



A BETTER BROWN BAG

FAMILY FEATURES

If you think that taking lunch to work has to be as boring as the brown bag you pack it in, think again. With a little planning and creative thinking, you can have a satisfying midday meal wherever you find a table.

Taking your lunch to work saves you money, helps you control calories and allows you to boost your daily nutrition. You control the portions and the ingredients, so you can customize what you carry, ensuring that you get a good-for-you lunch that you'll enjoy.

Here are tips from the National Peanut Board that may inspire you to think outside the lunchbox and create a brown bag meal you will be proud to carry.

- **Plan ahead** — put lunch items on your grocery list and gather lunch-style recipes for your meal plan.
- **Balance choices** — select a variety of foods from www.MyPyramid.gov, including whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and lean protein.
- **Think small** — pack a variety of snacks to satisfy any craving that may hit during the day.
 - Pack whole grain crackers and sliced cheese as an alternative to a sandwich.
 - Pack a bag of snack peanuts for an energy boost any time of the day.
 - Pack a banana for a sweet treat that may save you from a trip to the vending machine.
- **Dress up fruits and vegetables** with protein-packed peanut butter dip (see recipe). Repurpose leftovers — instead of simply taking last night's dinner for lunch, use the ingredients to make something new.
 - Turn leftover roasted chicken into a tasty chicken salad (see recipe).
 - Toss cold pasta with dressing and chopped veggies for a pasta salad.

For more delicious ways to upgrade your lunch, visit www.nationalpeanutboard.org.



Pita Pockets with Chinese Chicken-Peanut Salad

Yield: 6 pita pockets

- 2 cups chopped cooked chicken
- 1 cup grated carrots
- 1/2 head roughly chopped iceberg lettuce, (about 4 cups)
- 2/3 cup chow mein noodles
- 1/3 cup canned sliced water chestnuts
- 4 tablespoons peanut oil
- 3 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
- 3 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon lite soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/4 cup chopped dry-roasted peanuts
- 2 tablespoons chopped green onions
- 3 pita breads, halved

In large bowl, mix together chicken, carrots, lettuce, chow mein noodles and water chestnuts. Set aside.

To make dressing: In separate bowl, mix together peanut oil, peanut butter, rice vinegar, soy sauce and sugar until smooth. Stir in peanuts and green onions. Stir until blended. Pour dressing over salad and toss well.

Fill pita pockets with even portions of chicken salad.



Kickin' Up Kids' Lunches

Even kids can get tired of the same sandwich every day. Liven up their lunches with some of these creative ideas and recipes.

- Pack frozen yogurt or an ice cold water bottle as an edible ice pack.
- Mix peanuts, chocolate morsels and raisins for a treat.
- Look for lunchboxes and food containers that keep foods safe and undamaged. Look for those with several compartments that keep foods separate.
- Present food in fun ways: fruit chunks on skewers, deli meats rolled up around sliced vegetables, breakfast for lunch.
- Add a non-food treat, such as a fun eraser, sticker or other prize that children will enjoy just as much as a sweet treat.
- Pack individual sandwich ingredients and let the kids make their own creation at school.

Rock 'n' Roll Lunch

- 1 small whole wheat tortilla spread with 2 tablespoons peanut butter, sprinkled with 1/4 cup granola, rolled up and sliced
- Carrots and celery with Dazzling Peanut Butter Chocolate Dip (recipe follows)
- Blackberries
- Drinkable yogurt

Dazzling Peanut Butter Chocolate Dip

Yield: 4 (3-tablespoon) servings

- 2 tablespoons low-fat plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon chocolate syrup
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- Chocolate sprinkles (optional)

In a standing mixing bowl, mix yogurt and chocolate syrup on medium speed until well blended.

In a microwave-safe bowl, microwave the peanut butter at 70% power for about 1 minute or until melted; stir half-way through. Pour peanut butter into chocolate yogurt mixture and mix until smooth. Top with sprinkles if desired.

Serve with 1 cup assorted carrot and celery sticks, sliced cucumbers, apples or pear slices.



Breakfast for Lunch

- 1 sausage link
- 3 mini peanut flour pancakes (recipes follows)
- Fruit cup
- Greek yogurt with honey (for dipping pancakes and fruit)

Peanut Flour Pancakes

Yield: 24 (3-inch) pancakes

Use your favorite whole grain pancake mix according to package directions for 12 full size pancakes.

Add 1/4 cup peanut flour* + 2 to 4 tablespoons milk.

Let stand for 10 minutes before cooking.

*This low-fat, high protein, gluten-free flour is available at supermarkets nationwide and online.

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