



♥ Love Your Lunch ♥

Staying on goal with weight loss or maintenance is easier when you don't skip meals and when you make those meals nutritious and filling. One challenge for most families is preparing quick and healthy lunches – whether eaten at home, at the office or at school. A little pre-planning and these ideas and tips can help. *Check out the five days of suggested menus that follow for inspiration.*

Tips:

- ♥ When you prepare your own meals, you not only save money, you typically consume much less sodium, fat and sugar, saving you calories, too.
- ♥ Cook once, eat twice. When planning family dinners, keep lunch in mind. For example, when roasting a chicken, making a whole grain or pasta dish, soup or chili, make extra for lunch. It's economical and helps cut food waste, too.
- ♥ Keep staples on hand, such as canned beans (low sodium versions), canned tuna or salmon, dried fruits, nuts and seeds, whole grains, dried herbs and spices.
- ♥ If family members have an extra long day because of after-school sports or extra hours at work, be sure to pack a healthy snack too. Think nuts, seeds, and fruit; cut-up veggies such as carrots and celery are crunchy and hydrating.
- ♥ Speaking of hydration, be sure to include water, unsweetened tea or 100% fruit juice.
- ♥ A way to keep your foods cool is to freeze your water or juice and place it in your lunch box. When lunchtime rolls around, the liquid will be thawed and ready to drink.
- ♥ Make lunch fun for kids. Get them involved by including them in grocery shopping, letting them choose from your menu options and encouraging them to pack their own lunch. They'll be more likely to eat it (rather than swapping it with their school pals).

Menus for Inspiration

Here's what a week's worth of lunches could look like, using leftovers and healthy pantry/fridge staples:

Day 1: Whole Grain Sandwich

Grain: Whole grain bread, 2 slices

Protein: Turkey or chicken, sliced – cooked leftovers or from the deli (low sodium)

Vegetable: Spinach or other leafy greens

Extra flavor: Cheese (1 ounce or one thin slice) such as Cheddar or Swiss; mustard or yogurt.

Fruit: Orange, apple or grapes

On one slice of bread layer greens, followed by protein of your choice. Top with a thin slice of Cheddar or Swiss cheese. Top with remaining bread slice and enjoy your fruit on the side. To add a little tang, spread a thin layer of plain yogurt, or mustard on the bread.



Tip:

Make extra chicken or beef and grains and veggies at dinnertime, and set aside servings for lunch. Here are three ways to incorporate dinner leftovers into lunch:

Day 2: South of the Border Tortilla

Grain: Whole wheat tortilla

Protein: Beef, chicken (cooked), tofu, or beans

Vegetable: Bell peppers, onions, tomatoes (fresh or cooked); lettuce

Fruit: Peach, or Apple

Extra: Slices of avocado, salsa (2 tablespoons), or cheese

Combine any leftovers with plenty of vegetables in a whole wheat tortilla. Top with your favorite extra ingredients! (Don't overstuff or you won't be able to roll it). Enjoy your fruit on the side.



Day 3: Whole Grain Salad

Grain: Quinoa (cooked)

Protein: Chicken (cooked)

Vegetable: Leafy Greens (spinach, kale, mixed green)

Fruit: Apple (chopped)

Extra: Nuts such as almonds or walnuts, or feta cheese; olive oil and vinegar or lemon juice for dressing.

Last night's grain side dish becomes today's lunch salad. Toss together first four ingredients, top with chopped nuts or cubed feta cheese. When ready to eat, drizzle with dressing.

Day 4: Make Your Own Soup

Grain: Quinoa, brown rice or barley (cooked)

Protein: Beef (cooked)

Vegetable: Diced Tomatoes (one 14.5 ounce can), chopped onions and peppers

Fruit: Banana

Extra: Chicken Broth (low sodium, 3-4 cups)

In a stockpot, add one teaspoon olive oil, and sauté onions and peppers until soft, then add tomatoes. Stir in beef and grain, season with a pinch of salt, ground black pepper, and if you prefer, dried herbs such as thyme. Add stock and stir briefly. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to simmer. Cover and let cook for at least 15-20 minutes or until flavors meld. When cool, pack in individual containers and refrigerate.

Day 5: Mediterranean

Grain: Whole wheat bread (2 slices)

Protein: Hummus (1/4 cup serving)

Vegetable: Tomato (sliced), carrots (sliced or chopped)

Fruit: Grapes

Extra: Fresh mozzarella cheese (1.5 ounces) and fresh basil (several leaves shredded)

Place cheese and tomato on one slice of bread, sprinkle with shreds of basil and top with second slice. Enjoy the hummus as a dip for the carrots, and the grapes as a dessert. Or, spread a thin layer of hummus on one slice of bread before topping with cheese and tomato.