

# Lessons in Lunch:

**Recipes & Tips to Beat the Back-to-School Lunch Blues**

The Latest & Greatest Lunch  
Supplies

Global Lunchbox – Peek inside  
lunch boxes around the world

7 Must-Have Items to Stock Your  
Healthy Lunch Pantry

4 Tips for Packing Better  
Lunches

5 Go-To Lunch Recipes for Kids  
& Adults



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**A CookingClarified.com Project**



## **Welcome to Cooking Clarified's first e-booklet!**

It's back to school time -- reading, writing, arithmetic and lunch! If you're like me, packing a lunch that's both kid-friendly and mom-friendly can be tough. A lunch box filled with cookies and chips -- my daughter's dream -- isn't going to happen and it can be tricky finding foods that are healthy and pleasing to a picky kid's palate. I've compiled a week's worth of lunch recipes that will make moms and kids happy. They're full of nutritious ingredients and were created to give kids a chance to customize them to fit their tastes.

You'll also find tips on making lunchtime prep easier, cool websites that sell all types of lunch boxes and supplies, and a peek at what lunch looks like for kids around the world. This is the first of many e-books I'm planning that will help you prepare delicious and simple meals for your family.

Enjoy!

Chef Danielle

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## **Think Outside the Lunch Box**

Check out these websites for the latest lunch supplies.

<http://www.laptoplunches.com/ideas.html>

<http://www.ecobags.com/>

<http://kidskonserve.com/>

<http://www.easylunchboxes.com/>

<http://www.lunchboxes.com>

<http://www.warmandtote.com/buddie-cart.html>

## **The Global Lunchbox**

By

Kathy Coulibaly, from [www.kidculture.wordpress.com](http://www.kidculture.wordpress.com)

Beans and rice; risotto and a side salad; kimchi and a sweet yogurt drink: odds are, your child's lunchbox doesn't contain these items on a daily basis. But in Africa, Italy, and Korea, respectively, these are the kinds of things schoolchildren enjoy when the bell rings at lunchtime.

While American parents struggle to prepare a nutritious lunch their child won't trade away for cupcakes and M&Ms, parents around the world have developed a menu that works for their child, based on their culture, locally grown foods, and the school schedule.

Lunchtime in a French school cafeteria, for instance, incorporates cultural favorites such as chicken, crusty bread, organic yogurt, and salads topped with fresh herbs.

In India, children often enjoy a hot meal of chickpeas, rice, lentils, and vegetables.

Israeli children eat a variety of foods for lunch including schnitzel, noodles, soup, hummus, cucumbers, or sandwiches with cheese and meat.

In many countries, such as Spain, children still go home for lunch and return for afternoon lessons. Spanish children share their lunchtime meal – the largest of the day – with their family.

So if you're stumped for a healthy and enjoyable lunch for your child, take note of what other parents around the world do and adapt the foods you and your family enjoy at home.

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## Healthy Lunch Pantry

It's easier to pack a healthy lunch if your shelves are stocked with the right ingredients. Here's a list of a few must-haves that will make the morning lunch rush a breeze!

<b>WHAT TO BUY</b>	<b>WHY</b>
<b>Whole wheat or whole grain products: bread, sandwich wraps, pitas, tortillas, crackers, pastas</b>	They instantly add more fiber
<b>Eggs</b>	Once they're hard-cooked, they can serve as a stand-alone snack or be used to make deviled eggs or egg salad.
<b>Nut butters</b>	They're great sources of protein. Kids with allergies can try almond or cashew butter.
<b>Fruits and Veggies: Grapes, cherry tomatoes, orange segments, carrots sticks, diced melon, broccoli or cauliflower florets</b>	Bite-sized or easily sliced fruits & veggies are perfect for simple snacking or dipping.
<b>Whole Grains: Quinoa, bulgur and wheat berries</b>	They're high in protein and quick are high in protein and quick to prepare. Add cooked vegetables, shredded chicken and a splash of vinaigrette for a fast and nutritious salad.
<b>Low-fat or non-fat yogurt</b>	Buy your kid's favorite flavor or dress up plain yogurt with fresh or dried fruit, nuts or granola.
<b>Cheese</b>	Hard cheeses can be cubed or sliced. Spread soft cheeses onto whole grain crackers.

