



## Packed Lunch Ideas

Staying for lunch at nursery is an exciting time as children learn to eat independently and enjoy the social aspects of mealtimes.

This leaflet aims to give you more information on what to pack to ensure your child enjoys a healthy and nutritious meal.



## SPENDING THE DAY LEARNING AND PLAYING REQUIRES THE RIGHT SORT FUEL

Your child will have been very active all morning at nursery and therefore it is essential at lunchtime they receive the right nutrients to refuel. Good nutrients are proven to raise levels of concentration and improve learning as well as healthy physical growth and development.

Lunch boxes can be tricky, but it is important to fill your child's lunchbox with tasty food that is both healthy and appealing.

### What should be in a lunch box?

**A portion of protein** e.g. lean meat, fish, egg, cottage cheese, falafel

**Starchy food**, wholegrain roll, tortilla wrap, pitta, pasta or rice salad

**Fruit and or vegetables**

**A drink** water is ideal

St Michael's Pre-school

Helping children to develop social skills, to learn through play and be caring to others

## What should I include in my child's lunch?



### Suggested fillings:

- Lettuce, ham, and cucumber
- Cottage cheese and cucumber
- Marmite, lettuce, and cheese
- Chicken, celery, and mayonnaise
- Mashed egg and salad
- Lettuce, falafel, and hummus

### Alternatives:

- Crackers, scones, fruit bread (but don't forget to include a portion of protein, e.g. cheese, hardboiled egg, hummus)
- Leftover rice or pasta dishes
- Couscous or pasta salad
- Rice cakes



*Make sandwiches attractive by using cookie cutters or make pinwheels using flatbread.*

## **Fruit and Vegetables**

Young children love small items that they can eat as finger food – a great opportunity to work in fruit and vegetables!

- Sliced – apples, oranges, pears
- Easy to peel mandarins
- Grapes (cut into 4 lengthways), strawberries, kiwi fruit
- Fruit salad or tinned fruit (in juice)
- Vegetable or fruit kebab
- Sliced carrots, peppers, cucumbers to dip into hummus

### **Top Tips**

- Really think about how much you put in; children love finger-sized bites in exciting tubs to open
- Vary the contents daily – the same food everyday is dull and is not helping your child to broaden their palette
- Remember to include a drink
- Bake biscuits and cakes together – they will be great fun and much healthier than the readymade processed alternatives.

### **Milk and Dairy Foods**

- Chunks of cheese
- Rice pudding or custard
- Fromage frais
- Yoghurt
- Milk or flavoured milk
- Cottage cheese with dipping vegetables

There are also lots of dairy free alternatives such as dairy free yogurt and plant-based milks.

## **WHAT TO AVOID PUTTING IN A PACKED LUNCH**

Nursery children are still very young, and they need a highly nutritious diet. Foods that are highly processed and contain large amounts of additives, salt and sugar must be avoided such as:

- Crisps
- Sweets
- Chocolate bars

Nuts should not be packed as we have a policy to protect children who have nut allergies, meaning no nuts at all.

## WHAT SORT OF LUNCHBOX?

Most nurseries are unable to refrigerate lunch boxes, so you should buy an insulated bag or box. However, many of these are huge and designed for school age children or adults; remember your little ones have small stomachs so do not need big portions, but they do need foods that pack in a lot of nutrients.

Please be sure to:

- Include an ice pack in warmer weather
- Name the box/bag and all small containers
- Include a spoon for yogurts
- Avoid nut products

It's a good idea to separate the lunch into sections, e.g. savoury in a tub and yogurt and fruit separate.

Useful websites:

[www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk)

[www.nhs.uk/Change4Life](http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life)

