



**Justine Evans**

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## **Lunch-Boxes for Children**

So – the kids are back at school, and you need easy to prepare lunches.

Due to the rise in nut allergies, food sensitivities and an increased awareness towards learning issues, I consider the best approach is providing food groups on a “rotation” basis, meaning, alternating food groups which include grains and dairy, thus reducing the risk of food sensitivities through “over-eating” any one food type and introducing different flavours and textures. All long-term, important issues relating to children as it is too easy to only offer foods that you know your children will eat and thereby reduce a varied diet.

In essence, lunch box meals should be easy to eat, appealing, taste delicious and boost your child’s energy and attention through the day. This means plenty of complex carbohydrates, some good quality protein, fruits and vegetables and essential fats.

### **Water:**

We all understand that water is essential and the very best drink for children at lunch time would be to offer a bottle of filtered water. If your child would prefer something with “more taste”, pop a slice of fresh fruit into it – try orange, lemon or lime or add a few blackberries, strawberries or raspberries. It adds sweetness and taste without encouraging drinks made from refined sugars whilst hydrating the body.

Most schools offer a water fountain so encourage your child to fill the bottle after lunch and take it into class for the afternoon sessions. Plenty of schools have realised that water increases concentration and some schools allow sport type water bottles to be placed on the desk.

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### Lunches:

Try not to give your child/ren the same food every day even if they want it. It is as boring for them as for you making it, encourages food sensitivities and reduces variety into the diet.

**Wholegrains** – These are required to balance sugar and energy levels – they are referred to as complex carbohydrates. The refined varieties break down quickly and cause blood sugar fluctuations – we all know how “tired” we feel “mid afternoon”, children suffer as well. To counter act this offer a variety of less refined grains during the week – brown and wild rice, wholegrain bread, wholegrain pasta which include the “alternatives” such as spelt, rice or corn pasta, buckwheat, spelt, quinoa, millet, cous cous, barley, rye. There are so many different forms and all easy to prepare. My recipe book offers a selection of lunch time foods but I have offered some suggestions at the end of this leaflet.

**Raw vegetables** – Excellent cut up into shapes if the children are young and need enticing into eating, diced or grated/shaved in salads and full of vitamins and fibre. Carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, radishes, mushrooms, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, beetroot are all vegetables that can be used and can be kept fresh in a small container. Offer dips to accompany them – hummus, avocado dip, aubergine dip, low-fat taramasalata, tomato salsa.

**Cooked Vegetables** - Add cooked potatoes, green beans , soya beans, sweetcorn and peas to salads for variety and colour or make a home-made soup and keep in warm in a thermos. This has always been a firm favourite with my daughter. Add rice noodles to the soup to thicken it or different forms of pasta or rice as already discussed.

**Leafy Salads and Herbs** - Offer daily - a few sprigs of watercress, a variety of different types and coloured lettuces and other leafy vegetables including beetroot and spinach leaves. Herbs add flavour and nutrients – fresh coriander, mint, parsley, basil leaves etc – can be cut into small amounts and put into sandwiches, wraps, pasta or rice dishes or made up into a salad with raw vegetables and some protein. Although

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your child may not eat them every day – eventually they will get used to seeing them and be less likely to be resistant.

**Fruit** – either a piece of fruit which may be eaten whole or cut a selection of fruit to put in a Tupperware pot. Offer a small plastic fork or spoon to eat it with. Lots of children are put off fruit simply because it is a bother to peel or cut. The occasional smoothie also works well, and are popular. Encourage your children to make them in the morning and experiment with combining vegetables and fruit together, carrot and orange, celery and apple, etc. Don't forget the tropical fruits - pineapple, mango, kiwi, lychee, star fruit, dragon fruit, passion fruit etc plus the more popular such as apples, oranges, all forms of melon, banana, seedless grapes and berry fruits.

### Protein:

**Meat /cheese/legumes/fish/egg** – this should be from the best available source and should be given on a rotation basis. If your child eats meat then provide it on a rotation basis, possibly poultry then offer a small serving of cheese the following day, fish the following, tofu the next, legumes the next (that's pulses, chick peas, broad beans, haricot, kidney, butter beans, green beans, Jack beans, mung beans, navy beans, nuts, split peas, soy beans etc), an egg the next etc. These are all different forms of protein and encourages children to understand that protein does not only come from meat alone! Whilst nuts are a brilliant form of protein I have excluded them due to the fact that so many schools now have a "nut free" policy. However, seeds can be used including pumpkin, linseeds, as can pine nuts which are not actually a "nut" despite the name. If your child can tolerate nuts then use them in salads etc at home, or as a "snack" out of school time. Sesame seeds can cause allergenic reactions and should be introduced carefully.

