

Lady About Town
Currently
Caroline

As the little ones head back to school our columnist and mum-of-three, Caroline Stanbury, talks nutritious packed lunches to keep energy levels high so the kids can conquer the school day



Putting the good stuff back into our kids, Caroline keeps everything in moderation when it comes to packing lunch for her brood

PHOTO: AASIYA JAGADEESH

I know that the whole philosophy of school food for children and getting them to eat healthily at school is a real dilemma for most parents.

It's a particular struggle for me because I can't cook, but like to know exactly what my children are eating during the day. Lunch is so important because in our house we literally whizz through breakfast and it's a mad rush getting everybody out of the door on time.

I need to know that they are going to be eating something nutritious at school that I can slightly control and the thing is that, even if the school meals are balanced, kids tend to swap food with their friends or just eat one part of it.

At the beginning of every term my cook and I draw up a weekly menu, which I keep for a month or two. It may sound boring, but we stick to it because children like to know what they are getting every day.

I have three children so I need each one of them to enjoy what they are eating – obviously I can't be cooking three different meals every day!

Because it's so hot here and I don't want to poison them, the food has to be simple, easy to prepare and taste good cold. So we stick to things like vegetable sushi, rice with cold sausages and homemade pizza, which is delicious cold.

There's a limit though – so I do buy some things, like hummus and some snacks.

Kids love snacks like crisps, but I have managed to get mine into healthy versions like vegetable chips. They always have fruit in their bags, too and I make healthy chocolate chip cookies as well.

They leave for school so early, they are out the house around 7. So because we want to avoid food sitting around all day in this heat with the bread getting soggy and horrible (I know I wouldn't want to eat a sandwich that had been made the night before so why should they?) I prefer it to be fresh on the day. I do a lot of healthy wraps with chicken and lettuce – everything is prepared each morning.

For me the most important thing is switching things out – with bread, if it's baked, I use wholemeal flour and I halve the amount of sugar in any given recipe. And everything is organic.

At the end of the day they are children so they do want crisps, I can't fight against that. Plus, if you take everything out they just become obsessed with it so I never say no, I just offer them healthier alternatives...

And there are so many now, it's much easier than it was. I understand a lot of people can't make things fresh every day, but if you have all the little healthy snacks and fruit to go in the lunchboxes then just make a sandwich, that's not hard or particularly time-consuming. **H**

Caroline Craves



#HealthySnacking

I buy these because they satisfy my kids' crisp cravings



#StayHydrated

Refillable bottles are a must and Camelbacks keep the water chilled, plus they don't leak



#KeepItFresh

These little boxes ensure snacks don't get hot and soggy



#NotSoSinfulChocolate

Kids like sweet treats, so keep it healthy with these tasty soya-based desserts



#PackItAway

This Coleman lunch box keeps food cool and fresh