

## Thinking Outside the Lunchbox

With the start of the school year just around the corner, 5+ A Day has fun fresh ideas to get Mums and Dads thinking outside the square when it comes to the kids' lunches.

5+ A Day advocate and leading nutritionist, Claire Turnbull, who runs Mission Nutrition and is the nutritionist for Healthy Food Guide Magazine, says school lunches provide a great opportunity to work more fruit and vegetables into your child's diet, giving the energy and nutrients they need to get the most out of their learning day.

Claire suggests a great way to get kids eating more fruit and veg by making them look fun, and involving children in the process of preparing lunches.

"While kids may be reluctant to eat whole pieces of fruit, they love food they can eat with their fingers," says Claire. "Choose colourful fruit and vegetables and chop them up into small bite sized pieces that can be stored in small containers or slipped into sandwiches and wraps.

"Incorporating fruit and vegetables into lunches doesn't need to be a covert operation," adds Claire. "Kids love the opportunity to help Mum and Dad in the kitchen and they are more likely to eat lunches they have helped make themselves. It's also a great way to teach kids how to make healthy choices."

Claire also recommends introducing children to new foods at home first before including them in their lunchbox.

"Children are less likely to eat food that is foreign to them," says Claire. "By including new food types and styles in family meals first, children are more likely to eat them when they see it in their school lunches."

Here are five fun, tasty and healthy lunchbox ideas that will go some way to achieving 5+ servings of fruit and vegetables during the school day:

- For a nutritiously packed lunch that maximises brain power, try egg and lettuce wholemeal sandwiches cut into triangles for fun and easy handling. Pack a low fat yogurt and a small banana – try drawing a face on the skin for some added fun!
- For a delicious and healthy alternative to sandwiches, a potato frittata wedge packed with chopped courgette, onion, corn, spinach, mushroom and/or tomato - anything goes in this great lunch option. Pop chunks of cheese and cherry tomatoes in a small container for added protein, vitamins and minerals to help your childrens' bodies and brains work to their full potential. To complement the frittata, a homemade mini banana bran muffin adds extra fibre to this lunchbox and makes it a great filling snack so that the kids don't run out of steam before the day is out. Finally, add a piece of fruit of your choice to round out the

nutrition content.

- Kids love pizza! Leftover homemade pizza slices with their favourite vegetables such as mushrooms, tomato, baby spinach, corn, courgette and onion are always a lunchbox favourite and a great way of getting a few extra vegetables in at lunchtime. Making a wholemeal pizza base will add a little more fibre keeping kids fuller for longer. Add a small container of berries and grapes packed with antioxidants. Cucumber sticks make a fresh, healthy addition to this lunchbox combo.
- Sushi with tuna and avocado along with a handful of carrot sticks makes a tasty lunch providing carbohydrate for brain fuel and a good vitamin boost. Add strawberries or apple slices for a nutrition boost
- A wholemeal roll or wrap with ham and cheese, lettuce, grated carrot and cucumber makes a tasty protein packed lunchbox staple and is a fantastic way of adding more vegetables into their day. You can include sliced tomato in a small snap lock bag so the children can add at lunchtime – this stops the roll going soggy.

To keep lunches nice and cool, particularly during the warmer months of the year, Claire recommends using a “chilly block” and laying it at the bottom of your child’s lunchbox or bag. To make a chilly block simply freeze a small bottle of water and add to the box to keep it chilled or just use a store bought chilly block placed in the freezer the night before.

For more fun fresh lunchbox ideas, visit <http://www.5aday.co.nz>.

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#### 5+ A Day

5+ A Day was launched in New Zealand in 1994 by the non-profit organisation United Fresh NZ Inc. The objective of 5+ A Day is to encourage all New Zealanders to eat and enjoy eating five or more servings of fruit and vegetables every day for health, taste and variety.