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## ***Tips for Packing Better Lunches***



🕒 Save sandwiches from sogginess by packing foods that may add too much moisture to your bread -- mayonnaise, pickles or relishes -- separately. Kids can assemble them just before eating.

🕒 Got a kid who loves your homemade chicken tenders or pasta salad? Make an extra batch at the beginning of the week and you'll have a head start on lunchtime prep.

🕒 Make the most of leftovers by dicing leftover meat and veggies and piling them into pitas. Add a sprinkling of your kid's favorite cheese or a dollop of hummus or your favorite spread and you've got a great lunch in minutes.



🕒 Give kids some decision-making power about what goes into their lunch box and they're more likely to eat and enjoy it. Set simple boundaries -- let them pick a protein, vegetable or fruit and a snack from your healthy pantry and let them mix and match their own lunch menus.

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## **Five Go-To Lunch Recipes**

Here are a week's worth of delicious lunches that will pass muster with kids and moms! All of them can be enjoyed at room temperature, but today's insulated lunch boxes will make it a breeze to for you to pack them so your kids can savor them chilled or warm.

### **Spinach, Tomato & Feta Cup-Quiche**

Lunch couldn't be cuter with these mini quiche baked in a cupcake tin. This recipe uses chopped, fresh spinach and tomatoes, but you can add whatever diced, fresh vegetables you have on hand.

Makes 10 cup-quiche.

1 refrigerated pie crust, thawed  
All-purpose flour, for dusting your work surface  
½ cup chopped, fresh spinach  
½ cup diced tomato  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1/3 cup feta cheese, crumbled  
¾ cup half and half  
4 eggs  
¼ teaspoons salt  
1/8 teaspoon pepper



Try adding diced zucchini, yellow squash or red bell pepper.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Lightly spray a cupcake tin with non-stick spray.

Dust work surface lightly with flour. Roll thawed pie crust out until it's ¼-inch thick or less. Use a four-inch cookie cutter to cut dough into rounds. Re-roll dough scraps and continue cutting until you have 10 rounds.

Gently press one round of dough into each muffin cup. Line the bottom of each muffin cup with the spinach, tomato, feta and cheese, dividing the ingredients evenly between the 10 cups.

Whisk together the half-and-half, eggs, salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Divide the custard evenly between the 10 quiche.

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, until quiche are firm and crust is lightly browned.

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## **Grilled Cheddar & Green Apple Sandwiches**



Grilled cheese was always my favorite as a kid, but back then it meant a slice of plastic-wrapped American cheese on white bread. These grilled cheese sandwiches make the most of the combination of sharp cheddar cheese and the tartness of thinly-sliced Granny Smith apples to create a heartier sandwich. This is more technique, than recipe. I've left off amounts so you can add as much or as little of cheese and apple as you'd like.



Makes 1 sandwich.

2 slices whole wheat bread  
Thinly-sliced sharp cheddar cheese  
Thinly-sliced Granny Smith apples  
Softened butter

Preheat broiler. Lightly oil a small baking sheet with oil or non-stick cooking spray.

Brush one side of each slice of bread lightly with the softened butter. Place one slice of bread on your baking sheet, buttered side down. Arrange apple and cheese slices on bread. Top with second piece of bread, buttered side up, and place on baking sheet.

Place baking sheet on bottom rack of oven and cook until bread browns and cheese begins to melt, about 1 minute. (All broilers are not created equal. Keep a close watch on your sandwich to make sure it doesn't burn.) Use a spatula to flip sandwich over and continue to cook until cheese is completely melted and bread is golden brown, about 45 seconds more.

