

Healthy Lunchboxes

Made Easy!

Hi there! I'm Maija. I'm a registered Nutritional Therapist and Health Coach and a mum of 3 lunchbox users. Find out more about me and how you can best nourish *your* body and mind at www.foundationhealth.ie

Like you, I face the daily task of filling lunchboxes. I know that trying to pull together lunchboxes that are nutritious and that our kids willingly eat can be tough.

I created this guide to share my tips for making interesting, tasty and healthy lunchboxes aren't a grind or a head wreck! Hop inside for some inspiration 😊

Lunchbox basics:

Whole Foods

A healthy lunch is made up of whole foods (one ingredient or recognisable single ingredients) and contains no added sugar

Make it Easy

Removing peels and cutting food into bite size pieces help kids to be able to eat their lunch in the time available

Reuse & Recycle

Make use of leftovers – roast meat and vegetables make nutritious, filling lunchbox ingredients and don't have the mountains of salt and preservatives of packaged options

Be prepared

Trying to throw together a nutritious lunchbox 10 mins before you're late for school is nearly an impossible task. Get into the habit of planning ahead; preparing a bit extra dinner for lunchbox leftovers or batch cooking and freezing will give you the edge to create interesting, healthy lunchboxes in minutes.



The Main Dish

Choose 1

'Sandwich type things'

Whole wheat sandwich bread/roll/wraps/pita
Pancakes with cream cheese & fruit or bacon
Rice/oat/wheat crackers with dips or cheese
Quesadillas
Pizza slice

Sandwich alternatives

Slice of frittata
Omelette roll
Egg and bacon muffin
Hard-boiled egg (peeled)
Pasta/rice/quinoa/couscous salad
Meatballs
Lunch meats (e.g. salami/chorizo/ham; leftover roast chicken/beef slices; tinned fish)
Lettuce leaf 'wraps' (e.g. around smoked salmon slices; egg/mayo mix; Caprese salad; ham & cheese)
Bean or chickpea salad
Ham or bacon-wrapped avocado slices
Potato salad
Mini Cornish pasty
Leftover pasta bake
Fish cakes
Falafels

Snacks & Sides

Choose 2

Raw vegetable sticks (e.g. carrots, sweet peppers, celery, cucumber, sugar snap peas)
Guacamole or bean dips for veggies
Sprouted beans/lentils
Edamame beans or roasted chickpeas
Pickles
Pitted olives
Steamed vegetable pieces (e.g. broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, green beans)
Kale chips
Popcorn
'Ants on a log' celery sticks filled with sunflower/pumpkin seed butter, sprinkled with raisins
Pretzels
Rye crackers/crisps
Cubes of cheese (mozzarella/cheddar/feta)
Cherry tomatoes
Handful of nut-free granola

Sweet Spot

Choose 1

Fresh fruit (e.g. Handful of seasonal berries or grapes; pineapple chunks; sliced apple/pear; ½ - 1 banana; orange segments; plums/apricots/nectarines)
Small portion of dried fruit (e.g. raisins/mango/apricots/dates)
Oat flapjack
Nut-free snack bars
Cubes of fresh coconut
Yoghurt pot – plain with added fresh fruit

Drinks

Choose 1

Water (best choice)
'Spa water' (water with sliced fruit e.g. berries; lemon; lime)
Caffeine-free herbal tea (steeped, then chilled)
Plain milk
Dilute fruit juice (at least 70% water:30% juice)

MONDAY

The main dish

Bread-free B.L.T.

Snacks & Sides

Handful rye crackers + Carrot sticks

Sweet Spot

Handful fresh berries

How to make....

Bread-free B.L.T.

This makes approx. 2 lunch box salads

- 4 cups lettuce, shredded (Romaine or Iceberg)
- ½ avocado, diced and drizzled with the juice of ¼ lemon to prevent browning
- 125g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 3 rashers cooked bacon, diced
- ½ cup grated cheese (cheddar or mozzarella)
- Mayonnaise or Ranch dressing

Assemble lunch containers and in each, create a bed of shredded lettuce, top with tomatoes, 1/4 cup grated cheese, 2 tablespoons cooked bacon, and ¼ of an avocado. Toss gently or drizzle with 1-2 tablespoons ranch dressing.

Ranch Dressing

Keep in the fridge for up to a week

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried dill
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Pinch of salt and pepper

In a lidded jar, combine the mayonnaise, milk, parsley, dill, garlic powder, salt, and black pepper.

Screw on the lid and shake to combine.

TUESDAY

The main dish

Funky Chicken wrap

Snacks & Sides

Sliced pickles

Sweet Spot

Handful apple chips

How to make....

Funky Chicken wrap

This makes approx. 2 wraps

- 1 cup shredded roast chicken (leftover from dinner!)
- ¼ cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1 rasher cooked bacon, chopped (optional)
- ½ small green onion, diced
- ¼ cup ranch dressing (see Monday)
- 2 tortillas / wraps / pita pockets
- 1 cup lettuce

Mix together all ingredients except for lettuce and tortillas. Spoon chicken mixture into tortillas, top with lettuce and wrap up.

