

5 TIPS FOR PACKING HEALTHY LUNCHES (KIDS WON'T THROW AWAY)

During the elementary years my mom faithfully packed my lunch for school. I remember my daily lunch quite well... the notes, white bread sandwiches with the crust perfectly removed, and two quarters for buying ice cream. She lovingly took time each morning (or night) to pack my lunch.

Despite my mom's labor and love, I developed a horrible habit: *nearly everyday I threw away my lunch.*

I'm not sure why I suddenly felt the urge each day at 11:42 to throw my mom's hand-picked lunch in the school garbage. In fact, the habit became so regular my mom would often question where I was putting the metal spoons she sent in my lunchbox. You guessed it! *The trash.* Thankfully, I matured and snapped out of the lunch-throwing phase. Unfortunately, that year my mom also lost her entire collection of metal spoons.

The big question for me (and you) is: *"How do I pack a healthy lunch my kids will love (and not throw away)?"* There are a lot of "food" options competing for a spot in our kids' lunch-boxes. How do we get our kids' attention and pack lunches they will be excited about opening and eating?

Five Tips for Packing Healthy Lunches: 1. Create a Favorite Meals List: One of the most important steps to getting your kids to love lunch (and eat it) is encouraging participation from the very start!

Before school even starts, sit down together and create a *"My Favorite Meals"* list or book. Ask your child to color pictures (or cut pictures from a magazine) of food they would enjoy in their lunchbox. Nothing is off limits. If your child draws cookies, be sure to pack healthy cookies. Maybe homemade peanut butter or chocolate chip? As your child draws the pictures, talk about their choices. Encourage new choices: *"What's your favorite fruit? Apples? Perfect! Do you like apples sliced with the apple cutter or whole?"*

Hang the completed list on the fridge or create a *"My Favorite Meals"* book. This list (or book) can be revisited throughout the school year as you shop and pack lunch together. Don't forget to have a few extra pages handy for adding new favorite foods. You can download the *"My Favorite Meals"* [printable here](#) or by clicking the printable button below.

2. Shopping Allowance: After creating a favorite food list, it's time to go shopping! Provide your child with a weekly grocery allowance. Piper, my oldest, receives \$5 each week. With this money he can purchase anything at the market or natural food store.

As the parent, you'll still buy the majority of food, but the small allowance allows your child to have control over their food choices, and take pride in what they're eating for lunch. You might be surprised at the new foods your child explores just because they had a choice.

3. Prepare Together: Encourage your child to get involved in the actual packing process. Set aside time on the weekend, after shopping together, to chop vegetables and slice fruit, cut cheese, and create sandwiches. Make it fun with tools your child can easily use.

Allowing a child to help prepare food provides them with a sense of “*I did this!*” Often times children who help prepare lunch and family meals are more willing to try new foods and partake in meal time.

4. Practice Makes Perfect: Eating lunch at school can be intimidating, particularly for a young child. The noise and over-sized cafeteria can strike a bit of uneasiness in anyone. Trust me, I was a teacher for a number of years before coming home to share cookies and kombucha here at Live Simply.

Before school starts, sit down and talk with your child about what they can expect in the large cafeteria. Also, practice unzipping the lunchbox, taking out the thermos and LunchBot, and opening the snack taxis. Walk your child through the steps of cleaning and how to handle leftovers.

5. Super Cool Lunch Gear: Now it's time to stock up on super cool lunch gear your child will love!

Ladies, you know the amazing feeling you get when you purchase that new purse? Yep, *that* feeling. You're ready to take on the world! Your child's lunch gear is the same way. Utilizing lunch gear that's practical, yet fun, is an essential step to packing a lunch your child will love (and definitely won't throw away).

These items make the best lunch-packing gear, in kids' opinion:

- Snack Taxi: reusable bags for snacks and sandwiches that are made in the USA.
- Foogo Leakproof Straw Bottle: Keep your kids drink cold without the worry of a wet lunchbox. Plus, these bottles are BPA, PVC and Phthalate Free.
- LunchBot: A stainless food container that's great for lunch and snacks.
- Insulated Lunch Bag: A fun, practical insulated lunch bag that's easy to clean and carry.
- Apple & Pear Cutter: This tool allows easy cutting of your child's favorite apple or pear.

Packing healthy school lunches shouldn't result in frustration and a trip to the trash can. With these simple tips kids can enjoy an awesome year of healthy school lunches.