

Irish mums lunch box guide for mums, by mums



 innocent



The Irish Mums Lunchbox Guide

Your child's body is growing which is why a filling lunch is so important. Every mum knows how hard it can be to provide your child with a nutritious lunch that doesn't end up coming home uneaten. Children get bored easily eating the same thing day in day out but they also need a lunch box that is healthy and well balanced. So, how exactly do you provide a healthy, well-balanced lunch box that kids will be happy to eat? Some MummyPages mums suggested the following:

- ask your child what foods she likes
- home-bake every once in a while and freeze scones and muffins in batches
- stock up on items like wraps, pitas, bagels which can be frozen.
- don't force your child to eat something she really doesn't like

There are a lot of healthy treats that your child can enjoy too such as homemade muffins and oatmeal cookies. In order to ensure you are packing a healthy, balanced lunchbox, you should try to include one item from each of the following categories: Tummy fillers, One of their five a day, dairy, snacks and our favourite MummyPages mums recipes too such as our pizza muffins or our ham, pineapple & cheese scrolls.

Thanks to all of the MummyPages.ie mums who contributed to this guide and we hope you find it useful.

Love from MummyPages.ie & innocent drinks

Tummy fillers

Growing kids need lots of starchy foods to fill them up and give them plenty of energy. Nutritious meals that are packed with fibre, protein, carbohydrates and vitamins will help your child's growing bones and give them that extra boost to keep them focused for the afternoon ahead. These, along with fruit and/ or vegetables, should form the main part of your child's lunch.

There really are a whole host of different options you can fill your child's lunchbox with, from wraps to quiche to pasta to leftover dinners. So, once you use your imagination there's really no excuse for daily cheese sandwiches. Here are some great ideas for main lunchbox fillers:

 **Think about what your child likes to eat at home and try to translate that into a lunchbox option** 

Tummy fillers

Sandwich/wrap/pita/Panini/bagel options:

- Tuna, sweetcorn and mayo
- Egg, mayo, diced onion, chopped tomato and chopped lettuce
- Chicken, sweet peppers, rocket and Caesar dressing
- Chicken and stuffing
- Roasted vegetables and pesto
- Turkey and stuffing with cranberry sauce
- Houmous and salad: Houmous, lettuce, cucumber and salad
- Prawn, avocado and mayo
- Ploughman's: cheddar cheese and pickle
- Bacon, tomato, avocado and cream cheese
- Chicken tikka: Cucumber, lettuce, spring onions, chicken tikka pieces and natural yoghurt
- Mozzarella, tomato and pesto
- Cream cheese, cucumber, sundried tomato and pesto
- Coronation chicken: chicken, mayo, a little curry powder, sultanas and mango chutney
- Chicken, houmous, avocado, cherry tomatoes and cheddar cheese
- Sliced strawberries and cream cheese
- Peanut butter and banana
- Smoked salmon, cream cheese and a little lemon
- Turkey, peppers and cream cheese
- Roast beef, grated carrot, lettuce and chutney

Ham, pineapple and cheese scrolls

Makes 12 scrolls

300g self-raising flour
Pinch of salt
90g butter, cut into cubes
160ml milk
Plain flour, to dust
60g pizza sauce
80g coarsely grated cheddar
150g sliced cooked ham, coarsely chopped
1 x 225g can pineapple pieces, drained
Extra milk, to brush

Preheat oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas 6. Line a baking tray with grease proof paper. Sieve the flour and salt into a large bowl.

Use your fingers to rub the butter into the flour until it looks like fine breadcrumbs. Add the milk and mix using a spoon until well combined and the mixture holds together.

Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth. Sprinkle flour on a rolling pin and roll out the dough into a 30 x 40cm rectangle. Spread the pizza sauce evenly over the dough, leaving a little room at the edge. Sprinkle with grated cheese, ham and pineapple.

Start from the long side, roll up until it forms a log and then brush the edge with milk. Press down firmly to seal and cut across into 12 equal portions. Place scrolls onto the tray and place to bake in a preheated oven for 25 - 30 minutes until golden brown. Take out of the oven and leave aside to cool.



Tummy fillers

Pasta, rice and other alternatives to sandwiches:

Some kids just don't like sandwiches, so even if you go to the trouble of cutting up your little munchkins tuna and sweetcorn sandwich into little star shapes, it's still going to come home uneaten. Don't despair however; there are lots of other delicious, easily prepared tummy fillers to pop into your fussy eater's lunchbox.

