

# The Patriot-News

## Now you know

### How can I build a better BROWN BAG LUNCH?

**Brown-bagging doesn't have to mean a tiresome litany of PB&Js and greasy corn chips.**  
*Try these quick and easy ideas to add pizzazz to school lunches.*

Note to students: Pack your own lunch and you'll get brownie points for being responsible.

Note to parents: Get the kids involved in making their own lunch to foster good eating habits.

#### **A good investment**

A quality air-tight, insulated lunch bag is a must for a healthy lunch. Good ones come with a stainless steel vacuum bottle or a thermos; they'll keep the heat for wraps and sandwiches that are meant to stay warm -- or keep what you need chilled cool.

#### **Lunch ideas**

**Salads:** Start with fresh spinach or romaine lettuce, toss in low-fat cheese, hard boiled eggs, add fresh cucumbers or tomatoes and top with a light dressing for a quick, relatively cheap and healthy midday meal.

**Pizza:** Leftover pizza from the night before might be delicious, but rarely nutritious. Make your own with a bagel. Start with a whole grain bagel, marinara sauce and low-fat cheese. Top that with your choice of peppers, lean meat, mushrooms and olives.

**Clean up your sandwiches:** Ditch the carb-heavy enriched white bread, processed lunch meat and mayonnaise. Use whole wheat or seven-grain bread, or check out the wraps and flatbread options. Try a simple chicken wrap with lettuce and tomatoes, or spread heart-healthy hummus on a whole grain wrap and top with veggies.

**Sweets:** Substitute brownies and cookies with fresh fruit.

**Nix soda and juice:** Soda isn't good for you, and some juices can be just as bad. Filled with sweeteners, carbohydrates and artificial flavoring, a lot of fruit juice has little to do with fruit. Water is the best for students. Keep in mind, proper hydration leads to increased focus and a sharper mind.

**Leftovers:** Tonight's healthy supper of chicken over brown rice can be tomorrow's lunch. Plan your dinners accordingly. Making a little extra of a healthy meal can go a long way.

**These healthy and easy recipes will cure the cafeteria cringe. Recipes provided by Shauna Johnson of Wellspring Academies, a residential, weight-loss program in California.**

These salads can be prepared four or five days ahead of time (hold the dressing). Add protein with chicken, beef or shellfish. Meat left over from the previous night saves time and money.

#### **Linguini Salad**

1 cucumber (skin on) 2 vine ripe tomatoes 1/2 can chopped olives 1/2 large red onion minced 1 bottle fat-free, red wine vinaigrette 1 box linguini 1 bottle of salad supreme sea salt (to taste)

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add linguini and sea salt, give a stir, turn heat to medium-high heat and cook until desired doneness.

Place noodles in a large bowl and allow them to cool to room temperature. Pour 1/2 a bottle of salad supreme and 1 bottle of dressing and mix. Fine chop tomatoes, cucumber, onion and olives. Place in the pasta bowl and toss. Store in individual, ready-to-go containers.

### **Chicken and Rice Salad**

2 cups uncooked rice (basmati or jasmine) 1 cup snow peas 2 large zucchini 1 jar marinated artichoke hearts 1 bottle fat-free, sesame ginger dressing 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast Your choice of seasonings

Rinse and cook rice; instead of water use chicken broth. Place cooked rice in a large bowl to cool.

Season with salt, pepper and a drizzling of dressing.

In a large, non-stick skillet over medium high heat, saute chopped chicken breast, then season with your favorite seasonings. Steam the snow peas in a quick steamer leaving them semi firm, grill zucchini on an electric grill or stovetop grill; baste with dressing. Grill 5 minutes on each side.

Chop zucchini, and artichokes, leave the snow peas whole; place all ingredients in large rice bowl. Toss. Store in individual containers.

### **Soba Noodle Salad With Ginger Peanut Dressing**

Johnson adapts this recipe from "Vegetarian Times Substitutions."

6 oz. low sodium soba noodles 1/2 cup Better'n Peanut Butter

1/4 cup brown rice vinegar 1 tablespoon low sugar maple syrup 1 tablespoon minced ginger 2 teaspoons low sodium soy sauce 1 clove garlic, peeled 1 tablespoon lime juice 1 teaspoon fresh lime zest

1/2 cup chopped cilantro, divided 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded, and sliced 1 small red bell pepper, sliced 1 large carrot, grated

Cook noodles in boiling, salted water according to package directions. Drain, and rinse under cold running water. Puree peanut butter, vinegar, garlic, maple syrup, soy sauce, lime juice, lime zest, and 1/4 cup cilantro in a blender or food processor until smooth and creamy, adding 2 to 3 tablespoons of warm water to thin, if necessary.

Toss together noodles, cucumber, bell pepper, carrot, and peanut butter mixture. Garnish with remaining cilantro. Store in individual containers.

**Gobble-Me-Up Turkey Wrap** 1 whole wheat tortilla 1/2 pre-washed baby spinach 2 ounces lean turkey meat, peppered or smoked 1 spreadable cheese in garlic herb or 2 tablespoons of fat-free cream cheese

Spread cheese over the entire tortilla, place turkey, spinach, onions on the tortilla and roll. Cut tortilla in half, holding both sections together using tooth picks. Wrap tightly in aluminum foil.

### **BBQ Chicken Sandwich**

To save time, buy a whole rotisserie chicken at your supermarket. Take the skin off and use the white meat for salads, soups and sandwiches.

1/2 cup shredded rotisserie chicken white meat only

2 tablespoons BBQ sauce 1 whole grain hamburger bun 1 slice fat-free or low fat cheese

Mix shredded chicken with the BBQ sauce. Heat in microwave if not already heated. Build the sandwich using onions, romaine lettuce, pickles or alfalfa sprouts. Add a slice of cheese if desired. Wrap each sandwich individually.

### **Wellspring Clubin' Sandwich**

2 slices whole grain bread 2 strips turkey bacon 1 ounce (2 slices) deli roasted chicken breast  
Red onion slices (optional) 1 slice fat-free or reduced-fat cheddar cheese

Cook turkey bacon according to the package, wrap in a paper towel to remove excess fat. Toast bread and start stacking. Mix it up with the bacon and chicken slices; add onions, tomatoes, your favorite toppings. Suggestion: cut in half diagonally and place in two separate sandwich bags.

### **Guiltless Burger and Chips**

Use pre-made lean hamburger patties. They're cheaper than ground meat. You can also use 99 percent fat-free ground chicken. Make several at a time to save in the refrigerator for fast, on-the-go brown bagging.

Whole grain hamburger buns Hamburger patties

Reduced-fat or fat-free cheese slices Condiments: pickles, lettuce, onion, tomato, lettuce  
Cook patties on a skillet over medium high heat seasoning both sides until done. Place burger and cheese on hamburger bun and wrap in foil. Store condiments separately to avoid a soggy burger.

### **Build Your Own Burrito**

Whole grain tortillas 1 can fat-free refried black beans 1 dry taco seasoning packet 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro 1 can chopped chilies 1/2 red onion

Cook refried beans, chilies, and 1/2 packet of taco seasoning together; you can heat them in a sauce pan or in the microwave. During the last minute of cooking, add cheese. Saute red onion using non-stick cooking spray until translucent.

Build your own burrito using what ever you have in the refrigerator, tomatoes, olives etc. Let the burritos cool to room temperature and wrap in foil. Burritos are best when heated in the microwave for about 40 seconds.