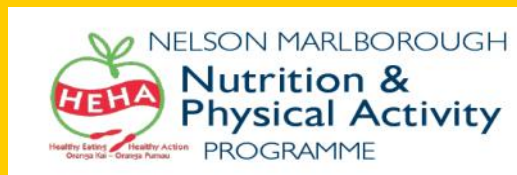




HEALTHY ETHNIC FOOD LUNCHES



**EXPLORE THE WORLD IN A
HEALTHY AND YUMMY WAY**





Dear readers,

We would like to share with you the benefits of putting ethnic foods into your children's lunchbox (and your's too!) — this is not just about nutritional benefits but about making your diet more diverse and adding fun and excitement into making and especially eating food — the most important daily occupation in our lives.

Whether you have much time or not, we believe that the information and recipes you find here will enrich your lives, so please share this with your family and friends and help to make everyone's children eat wholesome and tasty lunches.

As our planet is becoming increasingly smaller and we live amongst people from many different countries and cultures, food is a great way to break down barriers and to open up to each other — sharing and caring for our children and families and the importance of eating well is something we all have in common!

The recipes are designed for the lunchbox — whether they be leftovers from last night's dinner or freshly prepared snacks — if you combine them wisely — you will always be able to offer your children (and yourself!) a tasty, nutritious, diverse and inexpensive meal.

Enjoy! Bon appétit! Dober tek! En guete! Sen Sep! Buen provecho!

Your nutrition project team



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Please note:

In all recipes:

tsp=teaspoon, Tbsp=Tablespoon

Salt and pepper are to taste, chilli and sugar are given as guide quantities only.

Photos opposite page from <http://lunchinabox.net>

Introduction: Nutrition and ethnic foods

Nourishing foods are indispensable for our children to grow well. It is equally important that children feel comfortable to eat the healthy food they know and like — also if this is food from a different country.

So, with financial help from the Nelson Marlborough District Health Board's Nutrition and Physical Activity Programme, we have decided to compile this little booklet, to help you to know more about the elements of good, healthy food and to realize that it is important that children don't get bullied and ridiculed for the ethnic, 'exotic' food they bring to school. Most importantly, we want to give you an opportunity to try out some more exotic, ethnic foods yourself and to help you to get your children to learn about the world and its amazing diversity through the food they eat every day!

We have combined recipes, cultural, country and nutritional information in this booklet. So please join us on this journey around the globe!

How to combine food for good nutrition

Good nutrition comes from a diverse and well balanced diet. This is especially important for children who still have so much growing to do and whose bones, brains, muscles and nerves are in an extremely formative period.

The main elements of a diverse and balanced diet for your child are — to eat every day:

- **Some protein** (for example fish, meat, eggs, grains, pulses)
- **Some carbohydrates** (for example pasta, potatoes, rice)
- **Some dairy products** (for example yogurt, milk, cheese)
- **Lots of fresh fruit and lots of fresh vegetables**
- **Very little refined sugar** (raw sugar or honey is better than white sugar)
- **Very few processed foods** (for example takeaways, ready made foods)
- **Best drinks: water, fresh fruit juice, good quality milk**

It is important for your child to have a nourishing and healthy breakfast at home (for example cereal and milk, muesli with yogurt and fruit, fresh fruit juice) and to take a filling and satisfying lunch along for the day (including snacks for morning and afternoon teas). It is better to have a light dinner, not too late at night, so your child sleeps well. In many parts of the world the wise saying goes: **“Eat breakfast like an emperor, eat lunch like a king and eat dinner like a pauper.”**

How and where to shop

Try to buy food that is as unprocessed as possible. A lot of processed foods are high in additives, refined sugars and unhealthy fats. These don't benefit the health and growth of your children and often have an adverse effect on your children's moods and energy levels.

Whenever possible try and buy fresh produce (vegetables and fruit) and cook meals from unprocessed food — 'from scratch' (see next page for more information.) Also ensure that your children drink enough fluids, whenever possible water, fresh fruit juices and good quality milk. The supermarkets in town (New World, Countdown, SuperValue, Fresh Choice, Four Square) have most of the things you need for feeding your children, but you may like to go to 'Essential Asian Ingredients' (they also have organic foods available) on Queen St. or the Bin Inn on Seymour St. (both in Blenheim) for example, for some of the more exotic ingredients in the recipes that follow.

