

Healthy Food Ideas: School Snacks, Celebrations & Family Events¹



Snack time, celebrations, and family events are great opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle, provide consistent messages and create excitement around nutritious choices. When food is a part of the school day or a special school event, offer a variety of healthy options including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat/fat-free dairy products and water.

<h2>Fruits</h2>	<h2>Low Fat/Fat-Free Dairy</h2>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fresh whole or sliced fruit assortment ■ Fruit salad or kabobs ■ Dried fruit or 100% fruit leathers ■ Frozen fruit (try frozen grapes!) ■ Sliced apples with cinnamon ■ Unsweetened applesauce ■ 100% fruit popsicles ■ Banana pops (bananas, sliced in half, popsicle sticks inserted, rolled in yogurt and whole grain cereal toppings, and frozen) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ String cheese ■ Yogurt (try squeezable!) ■ Yogurt smoothies or parfaits 
<h2>Whole Grains</h2>	<h2>Vegetables</h2>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Low fat popcorn ■ Whole grain bagel slices, muffins or pita with hummus or peanut butter ■ Low fat breakfast or granola bars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raw vegetables (baby carrots, sugar snap peas, sliced bell peppers and more) with low fat dip ■ Celery topped with peanut butter & raisins or low fat cream cheese & 100% fruit preserves ■ Edamame – boiled soybeans served in the pods <p>DIPS: hummus, salsa, bean dip, honey mustard, low fat ranch, low fat yogurt</p>

WARNING: A small but growing number of kids have severe peanut and/or tree nut allergies. Before bringing in peanuts, peanut butter, or other nuts as a snack, make sure none of the children has an allergy.

Edible Art

Creative parents can make items like “Watermelon Turtles” (hollowed-out watermelons carved to look like turtles, filled with fruit) or “Veggie-Head Bagels” (mini whole grain bagels with low fat cream cheese; use small pieces of veggies like broccoli, carrots, and peppers to create fun faces). In fact, edible “food art” can be created using a variety of healthy foods. Kids will have a blast making and eating the good-for-you treats.

Drinks

- Water
- Low fat or fat-free milk
- 100% fruit juice
- Sparkling punch (seltzer & 100% juice)



Healthy Food Ideas



Make health the expectation and the easy choice for students and families

- Promote fruits and vegetables by arranging them in a visually-appealing way to draw the attention of kids and families.
- If sweets or other treats are present, offer them in small portion sizes with other, healthier foods that balance out the meal. Try cutting treats in half.
- Create sign-up sheets that list items like fruits, vegetables, whole grain crackers, low fat/fat-free yogurt, cheese and milk – and don't forget the water. Include one line for a parent to bring in a less nutritious, more traditional party treat (which is an opportunity to teach moderation), or eliminate that option entirely.

Alternately, instead of sign-up sheets, send home a list of suggestions for healthy party snacks (check for food allergies before serving).

Mixed Foods

- Air-popped popcorn with nuts and dried fruit
- Low fat cheese on whole grain crackers
- Graham crackers with peanut butter
- Sliced apples with low fat cheese slices
- Whole grain pizza with low fat toppings
- Whole grain pancakes topped with fruit
- Wraps with low fat ingredients
- Quesadillas or bean burritos with salsa
- Low fat cottage cheese with fruit
- Baked tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip
- Trail/cereal mix (low fat/low sugar)
- Fruit-n-cheese pretzel kabobs
- Whole grain rice cakes topped with bananas or other fruit
- Low sodium sliced turkey wrapped around slices of cucumber, bell peppers, or carrots
- Mini sandwiches cut into fun shapes with cookie cutters

Get Kids in on the Act! Parents can bring in the ingredients and kids can make their own:
Trail Mix – pretzels, dried fruit, whole grain-low sugar cereals, sunflower or sesame seeds, etc.
Fruit Salad – apples, oranges, strawberries, blueberries, bananas, kiwi, pineapple, etc.

Look for more healthy food ideas:

Coalition for Activity and Nutrition to Defeat Obesity (CanDo)

School Wellness Resource Kit:

www.ActionforHealthyKids.org/SchoolWellnessResourceKit-CanDo



Action for Healthy Kids® fights childhood obesity, undernourishment and physical inactivity by helping schools become healthier places so kids can live healthier lives. We partner with a legion of dedicated volunteers – teachers, students, moms, dads, school wellness experts and more – to create healthful school changes. Our programs, tools and resources make it possible for everyone to play their part in ending the nation's childhood obesity epidemic. Creating a healthy school food culture is a critical step towards reversing the national health crisis facing our children.

www.ActionforHealthyKids.org

¹ Adapted from "Healthy Celebrations," Connecticut State Department of Education, May 2005 & "Healthy Food Ideas," Ohio Action for Healthy Kids, 2012