



**the joy of lunchboxes**

# “Trade-proof” your child’s lunch

What really happens to that nutritious meal once your child gets to the lunchroom? Does he trade it away for a cupcake or soda? How do you ensure your kid will keep his healthy sandwich? By making the lunchbox fun, of course.

Below are tips you can use for making a fun and exciting lunch that will turn your child’s friends green with envy. Check back each month for new ideas.

## **Doggone It**

For your puppy-loving child, cut the sandwich or cheese slices, with dog bone shaped cookie cutter. Add some “people puppy chow” treats (cocoa cereal puffs). Complete the theme with a puppy sticker on the napkin and a dog paw print, using a pen or rubber stamp on the lunch bag.

## **Message In A Bag**

Add a message bubble to a photo of your family pet and place it into the lunch bag. The note can say, “I can’t wait to play with you when you get home!” You’ll find message bubble stickers in the scrapbook section of your local craft store.

## **Brain Food**

Cut the word scramble or puzzle from the newspaper kid’s section. Roll it around a pencil and include it in the lunch bag for a fun after-lunch activity.

## **Get A Clue**

During the week, leave clues in your child’s lunch that lead to a Friday afternoon or evening surprise. The surprise can be something big like a weekend adventure, or something small such as a toy or special dessert. If your child is not yet reading, use pictures or stickers of the clues.

## **Horse Lover**

Your kids will gallop to eat this healthy lunch. Cut the sandwich with a horseshoe or horse-shaped cookie cutter. Pack up some apple wedges and carrots. Include an oatmeal cookie and a horse sticker on a green napkin! Complete the theme with a coloring sheet or mini figurine. Kit’s Tip: Keep the apple from turning an unappetizing brown by rinsing or spraying the apple wedges with a lemon and water solution.

## **Make Your Own Apple Pie Treat**

Combine apple chunks with a small amount of vanilla or plain yogurt and some cinnamon sugar. Stir it up and store in a re-usable container. Pack the apple topping with some graham crackers and a spoon for scooping. Combining the apples with the yogurt will keep them from turning brown.

Tips for the lunchbox are provided by Kit Bennett of [amazingmoms.com](http://amazingmoms.com). Visit [www.amazingmoms.com](http://www.amazingmoms.com) to plan for a year of fun and nutritious school lunches.

## Chat with moms like you

Café Mom offers social networking groups you can join to discuss things such as providing healthy meals for your family. Sign up today to get ideas from other moms on making the lunchbox fun, share what you've learned about the benefits of whole grain, or just chat about your favorite pastime. Visit [www.cafemom.com/home/thejoyofeating](http://www.cafemom.com/home/thejoyofeating) to start sharing and find other moms pledging to make the switch.

## Back to school lunch tips

By Kit Bennett, Founder of [www.amazingmoms.com](http://www.amazingmoms.com)  
"Great ideas for family fun!"

It's that time of year again, back to school! School supplies, backpacks, new shoes and yes -- school lunches. Use these pointers to plan for a year of fun and nutritious school lunches that your child WON'T want to trade away.

### Plan ahead

Junk-filled & boring lunches usually happen when they aren't planned.

### Involve the kids

Children are more likely to eat what they have helped prepare. Discuss a lunch menu and try new recipe ideas. Add these items to the grocery list.

### Get organized

Once the menu items are purchased spend some time on early preparation; grate cheese, wash fruits and vegetables, prepare snack mixes and dips, cut grapes into clusters, place juice boxes in the freezer, etc. This will take about an hour of your weekend, but will save so much time during the week.

### Storage issues

Who has time in the morning to rush around looking for plastic containers, not to mention a matching lid? Before the school year begins, treat yourself to a new set of lunch-sized plastic containers. Store them where the kids can reach, with zip-top bags, lunch bags, thermoses, wood craft sticks for spreading, plastic spoons, forks, napkins and straws. Every so often check to see if it's time to re-stock.

### Taste test

It's great to try new foods but a school lunch is not the time to try foods that have never passed

your child's lips. Try new things at home first and keep of list of favorites.

### **Note from mom**

The addition of encouraging notes the first week or two of school, can help your little one feel better about the new school year ahead. Using your computer, print some notes with card-stock paper. Cut the notes, add a sticker, and they'll be ready go on a busy morning.

Simple sayings:

"You are a genius!"

" You're a good friend!"

" You are a beary special person!" (add a bear sticker to the note)

"Some bunny loves you" (add a bunny sticker to the note)

" Today is a special day. . .just because you are you!"

### **EWV, gross mom!**

Keep hot foods hot, cold foods cold and sandwiches from getting soggy.

Purchase and use thermoses for their intended purpose. Freeze juice pouches and boxes so they'll help keep things cold. Place frozen juice boxes in a plastic bag to avoid condensation. Pack lettuce and tomato separately to be added to sandwiches when ready to eat. Save or purchase ketchup, mayonnaise and mustard pouches to add to sandwiches at school (might be too hard for little ones to use).

### **Keep apples from turning brown:**

Keep apples from turning brown by spraying them with lemon juice kept in a spray bottle in your refrigerator.

## **Shopping List**

Include these items in your back to school shopping so you'll be prepared to make a fun lunch every day. For harder to find items check out party supply, craft and discount stores.

- Large set of kid's cookie cutters in animal shapes, holidays, letters, and a variety of objects.
- Stickers, stickers and more stickers. Pick up packages on-sale for use throughout the year.
- Sticky backed craft foam letters to spell words on your child lunch bag or containers.
- Packages of festive party, holiday and theme napkins in various colors. (If your daughter is a Barbie fan and your son loves Harry Potter, purchase napkins just for their lunches.)
- Erasers, pencils and small boxes of crayons.
- Colored cellophane, plastic wrap, tissue paper and curling ribbon.
- Kid-safe skewers, wood popsicle sticks, coffee stirrers or lollipop sticks.