Even though food is often the largest expense in your household budget, remember that high quality produce and whole foods are more nourishing than highly processed and budget items and will keep your shopping costs down over time—and your health up!

Quality is always preferable to quantity, as the German proverb goes: **We are what we eat!**

Home gardening

Lots of pre-schools/schools have started 'edible gardens' projects. Perhaps you would also like to start growing your own vegetables in your home garden?

It is a great way to spend time together as a family and there is great amazement and joy for children in seeing things grow from a little, tiny seed. You can start with just planting a few herbs in a planter box (for example chives, parsley) and you could grow a few vegetables that children love to snack on, for example cherry tomatoes and little crunchy carrots. Many people in foreign countries grow their own produce (fruit, vegetables and herbs) at home and love to do it here also. It is a good way to stay fit and to keep the grocery bill as low as possible.

It is great to be able to appreciate the taste of your own healthy produce, where you know exactly what went into them. Let your child have its own little garden patch and grow a giant pumpkin for starters, you will see they will be enjoying it more than you! Check out the last pages of this booklet for some more information sources and places to go to find out about putting in an 'edible garden' at your home.

Cooking from ‘scratch’ - Whole foods and other healthy facts

Ideal lunches are made up of freshly prepared snacks (for example walnut balls, sandwiches, rolls, home made popcorn, a hardboiled egg, sticks of carrots, celery or red pepper, whole foods (for example a little bag of nuts and dried fruit) or leftovers from dinner that do not need to be reheated (for example use leftover pasta for a pasta salad).

It is always better and healthier to prepare food from the basic ingredients (from ‘scratch’) than to buy ready made meals. This doesn’t mean you have to spend many hours cooking or that you can only give your child bland foods. On the contrary, in the recipes that follow you will find many very delicious and easy to make, interesting and nourishing meals.

It can also be fun to cook together and to encourage your children to make healthy things on their own, so they can help themselves to healthy snacks when they come home from school.

Protein: essential for the growth, maintenance and repair of tissues cartilage in all part of the body (sources: meat, chickpeas, lentils for example)

Fat: source of energy and needed for growth and health, help body to absorb some vitamins (for example vitamin A) (sources: nuts, milk, butter, cheese for example)

Carbohydrates: Pasta, rice and couscous contain very good carbohydrates for your child, it doesn’t always have to be potatoes. Chickpeas, lentils and nuts, lean meat and seafood all contain protein and minerals. Whole meal bread is better than white bread – you could try a German style rye bread for a change, Middle Eastern pita bread (pita pockets) or a corn bread for example.

Omega-3: prevention of cardiovascular disease (sources: fish, flax seed oil for example)

Iron: necessary for formation of red blood cells (sources: meat, rolled oats, vegetables)

Vitamin A: prevents infection, important for vision, to maintain normal skin health — good sources are fish, carrots and liver for example.

Vitamin C: very important for the growth, maintenance and repair of tissues, blood vessels and cartilage in all parts of the body – sources: fruit and vegetables.

Vitamin D: very important for the healthy formation of bones, main source is direct sunlight.

Vitamin E: prevents cardiovascular disease, is involved in the formation of red blood cells, helps body to use vitamin K. (sources: fish for example)

Calcium: very important for bone formation and structure (sources: milk, cheese, yogurt)

Other elements/minerals such as zinc, iodine, selenium, folate are important also. As long as you provide and eat a diverse and balanced diet with lots of fruit and vegetables you should get a sufficient amount of all of these.

How to present food

Children like visually pleasing things, so if their nice lunchbox is filled with yummy looking things they will be far more likely to eat it. Check out the pictures of the amazing looking lunchboxes on the first page – I don't think anyone would not want to eat those!

Children also compare themselves to other children—and no one wants to be ridiculed for what is in their lunchbox. Consequently children may stop eating some healthy foods. Try to speak to other parents and teachers about the importance for you to include ethnic foods in your child's lunchbox. You could also try to convince your school to introduce 'once a week' ethnic food lunches, so children get used to the idea of eating different foods and that there is no reason to ridicule or bully anyone.