Remove from oven; slice and serve.

Insulated lunch boxes like those sold at [warmandtote.com](http://warmandtote.com) will keep items nice and warm 'til lunchtime!

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## Turkey Empanadas

Empanadas are perfect little bundles of ground meat, ideally suited for little hands at lunch time. They can be enjoyed warm or at room temperature and your filling options are limitless. These are lightly spiced to please young palates, but you can create a grown-up, spicier version by adding more paprika and chili powder to taste.

Makes 10 empanadas.

2 teaspoons olive oil  
½ cup chopped onion  
1 clove garlic, minced  
6 ounces ground turkey  
½ teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon chili powder  
1 tablespoon chopped parsley  
½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese  
1 refrigerated pie crust, thawed  
Egg wash



Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Heat olive oil in a medium sauté pan or skillet over medium high heat. Stir in onion and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until onions start to soften. Add ground turkey and use a high-heat spatula or wooden spoon to break up the turkey into small pieces. Cook until turkey browns and no pink remains, about 3 minutes. Add paprika and chili powder, stirring until spices are evenly distributed throughout the ground turkey. Remove turkey from heat and stir in chopped parsley. Let cool for about 5 minutes.

Roll pie crust out until it's ¼-inch thick. Use a 4-inch cookie cutter to cut dough into rounds. Re-roll dough scraps and continue cutting until you have 10 rounds. Place rounds on prepared baking sheet and top each with a heaping tablespoon of ground turkey. Top ground turkey with shredded cheese.

Lightly brush the edges of the dough with a pastry brush dipped in egg wash. Fold the dough over the ground turkey and cheese, using your fingers to press the edges of the dough together to form a half circle. Press the tines of a fork gently into the edges of the dough along the seam, to seal the empanadas.

Brush the empanadas lightly with the egg wash and bake 15-20 minutes, until empanadas are lightly browned.

You can make your own pie crust if you have time, but I find a refrigerated pie crust will work just as well. I recommend Pillsbury's refrigerated pie crust for ideal results.

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## **Broccoli Slaw Pasta Salad**

Prepared bags of shredded slaw make a fantastic base for pasta salads. The addition of whole wheat or whole grain pasta boosts fiber content and also creates a filling and nourishing lunch.

Serves 6 to 8.

8 ounces whole wheat or whole-grain rotini, cooked according to package directions  
1 12-ounce bag of broccoli slaw  
2/3 cup raisins or dried cherries  
½ cup apple cider vinegar  
½ teaspoon grainy mustard  
2 tablespoons honey  
1 teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoons ground black pepper  
¼ cup safflower or other light oil

Combine rotini, slaw and raisins in a large bowl.

In a smaller bowl, whisk together vinegar, mustard, honey, salt and pepper. Gradually whisk in oil in a slow steady stream until vinaigrette thickens and all ingredients are fully combined.

Pour vinaigrette over slaw and toss until evenly coated.

Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Use penne, macaroni or your favorite whole wheat or whole grain pasta.



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## **Chicken Salad**

Pack this chicken salad as a stand-alone salad or with lettuce for lettuce wraps, crackers or use it to fill pita bread.

Makes four servings.

3 cups cooked chicken, shredded  
¼ cup thinly sliced scallions, mostly the green parts  
¼ cup finely chopped carrots  
1 tablespoon raisins, chopped

### **For Vinaigrette:**

2 tablespoons lemon juice  
½ teaspoon Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon honey  
¼ teaspoon dried basil  
4 tablespoons olive oil  
Salt and Pepper, to taste

Combine chicken, scallions, carrots and raisins in a medium bowl.

### **For Vinaigrette:**

Combine lemon juice, mustard, honey and basil in a small bowl. Whisk in oil in a slow, steady stream until vinaigrette thickens.

Pour vinaigrette over chicken and toss until all ingredients are evenly coated. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

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