



# 5 Tips to Building a Healthful Lunch



What's on your lunch menu? Do you buy lunch or make it at home? For kids, meals at school are a bargain, but sometimes kids may want a change of pace with a homemade lunch.

For adults, purchased lunches at a nearby restaurant can add up to a hefty price tag.

According to one study, the average purchased lunch costs about \$8. During a five-day work week, that adds to \$40 per week – or more than \$2,000 per year!

**The lunch you prepare at home is almost always healthier than a purchased meal. Be sure to select a variety of healthful foods with these tips:**

### 1. Pack some protein

Include lean protein in your lunch to help you stay feeling full longer. How about a sandwich made with grilled chicken or meat loaf from last night's dinner? Protein helps build and repair your body. Less expensive protein options include canned fish, beans and eggs.

### 2. Vary your veggies

Choose a variety of colorful vegetables, which provide vitamins and minerals. Purchase vegetables in season for the best value and nutrient profile. In-season fresh vegetables are often at their best quality and price, but fresh, frozen and canned vegetables all count toward the recommended amount.

### 3. Welcome whole grains

Try a variety of whole-grain foods such as bulgur, oats, quinoa, brown rice, whole-wheat pasta and wild rice. Be sure to look for the words "whole grain" as one of the first ingredients on the nutrition label.

### 4. Fill up on fruits

Fruits are a low-calorie way to satisfy your sweet tooth while also getting fiber. Fruits are packed with soluble fiber, which helps keep cholesterol low, and insoluble fiber, which helps keep you regular. As with vegetables, pick a variety of colors and types of fruits to get the best health benefits.

### 5. Don't forget dairy

Dairy products are well known for their boost of bone-protecting calcium. However, dairy also may help with blood sugar and blood pressure control. If you cannot tolerate milk, try vitamin D-fortified soymilk, yogurt or another calcium-rich option.

**We want to hear from you! Please follow this link for a short survey and the chance to win a gift card: <http://tinyurl.com/FNPsurvey2015>**

This program is funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact your county Social Services office or call 1-800-755-2716.

In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. S.W., Washington, DC 20250 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

I'm trying to save money by bringing lunch from home more often, but we do not have a large refrigerator at work. I have to wait in a long line to use the microwave oven to reheat foods. Do you have any ideas?

**Keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold are keys to food safety. Here are some tips:**

- **Invest in an insulated lunch bag and some freezer gel packs.** You also can use frozen juice boxes to keep food cool. Keep gel packs or juice boxes in the freezer. Just before leaving home, place a frozen gel pack in your lunch bag.
- **Try freezing sandwiches.** Many sandwiches freeze well and will thaw by lunchtime if placed in a lunch bag early in the morning. Save time by preparing and freezing some extra sandwiches ahead of time. Don't overdo the butter or mayo because the bread may become soggy during thawing. Sandwiches containing fruit or vegetables generally don't freeze well; pack ingredients such as lettuce and tomato separately.
- **Keep foods cool** by storing lunches out of the sun in the coolest possible place.
- **To transport hot foods** such as soup or chili, rinse a thermos with boiling water just before filling it with boiling-hot food such as soup. It will remain warm and safe for a few hours. To save time, heat the water in a microwave oven.

## Foodwi\$e Tip of the Month

Rice and pasta are economical grain foods. For the most nutrition, choose whole-grain rice and pasta. On average, brown rice and whole-grain pasta cost about 20 to 25 cents per serving (¼ cup dry). Brown rice takes longer to cook than regular white rice (about 45 minutes vs. 15 or 20 minutes).

**Did you know?** From dry to cooked, rice triples in volume. From dry to cooked, most pasta doubles in volume. In other words, 1 cup of dry rice becomes 3 cups of cooked, and 1 cup of dry pasta becomes 2 cups of cooked pasta.



## Just for Fun

What did one plate say to the other plate?  
Lunch is on me!

Take your taste buds on an adventure with this tasty and colorful sandwich. It includes whole grain, lean protein and veggies.

## Thai Chicken Wraps

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 4 oz. Thai peanut sauce\*
- 8 whole-wheat tortillas
- 4 c. lettuce, shredded
- 2 large carrots, cut into thin strips or julienned
- 1 cucumber, seeds scraped out, cut into strips
- 4 Tbsp. cilantro leaves (optional)
- 4 to 8 Tbsp. peanuts, chopped (optional)
- Salt and pepper, to taste



1. Pound the chicken, until flat, in a zip-top bag or between two pieces of plastic wrap. Season chicken with salt and pepper, then grill or sauté until done. Slice into thin strips.
2. Lay a whole-wheat tortilla on a cutting board. Add lettuce, chicken pieces, carrot and cucumber strips, and cilantro leaves. Drizzle on a good amount of peanut sauce, then sprinkle on some peanuts. Season with salt and pepper to your liking.
3. Roll up the tortilla tightly, slice in half and serve.

*Makes eight servings. Each serving has 280 calories, 8 grams (g) fat, 19 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber and 530 milligrams sodium.*

\* Peanut sauce can be found at most grocery stores and is similar in price to salad dressing. Other ways to use peanut sauce include as a salad dressing, a pasta topping (can thin with broth if too thick), as a marinade, or as a dip for fresh vegetables, dumplings or chicken skewers.

## Menu idea:

Thai Chicken Wrap, sliced apples and low-fat or fat-free milk



Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist

Contact the local office of the  
NDSU Extension Service  
for more information  
on food and nutrition or  
managing your food dollar.

