

Making The Grade With Nutritious Lunchbox Menus

(NAPSA)—As kids take to reading, writing and arithmetic, parents today are paying increased attention to planning lunchbox menus that will fuel their kids with energy and nutrition. America's growing concern over childhood obesity has parents looking closely at food labels and opting for healthy alternatives. The percentage of children and adolescents who are defined as overweight has more than doubled since the early 1970s.

According to nutritionist Joy Bauer, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Total Nutrition*, "A well-planned lunchbox will ensure that your child is at least eating healthy 25 percent of the day."

Here are creative tips from Joy to get kids eating in the right direction:

- Always include produce! Grocery stores offer pre-washed baby carrots, celery and other vegetables which make packing simple. Throw in leftover veggies from the night before, such as cooked sugar snap peas or even corn on the cob.

- Add easy-to-pack, hand-held fruits like apples, bananas or grapes, naturally low in fat and chock-full of nutrients and fiber.

- Roll it up! On a whole-wheat tortilla, spread honey mustard and layer sliced turkey or ham with low fat cheese and roll, roll, roll. Younger kids may prefer to skip the bread and simply roll the lean meats into "meat cigars" or "turkey fingers." Refrigerate the night before and they're ready to go the next morning.

- PB&J—Update a classic. This childhood favorite is not only tasty, but also packed with protein. Stick with thin schmears of peanut butter on whole wheat bread, and try low sugar jelly or unsweetened applesauce. Make them fun with popular cookie cutter shapes!



Lunchbox meal packed with nutrition and flavor.

- Avoid liquid calories. Don't let your kids drink their calories, instead save them for food. Read the label and look for zero calorie, full-flavored waters, such as Fruit₂O, for a delicious healthy beverage that also hydrates. Consider freezing the beverages the night before, so they remain cold and refreshing until lunchtime.

- Don't forget fun food! As long as snacks are under 200 calories and portion-appropriate, anything goes! Try low-fat granola bars, nuts, a handful of baked chips or a fun-size chocolate bar.

- Be creative. Put a smile on your child's face with a note from mom, a temporary tattoo or a fun riddle to figure out.

Fruit₂O is created through a distilled steam process capturing the essence of real fruit taste in pure spring water. Flavors include orange, lemon, lime, grape, raspberry, cherry, strawberry and peach and are available in 24-pack variety cases. Fruit₂O can be purchased at convenience stores, club stores, mass merchandise stores and supermarkets, as well as online at www.veryfine.com. For retail locations, call 1-800-VERYFINE or visit www.Fruit2O.com.