🍏 **While the humble apple is a great lunchbox filler (sturdy and hard to squash), consider cutting softer fruit up and putting it into a smaller container for protection** 💧💧

Pasta:

- Pasta salad with tomatoes, peppers, chives, cucumber and a little olive oil.
- Pasta salad with turkey, cooked broccoli, cherry tomatoes and a little soy sauce, honey and lemon juice
- Pasta with some cooked vegetables and a light coating of a tomato puree sauce

Tummy fillers

Rice/ couscous:

- Curried rice with raisins
- Rice with roasted aubergine, courgette, red onions, tomato and peppers
- Couscous with juice of half a lime, chopped chicken and chopped roasted peppers
- Couscous, feta cheese, pesto, red pepper, cucumber, toasted pine nuts, spring onions

Other yummy alternatives:

- Ham, cheese and pineapple scrolls
- Quiche Lorraine
- Quiche with mushrooms, leeks, onions, bacon, peppers and tomatoes
- Pizza pittas
- Sausage rolls
- Samosas
- Quesadillas
- Left-over homemade pizza
- Soups
- Baked potato with tuna and sweetcorn
- Pizza muffins
- Vegetable spring rolls
- Savoury scones

Pita pizzas

Makes 2 pita pizzas

4 wholewheat pita breads

4 tsp sun-dried tomato purée

3 ripe plum tomatoes, diced

1 shallot, thinly sliced

85g chorizo, diced

50g cheddar, grated

Few basil leaves, if desired

Heat oven to 200°C/400°F/gas 6 and place a baking sheet inside to warm. Spread each pita with 1 tsp of tomato purée. Top with the tomatoes, shallot, chorizo and cheddar.

Place on the baking tray and bake for 10 mins until the pittas are crisp, the cheese has melted and the chorizo has frazzled edges.

Scatter with basil, if you like, and serve with a green salad or pop into lunch boxes for a delicious alternative to a boring sandwich.

Chef's tip:

You can make them with whatever topping you like, ham and sweetcorn, ham and pineapple or cheese and tomato.



One of their five a day

Fruit and vegetables are an important part of a balanced diet, and it is important that we get at least five portions of these per day. This can be broken down easily into two fruits and three vegetables.

Fruit:

Whole fruit: Apple, orange, mandarin, satsuma, banana, peach, pear, plum, grapes, kiwi (provide teaspoon and cut in half)

Berries: Strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, cherries, blackberries

Chopped fruit: chop up banana, apple, pineapple, melon and grapes. Squeeze a little lemon juice over the fruit to keep from going brown and add some orange juice if desired.

Smoothies: Mix fruit, natural yoghurt and unsweetened orange juice. Add ice-cubes to keep it cold.

Dried: Raisins, sultanas, dates, mango, banana, pineapple, prunes Homemade fruit purée or apple sauce (you can add strawberries, peaches or raspberries to it, etc. Fruit jelly made with fruit juice and real fruit pieces Tinned fruit served in a container with a lid; pears, peaches, apricots, mandarins, fruit salad and

One of their five a day

pineapple are all wonderful choices for days when you're stuck. Fruit skewers with honey and yoghurt dip

“My kids will eat a lot more veg raw than cooked – add in a few runner beans, cherry tomatoes or chopped carrots for a change”

Vegetables:

Sticks: Carrot, cucumber, peppers, celery and dip, try natural yoghurt, houmous, cream cheese, guacamole, soured cream.

Soup: Homemade vegetable soups in a flask; carrot and coriander, tomato, vegetable or butternut squash are all great options.

Mixed: Make a salad containing any of the following: lettuce, avocado, mangetout, tomato, cherry tomatoes, sweetcorn, coleslaw, beetroot, carrot, peppers, pulses or potatoes.

Raspberry buns

Makes 12 buns

150g butter
150g icing sugar
50g plain flour
100g ground almonds
2 eggs
approx 40-50 raspberries

Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/ gas 3. Melt the butter and leave aside to cool. Place muffin cases in a tin. Sieve the icing sugar, flour and ground almonds together. Beat the eggs and add to the mixture. Add the cooled melted butter and combine well, it should resemble a soft batter.

Pour into the muffin cases and dot each cake with 4 or 5 raspberries. Transfer to the oven and cook for 15-20 minutes until the cakes are firm in the centre. Remove them from the tins. Dust them with icing sugar.

Chef's tip:

These raspberry cakes are so easy to make and will keep well for a few days. You can vary the recipe by adding blackberries, strawberries or blueberries.





Snacks & Dairy

Snacks:

• Falafel • Sliced hard-boiled egg • Mini sausages/ cocktail sausage-rolls • Crackers/ rice cakes with cream cheese or a slice of cheese • Sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds • Pitta crisps and dip • Scones: wholemeal, plain, cheese or fruit. Add a little pot of fruit jam, lemon curd, cheese spread, pesto or butter to the lunchbox. • Chicken goujons with homemade tomato ketchup • Cheesy biscuits • Bread sticks

Dairy:

• Fruit yoghurts, fromage frais or dairy-free alternative • Cubes of cheese or pre-boxed lunchbox sized cheese portion • Cold rice pudding • Greek/plain yoghurt with fruit purée • Drinkable yoghurts

 **Dairy can be hard to include, particularly in hot weather. If you can't safely get a yoghurt into the lunch box, make sure you offer dairy when she comes home from school** 

Occasional Healthier Treats

 **Last night's leftovers in a container with a small spoon can make a welcome change to the parade of endless sandwiches** 

Occasional healthier treats:

Sometimes it's okay to surprise your little one with an occasional sweet or savoury treat. Even though they aren't as healthy as other lunchbox staples, they're still far healthier than junk food.