Apple chips

Store in an airtight container for up to a week

- 2 Granny Smith or Braeburn apples, peeled, cored, and sliced thinly
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon

Preheat oven to 100°C and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Core apples and slice as thinly as possible into rings. Arrange the apple slices on the baking sheet in an even layer. Sprinkle cinnamon over the apple slices. Bake for 45-60 minutes, or until the apple slices are crisp and golden brown. Remove from oven and let cool to room temperature before packing into lunchboxes.



WEDNESDAY

The main dish	Snacks & Sides	Sweet Spot
Ladybird Pasta Salad	Cucumber + red pepper sticks with white bean dip or ranch dressing (see Monday) for dipping	½ - 1 banana

How to make....

Ladybird Pasta salad	White Bean dip
<p><i>This makes 1 or 2 lunch servings, depending on portion size</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 cup cooked whole wheat pasta* - ½ cup cherry tomatoes, sliced in half - ¼ cup pitted black olives, sliced - 2 teaspoons olive oil - Salt and pepper - A few torn herb leaves (basil or parsley) <p><i>Mix all ingredients in a bowl before adding to the lunchbox</i></p> <p><i>*Use buckwheat or brown rice pasta for a gluten free option</i></p>	<p><i>Keep in the fridge for up to a week</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 cup canned haricot or cannellini beans, rinsed and drained - 3- 4 tablespoons olive oil - 1 small lemon, washed - 2 cloves garlic, chopped - ½ teaspoon sea salt - Black pepper - 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped <p><i>Remove zest from the lemon with a hand zester or fine grater and keep aside. Squeeze the juice from the lemon into a food processor bowl. Add the beans, olive oil, garlic, sea salt and pepper. Blend until smooth. Adjust consistency by adding water, 1-2 teaspoons at a time. Remove into a bowl or storage jar and mix in the lemon zest and chopped parsley.</i></p>

THURSDAY

The main dish	Snacks & Sides	Sweet Spot
Lunchbox muffins	Kale chips	Small packet raisins

How to make....

Lunchbox muffins	Kale chips
<p><i>This makes approx. 5 full-size or 10-12 mini muffins</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ¼ cup leftover roast chicken, finely diced - 1 small onion or medium shallot, finely diced - ¼ cup spinach or kale, chopped finely - ¼ cup red / yellow pepper, finely diced - 5 eggs, beaten - ½ teaspoon dried Italian herbs - Pinch sea salt and black pepper - Butter / coconut oil / olive oil <p><i>Pre-heat oven to 190°C. Heat oil and onion in a fry pan until softened. Add chicken and heat through. Add spinach and peppers. Crack eggs into a separate bowl, mix with herbs, salt and pepper. Add spinach/chicken mix to eggs and pour into greased muffin tins. Cook for 20 mins or until cooked through.</i></p>	<p><i>If necessary, store in a zip-lock bag in the press</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 large bundle curly green or purple kale - 1-2 tablespoons olive/avocado/coconut oil - Seasonings of choice e.g. pinch sea salt & pepper; 1 tsp cumin powder; 1 tsp chili powder; 1 tsp curry powder; 1 Tbsp nutritional yeast <p><i>Preheat oven to 100° C. Rinse and thoroughly dry kale, tear into small pieces and discard any large stems. Add to a large mixing bowl and drizzle with oil and seasonings of choice. Use your hands to distribute the oil and seasonings evenly. Spread the kale over 2 large baking sheets, ensuring the kale touches as little as possible. Bake for 15 minutes, then turn the pans around and lightly toss/stir kale to ensure even baking. Bake for 5-10 minutes more, or until kale is crispy and very slight golden brown. Watch closely as it can burn easily.</i></p>



FRIDAY

The main dish

Mini pumpkin pancakes

Snacks & Sides

Boiled egg, peeled + halved

Sweet Spot

BOSS bar

How to make....

Mini pumpkin pancakes

This makes 18- 20 mini pancakes

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour (or gluten free flour)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon mixed spice
- 1 cup milk (use oat milk as a dairy alternative)
- ½ cup pumpkin or sweet potato puree
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons butter (or coconut oil), melted

Sieve the flour, baking powder, salt, and mixed spice in a large bowl. In a separate large bowl, combine the milk, pumpkin/sweet potato puree, egg, and butter. Whisk to combine. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and whisk together until just combined. In a large greased pan, over medium heat pour 1 to 2 tablespoons batter to make small pancakes. Cook for 2 - 3 minutes until pancake batter starts to bubble. Flip pancake. Cook for an additional minute or until the middle is cooked through and the bottoms are golden brown. Remove pancakes from the pan and cool to room temperature before adding to lunchboxes.

Banana Oat Seed Snack bar

Keep in the fridge for up to a week. Can be frozen.

- 150g jumbo oats
- 100g sultanas
- 30g un-sulphured dried apricots
- 30g desiccated coconut
- 75g each sunflower and pumpkin seeds
- 1 banana, mashed

Pre-heat oven to 180°C. Soak the dried fruit in boiling water for 20-30 minutes then drain. Mix the oats and desiccated coconut together. Blend seeds in a blender. Add oats/coconut and the drained fruit. Blend until mixture is firm-ish. Add banana and blend for 30 seconds more. Press into a baking tray lined with baking paper and bake for 20 minutes or until lightly golden. When cool remove from tray and slice into bars. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for a week or in the freezer for one month.

