

In early childhood, kids' produce consumption meets recommended levels, yet it falls off as they enter school-age years. How do we make sure kids continue to eat fruits and veggies as a lifelong habit? Making reaching for produce as routine as brushing teeth is one solution. Use these ideas to convert produce hacks into habits of health in the next generation, especially as they head back to school.



SCHOOL MORNINGS DESTRESSED

1. Non-Recipe

Breakfast: Top a whole wheat pita with yogurt and fruit.

2. Pre-school Fuel:

Set up a “smoothie station” with various fruits and yogurt. Include walnuts as a way to boost omega-3 ALA (2.5g/oz). Allow kids to blend their own concoction in a blender or smoothie maker.

3. Egg & Banana

Pancakes: Mash ripe bananas with eggs to make a simple pancake batter. Cook small pancakes on a griddle until golden brown for a naturally sweet breakfast treat.

4. Meal Prep Like

A Boss: Batch cook oatmeal, spoon it into muffin tins, top with your kids' favorite fruits and walnuts, and freeze. Once frozen, store in to-go containers. On busy mornings, microwave or let thaw.

5. Toast Trend:

Top whole wheat toast with cottage cheese and leftover roasted veggies (savory) or cottage cheese, sliced fruit, and a dash of cinnamon (sweet).

6. Fruit Salad Kits:

Prepare customized fruit salad kits in mason jars for grab-and-go breakfasts during the school commute.

LUNCH BOX MAGIC

7. Deconstruct it:

Cook some whole-grain pasta and pair with nutritious mix-ins like chopped hard-boiled eggs and a couple of your kids' favorite veggies. Serve it as a “deconstructed” meal so they can have fun mixing it up at lunchtime.

8. Roll-Ups for the

Win: Using your favorite whole grain wrap, layer with mashed avocado, low sodium deli ham, hummus, and string cheese.

9. One Veggie Five

Ways: Each day of the week, cook the same vegetable in a different way for packed school lunches. Think broccoli raw, roasted, and stir-fried, stems cut into sticks, and pureed into a dip with whole grain crackers.

10. Visual Appeal:

A lunch box with separate compartments offers visual appeal to make meals more fun. Add nutritious foods like fruit, veggie sticks, hard-boiled eggs, unsweetened whole-grain cereal, hummus, or trail mix.

11. Silly Sells:

When adding new veggies to school lunch, add notes with silly names such as “Broccoli Bob” or “Carrot the Explorer.” Encourage kids to create stories about the veggie characters.

12. Leftover Love:

Take your favorite cowboy caviar recipe and add leftover chopped pork tenderloin or pork chop. Serve with chips or celery for a delicious and filling lunch.

SNACK ATTACK SOLVED

13. Dice it, Chop it:

Make a fruit salsa with diced strawberries, pineapples, and Granny Smith apples. Serve as a snack with homemade cinnamon tortilla chips.

14. Coolest Mom On The Block:

Extra kids visiting after school? Keep your freezer stocked with unicorn wands, made by placing blueberries on a stick, rolling in yogurt, and freezing.

15. Trendsetter:

Create a rainbow charcuterie board with raspberries, orange and yellow pepper slices, green beans, blueberries, and purple grapes. Store in the fridge for after school snacks.

16. Protein Plus:

Have tacos the night before? Add leftover pork taco meat to a small container and layer with diced cherry tomatoes, sliced avocado, black beans and shredded cheese.

17. Tiktok Inspo:

Make watermelon pizza. Cut a thick slice, top it with feta cheese, onions, basil and a drizzle of balsamic. Or top with yogurt and diced fruit. Slice for a healthy pizza your kids will love.

18. Produce Power Couples:

Kids can prep these easy snack pairings on their own: apples + walnuts, grapes + string cheese, carrot sticks + hummus, cottage cheese + pineapple chunks.

19. Fruit Sushi Rolls:

Flatten rice cakes and fill with sliced fruits like bananas, mango, and kiwi. Roll and slice into bite-sized pieces.

KITCHEN WIZARDRY

20. Pear-fectly Ripe:

To ripen pears, put them next to bananas in a bowl on the counter. Bananas release ethylene gas which causes pears to ripen faster.

21. Grab Hack:

Put fruits and veggies at kids' eye level in the fridge so they see it first.

22. Freaky Fresh:

Wrap vegetables like celery, asparagus, and broccoli in aluminum foil and store in the crisper drawer to maximize freshness.

23. Store Solution:

Purchase pre-cut veggies at your grocery store to add to soups, casseroles, and scrambled eggs.

24. Lock in Freshness:

Just like many fruits and veggies are best stored in the fridge, for optimal freshness keep California walnuts in an airtight container in the fridge, not the pantry.

25. Finger foods:

Stock finger foods like cherry tomatoes, grapes, sugar snap peas, baby carrots, snack-size sweet peppers, and clementines for easy grab-able options as kids get hungry right before dinner.



For more inspo and recipes to help kids Have A Plant® every time they eat visit fruitsandveggies.org

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