• Banana bread, mini pancakes, brioche, waffles • Flapjacks, preferably homemade as some shop bought flapjacks can contain as much sugar as a chocolate bar • Oatmeal cookies or plain cookies • Muffins; plain or with fruit • Fairy cakes • Homemade popcorn (natural) • Homemade vegetable crisps • Homemade muesli bars • Homemade chocolate spread • Homemade fruit winders

Melting fajita quesadillas

Makes 4 quesadillas

Counts towards your 5 a day

1 tbsp sunflower oil

1/2 each red, yellow, and green pepper, finely sliced

1 medium courgette, sliced

6 spring onions, sliced finely

1 x 198g sweetcorn, drained

2 tbsp fajita seasoning

200g cooked chicken breast, shredded

Handful coriander, chopped

175g Cheddar, grated

8 flour tortillas

Heat a little oil in the pan and tip in the peppers, courgette and onions. Fry for 3 minutes, stirring. Add the sweetcorn and fajita seasoning and cook for approximately 1 minute. Stir in the chicken and heat through, add the coriander.

Scatter half the cheese over the flour tortillas and divide the filling between them. Add the remaining cheese and place the other tortilla on top. Press down and fry each over a medium heat for 2-3 minutes on each side. Slice and serve with salad and guacamole.

Chef's Tip:

For a vegetarian version, swap the chicken with 200g button mushrooms, sliced and fried in a little oil until golden.



Packing up lunches

It's important to ensure that when packing lunches everything is wrapped and separate containers are used. Nobody wants to eat a soggy sandwich. Use little containers with lids that fit inside a larger lunchbox.

Sandwich bags are also handy and can be reused if washed.

It's a good idea to pop water-bottles in the freezer the night before to keep everything chilled.

Remember, kids eat with their eyes so if their lunch looks unappealing, chances are they won't eat it.

It may seem cheesy but bring a smile to your child's face by leaving a little note inside their lunch box.

Three steps to an innocent lunchbox

1 innocent smoothies for kids

Our kids' smoothies are made from **nothing but whole crushed fruit and pure juices**. No colourings, no sweeteners, no preservatives or any weird stuff whatsoever. Each recipe is packed full of kids' favourite fruits and juices and absolutely **no bits at all**. What's more, every carton contains **one portion of fruit** making them completely lunchbox proof and much easier than hiding a pineapple in a lasagne.



2 innocent juicy drink

Our new innocent juicy drink is a delicious, refreshing and healthy blend of **100% pure fruit juice, a dash of spring water and absolutely nothing else**. Every carton contains 1 of your 5-a-day and no concentrates, additives, flavourings or any weird stuff whatsoever. They're the most natural kids' drink going. **Perfect for lunchboxes** and picnics, with two tasty recipes to choose from – apple and orange – there's no better way to **refresh your kids**.

3 innocent fruit tubes for kids

We've been making healthy drinks for kids for a while now and lots of mums and dads told us they wanted **healthy snacks for lunchboxes** to help get even more fruit into their kids. Plus lots of kids told us they liked squeezey things. So we combined both ideas and came up with innocent fruit tubes for kids: **100% pure fruit puree and a dash of juice** in a handy squeezey tube.



For more details on our products and nutritional information head over to www.innocentdrinks.ie

Pizza Muffins

**Makes 12 to 24
depending on size**

Counts towards your 5 a
day

80ml milk

80g melted butter

1 egg

250g natural yoghurt

1 tsp oregano

300g self raising flour

200g grated mature
cheddar

45g chopped sundried or
sun blushed tomatoes

4 spring onions –
chopped finely

4 bacon rashers - grilled
and diced

Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6. Line a muffin tray with 12 paper cases or if preferred, you could get nearly 24 smaller buns sizes out of this recipe.

Using a large bowl, add the milk, melted butter, egg, yoghurt and oregano. Sieve in the flour and mix until combined – be gentle.

Finally, stir in spring onions, sundried tomatoes, bacon and cheese. The mixture will be thick and lumpy.

Spoon into the prepared paper cases and bake for 20 minutes until golden brown. Remove from the oven and allow to cool in the tray for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool fully.

Chef's Tip:

They freeze really well and are a great addition to any, previously boring, lunchbox.



Lemon and coriander houmous

Serves 4-6

2 x 400g chickpeas in water, drained

2 fat garlic cloves, roughly chopped

3 tbsp Greek yoghurt

3 tbsp tahini paste

3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Zest and juice of 2 lemons

20g coriander

Tip everything excluding the coriander into a food processor, then blitz to a fairly smooth paste.

Season with salt and pepper generously, then add the coriander and pulse until mixed.

Drizzle with a little olive oil and transfer into a container with a lid. Serve with vegetable crudités or pita chips.





Thanks to all of the *MummyPages.ie* mums who have shared their best lunchbox ideas to create this guide.