



Pointers For Parents

Easy Tips To Reduce Food Waste In Your Child's Lunch Box

by Jean Buzby

(NAPS)—It's estimated that a family of four spends, on average, \$1,500 a year on food that goes uneaten—but you can help save food and money and improve your kids' health.

As kids go back to school, these six easy tips can help you reduce food waste in your child's packed lunch.

Lunch Packing Tips And Stats

1. Get your children's input on what they like. Avoid “wish packing” foods that your child won't eat at home as these foods will likely be discarded at school. If clementines and turkey wraps are his thing, pack those. It is challenging to find the sweet spot between good nutrition and your child's preferences.

2. Cut up fruits and veggies so they are easy to eat. Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories. None have cholesterol. They provide many essential nutrients, including potassium, dietary fiber, folate, vitamin A, and vitamin C.

3. Make lunch fun. For example, add dips for cut veggies, make meat or cheese pinwheels and include dressing to add to a “shake and serve” salad.

4. Make sure to get the portions right for kids of different ages and sizes. USDA's MyPlate provides simple-to-use nutrition guidelines for allocating portions among food groups, such as one-quarter of the meal as lean pro-



Prevent food waste in your child's lunchbox by adding your child's favorite fruits or vegetables.

tein (e.g., beans, fish, lean meats, and nuts), one-quarter grains (preferably whole grain), and fruit and vegetables for the remaining half of the lunch.

5. Aim for “zero-waste lunches” by using reusable water bottles, containers, and snack bags, compostable cutlery, and bento-style lunch boxes, which separate foods into different compartments to offer variety while providing portion control.

6. Always keep food safety in mind. Some practices can reduce both food safety risks and food waste, such as using insulated lunch bags or boxes to keep fresh foods fresh and including reusable cold packs.

Learn More

For further facts, tips and recipes, visit www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste.

• *Dr. Buzby is the USDA Food Loss and Waste Liaison in the Office of the Chief Economist.*