

healthy HOME



Lunches Made Healthy: Healthy Lunches That Fuel My Kiddos.

As you guys know, my boys are my greatest treasures and I take their health and happiness probably more seriously than I take my own. I'm not sure if that is a good thing or a bad thing, but I certainly feel my best when they are feeling their best. So, of course, like most parents out there, I worry about what they are eating when I'm not around even though I do pack their lunches. And, even though Ben and I know better and always make (or try to make) healthy meal decisions, sometimes our boys just take what is handed to them. Now, don't get me wrong, both of my boys have developed super healthy palates and would rather have nutbutter and free-range jerky than a candy bar any day – but that does not mean that when a teacher passes out little Debbie's they won't take one.

Because fueling my kids with the most tasty and nutrient dense lunches is so important to me, I wanted to encourage you to get on board too. And yes, there are a few things that could make or break your decision to start packing your kiddos lunches - and these factors I took very seriously. Because I know, the process has to work for it to work!

First is that it has got to be, well healthy of course, that's a no brainer, but also easy. I'm a busy, busy mom

and my schedule simply doesn't allow for crazy hours of lunch food buying, prepping and making – nor do I want to spend a fortune on foods that they might not like or toss. So, I have developed super easy, fast, nutritious and affordable lunches that also are brain boosting and peanut free. I have spent weeks experimenting with what will fuel their body and brain while tasting delicious, and without causing any allergic reactions in the class or lunchroom. Come to find out, kiddos with peanut or tree nut allergies can go into anaphylaxis just through scent when molecules from the nutbutter become airborne. That is why I have only used alternative nutbutters like coconut, tahini, sunflower seed and flax. Just as tasty – without the risk.

I also figured out a way to make lunches for 1 – 2 weeks and I do so on Sunday evening. Yep, I make, bake, fridge some, and freeze some. I got to say, the whole process was fun and I learned so much about my boys. I let them make lists of their favorite foods, help design the lunch menu, pick out the best bets at the grocery store, clean, prep, cook and pack right along with me. So, no matter what ideas you want to use from this post, get your kiddos involved and let them direct you to what they would most enjoy. And, even if you don't have kids, make this stuff for you. You want to feel great too – right?!

Here are a few of my ideas that cost peanuts but don't have any peanuts, taste great, are super nourishing, are full of healthy brain fuel, are easy to make and save you money:

- The Kid Quiche: Simply mix free-range eggs, ghee or grass-fed butter, organic meat or fish of your choice, herbs, finely diced tomato, mushroom, bell pepper, leek, scallion or onion, garlic, spices, ground flax and either whole milk, cream or coconut milk – mix, and pour halfway into coconut oil greased muffin tins. I even put a layer of hulled hemp seeds in the bottom of the pan before I pour the mixture in for added texture and for a bit of an earthy nuttiness that provides extra healthy fats and omega-3s. Bake at around 250 degrees until fluffy and a wooden toothpick comes out clean.

- The Surprise Apple: Fill a cleaned and cored apple with my awesome tasting seed butter (recipe follows!), fridge it. Serve. Talk about a delicious treat!

Jessa's seed butter recipe:

3 1/4 cups roasted sunflower seed
1/4 cup flax seeds
1/4 hemp seeds
1/4 pumpkin seed
2-4 Tbl coconut oil
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 packet stevia
1/2 teaspoon salt

Turn oven to 350°. Spread sunflower seeds on a cookie sheet evenly and roast for about 10-15 minutes. Allow the seeds to cool.

Combine all the seeds into a food processor and process for 5-8 minutes until smooth. Next add in the salt and stevia and blend until incorporated.

In a small bowl combine the vanilla and the coconut oil and stir until incorporated. Then add the coconut oil mix into the food processor and process until the seed mixture and the oil become smooth and spreadable.

Store in a glass container in the fridge.

- Cool Kid Kabobs: Simply cube salami and cheese. Wash some cherry tomatoes. Load all three ingredients on to toothpicks. Voila!

- Lastly, try my outstanding, kiddo-pleasing Coconut Milk Tapioca.

Jessa's Coconut Milk Tapioca Recipe:

1/2 cup small tapioca pearls
4 cups full fat coconut milk
1 vanilla bean or 1tsp vanilla extract
2 egg yolks
4 Tbs raw honey

In a saucepan combine tapioca pearls and 2 cups coconut milk and cook over medium heat. Bring to a simmer, and whisk often. Once the tapioca pearls have become translucent and tend (takes about 20 min) whisk in the remaining coconut milk.

In another bowl combine the yolks and the honey. Stir until smooth. Very slowly add in about half of the coconut milk tapioca mixture. You want to make sure to go slowly and take your time on this step otherwise you will end up with chunks of scrambled egg in your tapioca pudding (Yuck).

Take the contents of the bowl and pour it into the saucepan with the remaining coconut milk and tapioca. Over medium heat cook the pudding for another 5 minutes stirring constantly.

Refrigerate the pudding until solid and serve chilled.

I could go on and on and would love to share all of my quick, cheap and healthy lunch recipes with you – and, I promise to do so, in a proper cookbook – but for now friends, this list will get you going.

Have fun cooking and get to makin' quick and healthy kiddo-fueling lunches! Take great care!