

Tips and Ideas for using the Food Dudes Lunchbox

Children will be encouraged to have at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables in their lunch every day. To help you make the most of the Food Dudes lunchboxes that your child/children received, we have enclosed some Tips and Ideas below- we hope you find them useful.

Children need lots of energy and nutrients from food, particularly when they are growing. Try to encourage them to eat lots of fruit and veg (you should aim for at least 5 portions a day) to help ensure they have the required amount of vitamins and minerals. Variety is one of the keys to a healthy balanced diet and this applies just as much to the fruit and veg you eat. Including a range of colours, flavours and textures can help make the food more interesting and enjoyable. But it can sometimes be difficult to make packed lunches that are varied, interesting and healthy.

Here are some practical tips that might help:

- Sandwiches are a popular choice for packed lunches and you can add in a salad vegetable such as lettuce, tomato, cucumber, sweet corn, grated carrot or spinach, along with common fillings to include a vegetable portion.
- Make vegetable sticks from carrots, peppers, cucumber or celery and serve with a dip. Alternatively a vegetable dip could be made and served with breadsticks or crackers e.g. hummus made from chickpeas, avocado, or cooked, mashed cauliflower.
- Mix a variety in a pot to create a salad. Mixed berries are a great snack and can be added to yoghurt. Chop up any fruits for a fruit salad. Adding some pure orange juice helps fruit from going brown.
- Chop up or grate a selection of salad vegetables. Add a dressing to make it more appealing.
- Stir-fries can include fruit and/or vegetables. Save some from the previous evening meal and put in one of the lunchbox tubs.
- Mix cheese with a portion of fruit and/or any of the above vegetables items. Grapes and cheese is a popular combination.
- Cous cous, pasta or rice mixed with finely chopped or roasted vegetables can be a good alternative to sandwiches.
- Vegetables can be served raw, steamed, bakes, grilled, in a salad, juiced, stir fried or boiled. Try a variety of vegetables in a variety of forms to explore what your child likes.
- Frozen, tinned or dried fruit and vegetables can also be used. Select tinned fruit that is in juice NOT syrup or sugar.
- Involve your child in selecting and preparing their fruit and vegetables and lunch. If they are involved they will be more excited to eat it later in school.
- Remember to encourage repeated tasting. The more times a child tastes a food they don't like, the more they come to accept it.

For more tips and ideas visit our website www.fooddudes.ie