



## BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

### Packing Lunch & Saving Money!

Lunchtime is often enjoyed at work and unless provided, something we need to pack before leaving for the day. When busy, it can be tempting and convenient to opt for the drive-thru which can be expensive. With proper planning and preparation packing a lunch can be quick, help us make healthier choices, and save money. Read below for helpful tips when packing a lunch for you or someone else.

#### Meal Plan & Save –

Include lunch when making a meal plan for you and your family. Use your meal plan to create a grocery list of needed ingredients. A plan helps keep things organized and eliminates any unnecessary spending. Look for weekly discounts and buy in bulk the foods eaten most often.

**Leftovers** – Plan to eat leftovers or make extra of your dinnertime meal to include in a few lunches throughout the week. This may help reduce the

number of ingredients needed to purchase when shopping.

**Have kids help** – If you are making lunches for kids, let them be part of the meal plan. Kids are more likely to eat things they help prepare or make decisions about. This can also help reduce any food waste throughout the week.



#### Lunch ideas

In addition to saving money, packing a lunch can also be nutritious! Try to include the five main food groups when planning your lunch. The five main food groups are vegetables, fruits, grains, protein, and dairy. Here are lunch ideas that include all the food groups.

- Deli ham or turkey slices with reduced-fat cheddar cheese cubes, whole grain crackers, sliced cherry tomatoes, apple slices, and low-fat yogurt.
- A peanut butter and banana sandwich served on whole grain bread with celery sticks, fresh strawberries, and low-fat milk.
- Cheese quesadillas on whole wheat tortilla with a side of bell pepper sticks, guacamole, mixed berries, and low-fat string cheese.

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**Recipe of the Month**

*Recipe from Lindsey Breunig-Rodriguez, Project Specialist – Better Living for Texans*

**MyPlate Lunchbox**

Lunches during the school day or the workday often need to be easy to take with you and require little to no preparation when ready to eat. Preparing lunch at home is often cheaper and healthier for us!

**Directions**

Choose one food from each MyPlate food group. You can cut, slice, or pre-portion several items once and enjoy throughout the week. If a refrigerator is unavailable for your lunch, keep your MyPlate Lunchbox stored in an insulated container with an ice pack or frozen water bottle. *Note: Nutrition content will change as ingredients are substituted.*

**Ingredients**

Fruit	Vegetable	Grain	Protein	Dairy
1 cup fresh berries	1 cup celery sticks	1 small whole wheat tortilla (6" diameter)	1 hard-boiled egg	1 cup low-fat yogurt
1 small apple	1 cup sliced bell peppers	1/2 cup brown rice	1/3 cup hummus	1/3 cup Greek Tzatziki dip
1 large banana	1 cup baby carrots	1 cup whole grain cereal	1 tablespoon nut butter	1 cheese stick (1 ounce)
1-2 clementines	1 cup cucumber slices	1 whole wheat muffin	2 slices of lean lunchmeat	1 cup cottage cheese
1 fruit cup like peaches or pears in 100% fruit juice	1 cup roasted chickpeas	5 100% whole wheat crackers	1-2 tablespoon mixed nuts	

**Example:** 1 cup berries, 1 cup sliced bell peppers, 5 100% whole wheat crackers, 1 hard-boiled egg, and 1/3 cup Greek tzatziki dip

**Nutrients Per Serving (from example):** 280 calories, 9 g total fat, 2 g saturated fat, 165 mg cholesterol, 330 mg sodium, 41 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 16 g total sugar, 0 g added sugar, and 13 g protein

**Total Cost:** \$\$\$\$



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