### Dairy:

Experiment: use both chicken and duck eggs. Why not a quail's egg? Hardboiled eggs can be added to salads, eaten alone and used as fillers for wraps etc.

**Cheese:** Goat's, sheep's which include the traditional feta cheese and cow cheese. Halloumi, cheddar –all forms of good quality cheese rather than the more processed

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variety. Experiment occasionally with cream cheese to make alternative dips or sandwich fillers.

**Yoghurts:** Again do not keep to the sweetened “child” varieties, offer frozen fromage frais, sheep and goat’s yoghurts – do not forget the soya based ones. Again, these can be offered on a rotation basis, putting fruit at the bottom and yoghurt on top makes a change and adds flavour, as does a small spoonful of Manuka honey to plain yoghurt - it has wonderful immune boosting properties.

**Milk:** If you want to provide your child with a milky drink – consider using Soya, Rice Dream, Oatly, Provamel and the more traditional form from cows, again offer on a rotation basis.

**Other drinks:** Mangajo range of green teas and soya based drinks, Fruit Teas, Copella fruit juice and Innocent or home made fruit smoothies and other **non-concentrated** fruit and vegetable juices.

**Other Stuff:** Yes, I know, what about chocolate biscuits, cakes and crisps? Well, my opinion is that moderation is the answer and denial does not work so I personally would include something twice per week, but stay away from the ones with the E numbers. I have attached a short article below highlighting the problems associated with additives. Alternatives to the “naughty foods” are Japanese rice crackers, ginger or fruit oat biscuits, dried fruit, some organic fruit bars (although these often contain a high percentage of sugar) wheat free biscuits and cakes, halva, rice cakes, corn cakes etc. There is an amazing supply of “wheat free, and salt free” alternatives so please check the labels carefully and offer on a balanced basis.

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### Food colourings can fuel hyperactivity in children

#### (Information extracted from Nutri Supplement, 2007)

The Foods Standards Agency (FSA) is issuing guidance to consumers recommending that they avoid giving foods with certain additives to children who are showing signs of hyperactivity or attention deficient disorder (ADHD). This is in the wake of the results of the largest study in the UK into links between chemical food additives and hyperactivity, published in the Lancet.

In the study, 153 pre-school children and 144 8-9 year olds were given fruit juice or one of two drinks of identical appearance and flavour that contained various additives. One of the additive-containing drinks contained the average daily intake among children of various food colourings; the other contained levels equivalent to two 56g bags of sweets, in both cases the colourings were combined with the preservative sodium benzoate. None of the children had hyperactivity or other behavioural problems.

The researchers observed that both of the additive containing drinks resulted in significantly increased hyperactivity among the 8-9 year olds; the drink with the higher levels of additives also had an adverse effect on the pre-school children. The children who consumed the drink containing the high levels of additives moved 10% closer to the internationally used definitions of hyperactivity.

Professor Jim Stevenson, who headed the study, commented: “we now have clear evidence that mixtures of certain food colours and benzoate preservative can adversely influence the

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behaviour of children” . His personal view, as reported in *The Guardian*, is that the government should issue an outright ban on the use of the studied colourings.

Eric Scholler, author of *Fast Food Nation*, sums up “we are only just beginning to learn the impact of synthetic additions to what we eat. The industrialisation of the food supply has turned consumers into the unwitting subjects of a vast, ongoing scientific experiment” .

The colourings used in the research are found in many foods and drinks commonly consumed by children such as Diet Coke, Iron Bru, Skittles and Refreshers. They were:

- Tartrazine E102
- Carmoisine E122
- Ponceau 4R E124
- Quinoline yellow E104

It is important to be aware that the children in the study reacted to various degrees, some did not react at all; the amount of these chemicals a child can tolerate will be widely different.

30 years after the link between chemical additives and hyperactivity was first proposed, by the American scientist Ben Feingold, scientific validation has emerged. Indeed even the cautious FSA will be passing the study findings to the European Food Safety Authority, who will make a decision as to whether new regulations need to be issued.

