



Creative Ways To Create Meals And Snacks In And Out Of Classroom

by Erin McGraw
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August Nutrition Article on school meals-in and outside of the classroom. There are healthy recipes for snacks that can be created at home and photos of those recipes, as well. Please let me know if you are able to find a spot for it this month. Have a great weekend!

It is back to school time and schools, cafeterias, and parents are trying to piece together how the 2020-2021 academic year will look among the COVID-19 pandemic. While school districts are coming up with in-person, virtual, and a hybrid of both in-person and virtual learning options, parents and school nutrition directors are inventing ways to keep nutritious foods, like dairy, fruits, vegetables, and whole grain, in students' daily routines.

During stay at home orders, schools were quick on their feet when it came to delivering students much needed nutrition. According to a recent School Nutrition Association survey, more than 80 percent of schools offered food boxes via drive-through pick up. These boxes, which included items like gallons of milk, fruits, and vegetables, contained up to a week's worth of food to create balanced breakfasts and lunches at home.

Now school nutrition directors are reimagining what meal service will look like in the future. With so much uncertainty in the new school year, many schools may have to do away with a traditional lunch period in the cafeteria in order to maintain health, safety, and social distancing. To do this, some schools are looking at expanding one popular breakfast program, Breakfast In The Classroom, to lunch as well. This possible solution to school meals would deliver lunch directly to students in the classroom to consume at their desks.

No matter the method a school chooses to get food to their students, the St. Louis District Dairy Council is trying to help with the unforeseeable future that schools will face with their Dollars for Dairy Grant. "This is a great opportunity for schools over the summer months to apply to receive funding to help get healthy foods like dairy to students," said Erin McGraw, registered dietitian and nutrition educator with the SLDDC. "We have seen an increase in grant applications for coolers, insulated bags, and mobile carts - all which would allow school nutrition staff to safely get food to students in the classroom."

While school nutrition directors are tackling meals in the schools, parents who choose to homeschool or participate in virtual learning this coming school year will be tasked with providing balanced meals and snacks in their homes. Healthy eating has been linked to better learning, memory and higher grades, but figuring out healthy meals and snacks can be an added stress to families unable to participate in school meal options through school districts.

To promote healthy eating and brain function outside of school meals, parents should provide their kids with smaller meals and snacks every 3 to 4 hours. Focusing on foods that contain protein and fiber can help promote a feeling of fullness as well as providing daily essential vitamins and minerals.

“The dairy group packs a powerful nutrition package, including 8 grams of protein per serving, and can be paired with any food group to create an easy and balanced meal or snack,” reminds McGraw. “Healthy snack and meal ideas include fruit smoothies made with yogurt, string cheese paired with whole grain crackers, whole grain pitas filled with turkey and cheese, vegetable quesadillas, or oatmeal with milk. The possibilities are endless,” adds McGraw.

For more healthy school meal and snack ideas or to learn more about the St. Louis District Dairy Council’s Dollars for Dairy Grant, visit www.stldairycouncil.org. Reach Erin McGraw at 314-835-9668 or emcgraw@stldairycouncil.org. Follow the St. Louis District Dairy Council on Facebook and Instagram at STLDairyCouncil.

Peanut Butter Honey Yogurt Dip

This dip is the perfect sweet, creamy, and healthy after school snack to serve with apple slices or your kid’s favorite snack foods!

Ingredients

- 6 oz container of low fat, plain Greek yogurt
- 3 Tbs creamy peanut butter
- 3 teaspoons honey
- Fruit of choice for dipping, graham crackers

Directions

1. In a small bowl, combine Greek yogurt, peanut butter, and honey.
2. Stir until combined and smooth.
3. Serve with apple and pear slices and/or graham crackers for dipping.

Nutrition Information

230 calories 14g fat 15g protein 7% daily value for calcium

Pinwheel Lollipops

Sending lunch to school or making lunch for home school, this quick kid-friendly recipe can make lunch fun and memorable.

Ingredients

- 1 package (8 oz) cream cheese (softened)
- ½ oz package of ranch dip mix

- 2 large whole wheat tortillas
- 9 ounces lunch meat of choice
- 8 ounces thinly sliced cheese of choice
- Lollipop sticks

Directions

1. Combine cream cheese and ranch dressing mix.
2. Spread the mixture on the tortilla, almost all the way to the edges.
3. Lay 4 slices of lunch meat and 4 slices of cheese on top of the cream cheese mixture
4. Roll the tortilla around the meat and cheese as tightly as possible.
5. Cut rolled tortillas into 1 ½ inch pinwheel slices and insert an end of a lollipop stick into the edge of the tortilla pinwheel.

Nutrition Information

315 calories, 23g fat, 17g protein, 21% daily value for calcium

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