

NEW YORK POST

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2009

PARENTING

PACK TO SCHOOL

Load them up with healthy lunches

MAKING a few simple changes to the regular lunchbox routine will not only make you feel like you're taking an active step towards improving your child's nutrition, but your kids will gobble up the goodness.

Studies show that foods loaded with saturated fats, salt and sugar not only lead to diabetes and obesity but can cause kids to feel tired and affect their ability to concentrate during class.

Yet, parents struggle with trying to find new ways to make their kids lunches more enticing and healthy.

"It can be challenging to create a lunch that's both nutritious and that kids won't trade away," says Aimee Sands, spokesperson for Annie's Homegrown (annies.com), a company that built its success on all

natural wholesome foods.

Instead of the standard sandwich, she suggests a thermos of whole-wheat mac and cheese, along with a container of fun mix-ins, such as shredded chicken, sun dried toma-

toes, peas and broccoli.

"The combination of whole grains, protein and vegetables provide lasting energy, while the variety of textures and toppings make the meal more fun," she adds.

Gina Asoudegan, communication and outreach manager for Applegate Farms (applegatefarms.com) points out that "many kids are allergic these days."

Applegate Farms products are dairy-, gluten- and/or casein-

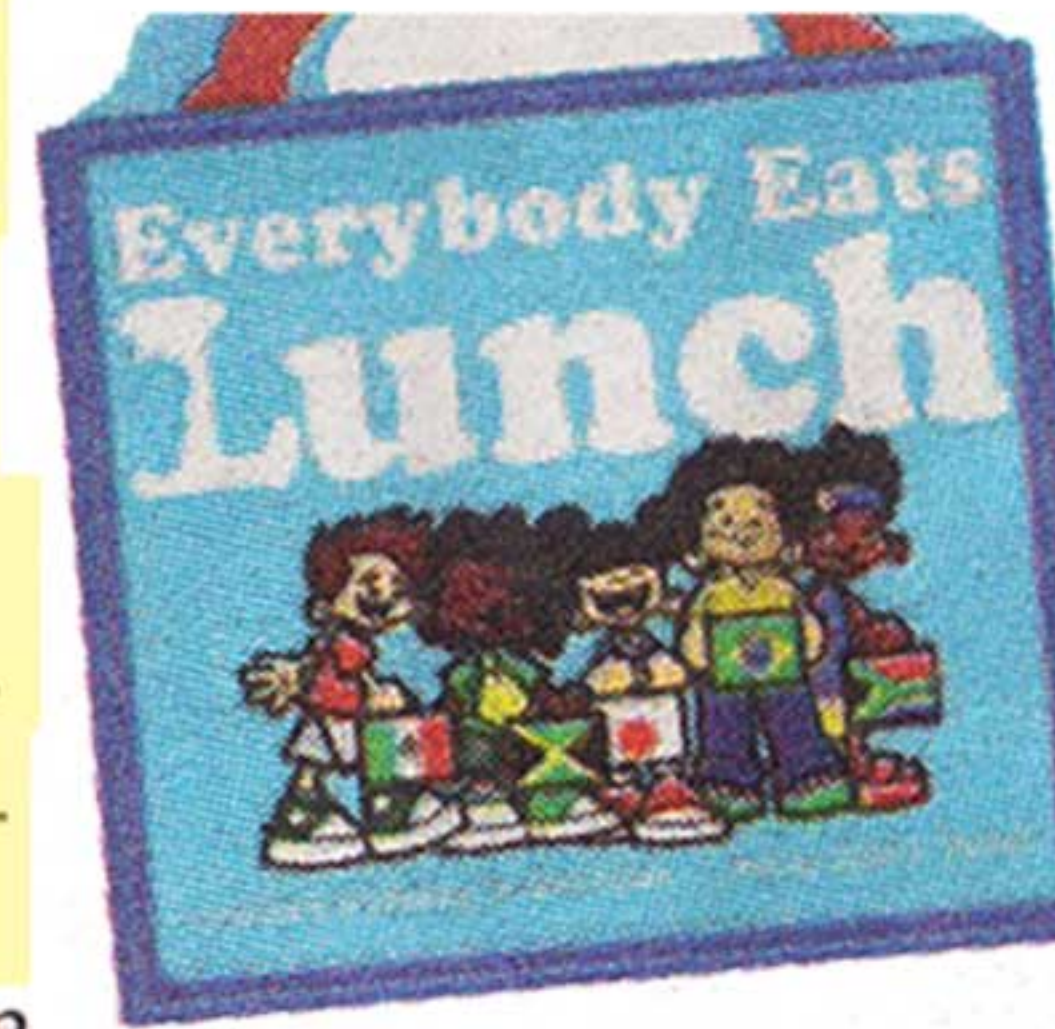
(dairy protein) free, a great option for parents trying to pack lunches for kids with sensitive diets.

Kids often enjoy assembling their own snacks at school from the ingredients you give them. Try a healthier version of a taco by packing containers with fresh chicken or turkey, whole-wheat tortillas, all natural salsa, shredded cheese and lettuce.

Fruit leather (essentially healthy Fruit Roll-Ups) and fruit cups are great because fresh fruit can get bumped around in a lunch bag, and it's hard to know if they are sweet. Many kids will take a bite and throw it out if it's not ripe and juicy.

Make sure to provide an alternative to candy, since forbidding sweets usually makes kids crave it more. Look for brands like Newman's Own and specialty and natural food store brands like Whole Foods and Trader Joe's.

Finally, think outside



"Everybody Eats Lunch" (Glitterati, \$12) by Cricket Azima helps kids get interactive with food.

of the box. Cricket Azima, founder of The Creative Kitchen, based in the city, and a children's cooking expert, offers exciting ways

to introduce global flavors using a healthy and fun approach in her interactive children's cook book, "Everybody Eats Lunch."

"Getting children involved in the process can make all the difference," she says. "It can be fun for everyone to learn new recipes while learning about social studies, geography and nutrition."

TRADE-OFFS

INSTEAD OF THIS

USE THIS

Potato chips

Veggie chips or soy crisps

Fruit Roll-Ups

Fruit leather and fruit packs

Processed white bread

Whole grains bread

Fruit drinks and sodas

Low fat milks (even flavored)

Processed meats and cold cuts

Nitrate free meats, and tofu-based protein

Candy bars

Energy bars and trail mix

High-fat/sugar yogurt

Low-fat Greek yogurt

BAG IT

Don't cut down any more trees for paper lunch bags. ECOBAGS® lunch sack is made from recycled natural cotton fibers (scraps are collected and woven into new canvas material) and is machine washable. \$9.99 from ecobags.com.

