried tomato spread in small bowl. Spread 1 tbsp tomato mixture down center of each tortilla. Top each with half the basil, bell pepper, cheese and salami. Roll up.

ESTIMATED PREPARATION/COOK TIME

5 minutes

Autumn Pasta

DESCRIPTION

This low-sugar dish makes a great meal at the onset of those chilly fall months.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 boneless skinless chicken breast (4 ounces) cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 8 brussel sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 1 large fennel bulb, trimmed and sliced (1 1/2 to 2 cups, 2 inch pieces)
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 lemon, juiced (about 1/4 cup)
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup crushed whole-grain rotini pasta
- 1/8 cup shredded parmesan cheese

PREPARATION

Combine chicken, brussel sprouts, fennel, tomatoes, lemon juice, garlic and olive oil in large mixing bowl.

Lightly coat skillet with cooking spray. Add chicken mixture, covered, over medium until chicken is done and vegetables are tender (about 15 minutes).

Toss pasta into skillet with chicken mixture and heat through. Sprinkle with cheese before serving.

ESTIMATED PREPARATION/COOK TIME

30 minutes

Baked Honey Apple Slices

DESCRIPTION

Warm apple slices basted with honey, lemon and cinnamon.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup honey
- juice of 1 lemon
- 3 large cooking apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 2 tsp butter
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon

PREPARATION

Mix honey and lemon juice in shallow baking dish or pie pan. Place apple slices in honey-juice mixture and coat well. Dot with butter. Bake in 350 degree oven for about 30 minutes or until tender. Baste with pan liquid twice during baking.

ESTIMATED PREPARATION/COOK TIME

40 minutes

Carrot and Cucumber Salad

If your child doesn't like pasta create some vegetable 'noodles' using carrots, cucumbers and a trusty hand peeler or grater. Mix the carrots and cucumber 'noodles' together and top with your child's favorite salad dressing.

Crazy Eights

For this simple peanut-free school lunch idea all you need to do is supply eight of everything. Then pack a lunch note in your child's lunch bag promising a game of Crazy Eights before bed. Here are some menu ideas to get you started – eight pieces each of cheese, pepperoni, crackers, celery sticks, baby carrots, pickles, fruit wedges.

Jam & Cheese Roll Ups

Spread plain or flavored cream cheese on a soft tortilla and top with your favorite jam. Roll up.

Pita Crisps

Cut regular sized pitas into wedges and oven bake until crispy. For variety, brush first with oil, a little garlic powder and parmesan cheese or sprinkle on a little water, cinnamon and brown sugar. Serve with a favorite dip, yogurt or apple sauce.

Carrot, Raisin & Pineapple Salad

2 cups carrots, grated
1 small can pineapple tidbits, drained
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup mayonnaise or whipped salad dressing.

Combine ingredients. Pack in individual containers.

Tomato, Pasta & Cheese Salad

8 oz. of your children's favorite cooked pasta
4 large ripe tomatoes, diced
4 ounces favorite cheese, diced
4 tbsp. Italian dressing
Parmesan cheese

In a large bowl, combine cooked pasta, tomatoes, cheese and salad dressing. Add cooked pasta. Toss and divide into lunch portions. Garnish each container with Parmesan cheese.

Tomato & Corn Salad

1 large tomato, diced
3 tbsp. black beans

3 tbsp. frozen corn
2 tbsp. salsa

Toss and pack in a single portion container.

Mexican Wrap

Go Mexican by wrapping up some grilled chicken with black beans and spiced rice, topped with grated cheese, guacamole, salsa and sour cream. If your kids like tacos, make them transportable by opting for soft tortillas over hard shells.

Veggie Wrap

If your child is a veggie lover make a wrap using grilled zucchini, red and green peppers, eggplant and sweet onions. Spread the wrap with goat cheese, add a little salsa and top with vegetables. .

Chicken Caesar Wrap

Make up your favorite Caesar salad and put it in a soft tortilla wrap along with strips of sliced grilled chicken.

Roast Beef Wrap

Layer thin slices of roast beef on a flour tortilla. Spread with mayo and top with lettuce and tomato.

Bean Burrito

Or if your child likes to keep things simple what about spreading refried beans on a soft tortilla? Sprinkle with shredded cheese and wrap up.