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SP719-H Quick Bites Create a 'Brown Bag Special'

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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UT Extension

Tennessee Nutrition and Consumer Education Program

SP719-H

Quick Bites

Revised September 2009

Create a "Brown Bag Special"

Make your lunchtime "special" by brown bagging your midday meal. A packed lunch can be a great way to trim your waist and your budget. Restaurant meals can have huge portions and extra calories that can really pack on the extra pounds. Plus, they can easily cost around $10 or more. Over the course of a month, the extra calories and dollars really add up.

Excitement in a Bag

How do you make the lunch you pack at home just as exciting as a restaurant meal? First, stay away from the same dull sandwich. Fill your brown bag with variety! A sandwich once or twice a week is fine as long as you change it up a little. For example, build your sandwich with an assortment of whole-grain breads, pitas and wraps. Then choose lean fillings like sliced eggs, tuna, low-fat cheese or lean meats. Jazz up your sandwiches with cool, crisp greens, sliced cucumbers, onions and tomatoes.

Not Just Sandwiches

There are several other easy options other than sandwiches to keep your lunch exciting. Soups and frozen meals can be healthy, inexpensive choices, especially if you stock up when they are on sale. Choose the healthier versions of these foods to keep the calories, fat and sodium low. Don't feel limited to what is packed in the can or box. Add a side salad or a piece of fruit to make sure you have a full, inviting meal.

Leftovers to the Rescue

Your lunchtime is a time for you to relax and replenish your body, so make sure your food is attractive. If you are preparing a frozen meal, take the food out of the plastic container and place it on a real plate along with the extra side item you packed. Creating a meal that looks great will help make the meal feel homemade and will make your meal more satisfying. Don't just stop with a nice looking plate, make sure to move away from your desk or work area for a pleasant change of scenery and time to recharge.

Make Your Time Special

Leftovers can definitely enhance your lunchtime experience. Take the leftover idea a bit further and plan for lunchtime portions when you cook dinner meals. You can even cook in bulk over the weekend by cooking a big pot of chili, soup or rice and beans. These foods can then be divided into individualized portions that are ready to quickly pack in your work time lunch. Add some fresh carrots, celery and pepper strips for some cool crunch in your lunch.

10 Ideas for an Exciting, Tasty, Inexpensive Packed Lunch

1. Turkey or ham sandwich on whole-wheat bread, one small piece of fruit, cucumbers and broccoli with low-fat dip.
2. Green salad with tuna or chicken breast, light salad dressing, 10 whole-wheat crackers, 6 ounces light yogurt.
3. Low-fat chicken salad (see recipe below) in a whole-wheat pita pocket, ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese with 1 cup strawberries.
4. One cup bean soup, side salad with low-fat dressing, five whole-wheat crackers, 1 cup melon.
5. Turkey wrap (made with whole-wheat tortilla, lettuce, light mayo, tomato and veggies of choice), ½ cup sugar-free pudding.
6. One cup tuna macaroni salad (made with tuna packed in water, whole-wheat pasta and light mayo), side salad with light salad dressing, one small piece fresh fruit.
7. Spinach salad with grilled chicken breast, light salad dressing, 1 cup berries, 6 ounces light yogurt, one slice whole-wheat bread.
8. Healthy frozen dinner, one small piece fresh fruit, side salad with light dressing.
9. One cup whole-wheat pasta salad with chickpeas and veggies of choice (use light Italian dressing), one small piece fresh fruit.
10. Asian chicken salad (grilled chicken breast, lettuce, peapods, carrots, ½ cup mandarin orange slices packed in juice, drained), low-fat sesame dressing, one medium whole-wheat roll.

Toasted Almond Chicken Salad

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts
2 14.5-ounce cans fat-free, reduced-sodium chicken broth
½ cup fresh celery, chopped
15 grapes, sliced in half
¼ cup almond slivers, toasted
⅓ cup light mayonnaise
2 tablespoons plain, fat-free yogurt
½ teaspoon salt
Dash ground black pepper
10 slices whole-wheat bread or 5 pita pockets

Nutrition Facts
Serving Size: 1 sandwich (119g)
Servings: 5

Amount Per Serving
Calories 230 Calories from Fat 110

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 13g	**19%**
Saturated Fat 0.5g	**3%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Polyunsaturated Fat 0g	
Monounsaturated Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 25mg	**8%**
Sodium 630mg	**26%**
Total Carbohydrate 17g	**6%**
Dietary Fiber 4g	**14%**
Sugars 3g	
Protein 17g	

Vitamin A 0% ▪ Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 8% ▪ Iron 8%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

		Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 ▪ Carbohydrate 4 ▪ Protein 4

1. Place chicken breasts in a large saucepan over medium heat. Pour chicken broth over chicken breasts and bring to a low simmer for 20 minutes or until done. Drain meat. Allow chicken to cool, then shred with fork.

2. In a medium bowl, combine remaining ingredients, except bread, and mix well.

3. Add chicken to mixture and toss well to coat. Divide the chicken salad into 5 equal portions.

4. Top 1 slice of toasted wheat bread with one portion of chicken salad. Top with another slice of bread. Repeat for remaining 4 sandwiches.

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