#### Resource Books:

Kids Healthy Lunchboxes - written by Cara Hobday

They Are What You Feed Them – Dr Alex Richardson

Optimum Nutrition For Your Child’s Mind – Patrick Holford

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Happiness is Junk- Free Food – Janet Ash and Dulcie Roberts

What Should I feed my Baby? – Susannah Oliver

Gut and Psychology Syndrome – Dr Natasha Campbell-McBride

Cooking Without – Barbara Cousins

Cooking Without Made Easy – Barbara Cousins

Vegetarian Cooking Without Made Easy – Barbara Cousins

Not on The Label – Felicity Lawrence

The Art of Hiding Vegetables – Karen Bali and Sally Child

E for Additives – Maurice Hanseen

Fats That Heal, Fats that Kill – Udo Erasmus

Recipe's for Good Health – Justine Evans

<http://www.mangetoutkids.com> – useful web-site which has interesting facts and help sheets and offers childrens' food tasting clubs.

### Lunch Selections:

**Always serve 250ml or 500 ml water, or 100 ml fruit smoothie or fruit juice, such as Coppella, Innocent, Libby's Organic, Mangajo soya drinks.**

Small tupperware container containing brown rice, parsley and basil leaves, iceberg lettuce, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, chick peas. 2 rice cakes spread with Manuka honey. Fruit salad comprising 2 types of melon, pineapple and mango.

Tahini (this is sesame seed) spread with 3 oat cakes. Portion cheddar cheese.

Tomato, cucumber, spring onion, cooked potato. Soya yoghurt.

Slice roasted vegetable quiche with grated carrot, white cabbage and raisins. 4 Lychee. Small packet vegetable or apple crisps.

*Use a wide necked thermos to keep food hot.* Tomato and basil soup or a chunky vegetable and bean soup or

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bean and vegetable stew with wholegrain roll. 1 Kiwi fruit cut in half and wrapped. Bottle water. 2 ginger oat biscuits.

Quinoa salad, comprising quinoa, pesto sauce, diced red and yellow pepper, endive leaves, barlotti beans, pumpkin and sunflower seeds. Selection berry fruits with plain goat yoghurt. Water with strawberry in. Small slice banana cake.

Copella apple juice. Tuna salad with cooked green beans, lettuce, avocado, capers, cherry tomatoes. Oat cakes or rye biscuits. Packet Japanese rice crackers.

Cooked chicken breast with cous-cous, cooked potato, kidney beans and sweetcorn. Manjago soya fruit drink, selection dried fruit and yoghurt.

Homemade pizza made from 1 x wheat free or wholegrain pitta, spread with tomato puree, add choice of toppings, (spring onions, spinach, sweetcorn, basil leaves and mozzarella cheese or whatever you fancy). Grill for 2-3

minutes until mozzarella and leaves are warm and soft. Eat warm or cold. Selection cut up melon, bottle water with blackberry in. Oat flapjack.

Mix a can of beans with peppers, cherry tomatoes and a little pesto or pasta sauce, torn basil and coriander leaves and put in small Tupperware box. Serve with wholemeal pitta, a bottle of water and piece of fruit.

Corn tortilla wrap or wholemeal pitta filled with one of the following: egg mayonnaise with cress, cottage cheese and prawns, chicken and salad, houmous and alfalfa, smoked mackerel, chopped vegetables or smoked salmon and cream cheese or cucumber. A fruit bar or small packet raisins or homemade popcorn.

Further ideas are within my recipe booklet and "Alternative Lunches" article which you may print off from my web-site.

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Justine Evans is a Natural Health Practitioner with over 10 years experience. She is a member of the Children's Trust and has a particular interest in children's health, donating 10% of all fees charged for child consultations to SOS!SEN, a Twickenham based charity helpline which provides support for special educational needs. Her approach to health is "holistic", believing that moderation is the key.

Justine offers individual consultations, allergy and food sensitivity screening, workshops and "Nutrition Natters". Her recipe booklet can be purchased for £7.00 and she can be contacted on 07747 133170/0208 255 9666.

Disclaimer: This leaflet is for general guidance only and does not take into consideration any food sensitivities/ food allergies/specific illnesses.

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