

JULY-SEP

Issue 32

Fuel Your Future

As summer winds down and the school bells prepare to ring, it's time to kick off a healthy and successful academic year with good nutrition as the cornerstone of focus, energy, and overall well-being.



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 **TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Agriculture
Cooperative Extension

shop. cook. eat.
WITHIN YOUR BUDGET



Wishing you a fantastic and healthy back-to-school season!



SHOP: Conquer School Lunch Shopping on a Budget

Back-to-school season often comes with a hefty price tag, and daily school lunches can quickly add up. But packing nutritious and delicious lunches for your children doesn't have to break the bank. With a little planning and a few smart shopping strategies, you can keep your kids well-fed and your budget intact.



Plan, Plan, Plan!

The golden rule of budget shopping is planning. Impulse buys are budget killers.

- Create a Weekly Menu: Sit down with your kids each week and plan out their lunches. Get them involved!
- Check Store Sales Flyers: Before you even make your list, browse the weekly ads from your local grocery stores. Build your menu around what's on sale.



Shop Smart: Where and How You Buy Matters

The way you navigate the grocery store can significantly impact your spending.

- Shop Seasonally for Produce: Fruits and vegetables are cheapest and freshest when they're in season. Incorporate these into your lunch plans.
- Generic Brands are Your Friends: Store brands have come a long way and often offer comparable quality to name brands at a fraction of the cost. Give them a try!



Invest in Reusables

While there's an initial cost, good quality reusable lunchboxes, containers, and water bottles will save you a significant amount of money over time by eliminating the need for disposable bags, wraps, and single-serve items.



By adopting these strategies, you can take control of your school lunch budget, ensure your children are eating nourishing meals, and reduce food waste.



COOK: Speedy Southwest Brown Rice Salad

This nutritious and delicious salad is perfect for lunchboxes or a light dinner!



SPEEDY SOUTHWEST BROWN RICE SALAD

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 1 cup cooked quinoa (cook according to package directions)
- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup frozen corn, thawed
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1/2 red onion, finely diced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro (optional)

Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

WHAT TO DO:

1. Clean kitchen surfaces before, during, and immediately after use when preparing food. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
2. Rinse and dry all produce before use.
3. In a large bowl, combine the cooked brown rice, black beans, corn, red bell pepper, red onion, and cilantro (if using).
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lime juice, cumin, chili powder, salt, and pepper.
5. Pour the dressing over the quinoa mixture and toss gently to combine.
6. Serve immediately or chill for later. This salad keeps well in the refrigerator for 3-4 days.
7. Enjoy!

QUICK & DELICIOUS!



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Get your kids involved in packing their lunches! They're more likely to eat what they helped prepare.



EAT: Beyond the Sandwich!

Packing a nutritious lunch can sometimes feel like a daily challenge, but with a little planning, it can be fun and delicious! Aim for a balanced lunch that includes:



Lean Protein: (chicken, turkey, hard-boiled eggs, beans, hummus) for sustained energy.



Whole Grains: (whole-wheat bread, wraps, crackers, brown rice, quinoa) for fiber and complex carbohydrates.



Fruits & Vegetables: (colorful variety!) for essential vitamins and minerals.



Healthy Fats: (avocado, nuts, seeds) in moderation for brain health.

CREATIVE LUNCHBOX IDEAS



- **Deconstructed Lunchable:** Whole-wheat crackers, cheese slices, turkey or ham, and grapes.
- **Mini Pizzas:** Whole-wheat pita bread or English muffin halves topped with sauce, cheese, and your child's favorite veggies.
- **Hummus & Veggie Wraps:** Whole-wheat tortilla spread with hummus, layered with cucumber, carrots, and bell peppers.
- **Thermos Warm-Up:** Send leftovers like soup, chili, or pasta in an insulated thermos for a comforting hot meal.



Water is crucial for concentration, energy, and overall health. Encourage your children to drink water throughout the day. Send them to school with a reusable water bottle and remind them to refill it often.



MOVE: Stay Active During the School Year

The school year often means more structured time, less free play, and an increase in sedentary activities like homework. However, keeping children active is crucial for their physical health, mental well-being, and even academic performance. Here are some tips to help your child stay active during the school year:



Make it a Family Affair: Be a Role Model

Kids are more likely to be active if they see their parents being active and enjoying it. Go for family walks, bike rides, or play active games together.



Integrate Movement into Daily Routines

Encourage short bursts of movement during homework sessions. Every 30-45 minutes, have them do some jumping jacks, run in place, or stretch.



Encourage Active Play

Don't underestimate the power of free play. Provide opportunities for them to play outdoors with friends, whether it's riding bikes, playing tag, or building forts.



Limit Screen Time & Offer Alternatives

Set Clear Limits: Establish clear rules for screen time (TV, video games, tablets, phones). When screen time is over, have a list of active alternatives ready.

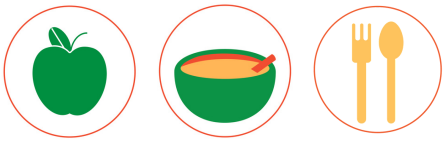


Listen to Their Interests

As they get older, their interests may change. Be open to new activities and help them explore different options.



By making physical activity a natural and enjoyable part of your child's school year, you'll be setting them up for a lifetime of healthy habits.



ACTIVATE: Healthy Snack Swaps

After a long school day, kids often need a pick-me-up. To learn about yummy and healthy snack choices, swap the less healthy options for the better ones!



Answers: *Instead of: Chips Try: carrot sticks with hummus. | Instead of: Candy bars Try: A piece of fruit (apple) | Instead of: Sugary drinks Try: seltzer with a splash of fruit juice*

Contact your local TSU County Educator for Nutrition Education classes near you!

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