

What should be in a lunchbox?

Always include

1. Portion of vegetables, to help boost fibre and nutrient intake – carrot, cucumber, pepper, celery, sugar snap peas....
2. Piece of fruit– apple, pear, satsuma, orange quarters, banana, grapes, melon.
3. Wholegrain, for fibre, sustained energy, vitamins and minerals – wholegrain wrap / bagel / bread / crackers / pasta, oatcakes
4. Healthy protein, to help support growth and development – egg, fish, chicken, hummus, yoghurt, nuts, nut butter, seeds, falafel
5. Water to drink. Staying well hydrated improves concentration and performance

Red pesto dip

Preparation time 5 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp. red pesto
- 2 – 3 tbsp. natural yoghurt (or use natural soya yoghurt for dairy free version)

Directions:

- Stir pesto and yoghurt together
- Serve with vegetable sticks, oat cakes or pitta crisps

Pitta 'crisps'

Preparation time 5 minutes, cooking time 10 - 12 minutes

Ingredients:

- ½ tbsp. olive oil
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 1 wholegrain pitta bread

Directions:

- Preheat the oven to 180C
- Mix the oil and paprika together in a bowl
- Split open the pitta bread, brush lightly with the oil mixture and slice into triangular pieces
- Place in the oven on a baking tray for 10 – 12 minutes until toasted
- Allow to cool and serve with dips

This recipe can be made with wholegrain wraps and flatbreads and is a great way to use them up if going stale. Instead of smoked paprika try rosemary, grated parmesan, lime zest & chilli ... 'Crisps' will keep fresh in an airtight container for 2 or 3 days.

Cheddar and courgette muffins

Preparation time 10 - 15 minutes, cooking time 20 minutes

Ingredients:

2 courgettes, grated
1 spring onion, finely sliced
½ cup mature cheddar, grated
2 tbsp. fresh parsley, finely chopped
(optional)
2 cups wholegrain self-raising flour
3 eggs
3 tbsp. olive oil
1 cup full fat natural yoghurt

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 190C and grease a 12 hole muffin tray (or use paper inserts)
- Place the courgette in a tea towel and squeeze to remove excess water
- Place courgette in a large bowl and add onion, cheese, parsley and flour and mix
- Whisk eggs, olive oil and yoghurt together and add to courgette mixture, mixing well
- Spoon mixture into muffin tray and bake for 15 – 20 minutes until firm to touch and golden
- Leave to cool in pan for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire tray

These muffins provide a healthy and tasty snack that is rich in vegetables, protein and wholegrains. Can be frozen for up to 1 month.

Wholegrain hummus roll-up

Preparation time 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 soft wholegrain wrap
2 tbsp. hummus
1 grated carrot / mixed sprouts /
cucumber strips

Directions:

- Place the wrap on a chopping board and spread with the hummus
- Sprinkle the grated carrot or other veg onto the lower half of the wrap, leaving a gap with no filling around the edges
- Fold in the sides, so that they almost touch, with just a gap of an inch or so
- Holding the sides in, fold up the bottom over the sides and roll tightly. Slice in half on the diagonal

Chocolate power balls

Preparation time 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 cup peanut / almond butter
1 – 2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 cup shelled hempseeds (or milled flaxseeds if not available)
1 tbsp. cocoa powder
½ cup nuts (any combination of peanuts, sliced almonds, chopped walnuts, chopped cashews, toasted coconut ...)

Directions:

- Mix nut butter and maple syrup in a large bowl until smooth
- Add in rest of ingredients and mix until well combined. If mix is too dry add more nut butter
- Roll into small balls and eat! Keep dipping hands in bowl of clean water to prevent mixture from sticking
- Can be rolled in finely chopped nuts and seeds or in cocoa powder

Lots of fruit and nut-based snacks contain large amounts of dates or other dried fruit. While dried fruit does contain minerals and fibre, it is also up to 65% sugar and snacks with a large amount of dried fruit can be very high in sugar. These power balls are sweetened only with a small amount of maple syrup and require absolutely no equipment to make, beyond a bowl and spoon. They can be frozen with greaseproof paper separating the layers for up to one month.

Banana oat bites

Preparation time 5 minutes, cooking time 20 minutes

Ingredients:

3 small, ripe bananas
1 cup oats
½ cup peanut butter
2 tbsp. maple syrup
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla
½ tsp. baking powder
2 tbsp. pumpkin / other seeds

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 170C
- Line a 9 x 9 inch baking tin with greaseproof paper
- Mash bananas in a bowl
- Add remainder of ingredients and stir until combined
- Pour into lined tin and bake for 20 – 25 minutes
- Allow to cool before cutting into squares

These bites make a perfect healthy treat. To make a version with a chocolate twist, add 1 – 2 tbsp. dark chocolate chips or cacao nibs.