Just because local people eat certain things doesn't mean these are healthy things — you can be proud of the 'nutritional heritage' you bring to this place — and please share it with others!

Children can also be very firm about what they do not like — try not to force them to eat anything they do not want — perhaps you can come up with a way to dress things up they didn't like initially or didn't even want to try in the first place. But if your attitude to food is positive and you are excited about ethnic foods your child will be far more likely to enjoy it also!

Here are some other useful tips:

- Buy a nice looking lunchbox (with compartments) that your child likes.
- Chop fruit into nice, bite sized pieces — children are far more likely to eat an apple if it is cut into manageable pieces (add lemon juice to prevent from going brown).
- Cut vegetables, fruit and sandwiches into exciting shapes, for example carrot flowers or teddy bear sandwiches.
- Put toothpicks into things, children like picking things up with toothpicks.
- Give your child different things to snack on — small portions but lots of variety (for example little yogurt packs, bag of nuts and dried fruit)
- Don't force your child to eat anything it doesn't like — instead you could create the house rule: **“Everything new we try at least one bite of”**

And remember it is all about balance, variety and the enjoyment and wellbeing that good, healthy food brings!

Recipes from around the Globe



South and Central America

In Brazil, whether at home or in a restaurant, meals are always a special time – for eating, but also to share precious moments with family and friends. In Brazil lunch is usually a more substantial meal and as important as dinner – some people usually have a lighter meal for dinner. Because most of the schools are ‘part-time’, children are able to eat their lunch with their family at home. Most public schools provide a balanced meal during the morning break. This is why many Brazilian migrants find it really difficult to prepare their children’s lunchbox. Usually children would eat their lunch — Brazilian style — at home after school. Brazilians also eat dinner later in the evening than New Zealanders.

Brazilian food tends to be a blend of cultural backgrounds (European, Japanese, Middle Eastern, African) and because Brazil is a huge country, there is an enormous variety of food. The basic meal for Brazilians consists of rice and beans, followed by meat or fish, vegetables, salads. Food is always cooked with seasoning, garlic, onion and herbs.

For more options about Brazilian and South America food go to:

http://gosouthamerica.about.com/od/cuisine/Latin_American_Cuisine_Food_and_Drink.htm

Pao de Queijo—cheese balls (Brazil)

Superdelicious and ‘very Brazilian’ little cheesy treats.

1 cup of water

1 cup of milk

1/2 cup of oil

1 teaspoon of salt

450 g of tapioca starch

2 to 3 eggs

200 g of grated parmesan cheese (you can also use tasty cheese)

Bring the water, the milk, the oil and the salt to the boil in a big pot. Remove the pot from the heat and add the tapioca starch. Mix well with a wooden spoon and let it cool down.

Put the mixture in a bowl, add the eggs and knead well. Add the grated cheese and keep kneading until the dough is smooth.

Roll 1 tablespoon of mixture into a small ball. Tip: Grease your hands with oil before making the balls. Wash your hands once in a while if necessary.

Place the balls on a baking tray greased with oil or lined with baking paper.

Bake the cheese rolls in a hot oven (200 degrees) for about 20 minutes or until golden brown.

Bolinhos de arroz— Rice cakes (Brazil)

Ideal tasty snacks for the lunchbox — go very well with a nice salad.

2 cups of cooked rice (Brazilians cook their rice with seasoning)

1 Tbsp diced onion

1 garlic clove crushed

2 Tbsp of spring onion (you can add parsley or other herbs)

2 eggs

1 cup of flour

Salt to taste

Mix all the ingredients and form balls. You can bake these on an oven tray in a medium hot oven for 30 minutes or deep fry them in hot canola oil.

Torta facil— versatile pie (Brazil)

Here is the Brazilian version of 'the pie' — which is such a popular dish in New Zealand. Great to prepare in the evening and to put a slice in your lunchbox the next day (if there is anything left!) — perfectly nutritious with a tasty salad and a piece of fruit for dessert.

Mixture for bottom and top:

3 eggs

1 cup of canola oil

2 cups of flour

1 tsp of salt

2 Tbsp of grated cheese

2 cups of milk

1 Tbsp of baking powder

Salt according to your taste (we recommend a small tsp)

Mix all ingredients in a blender.

For the filling:

You can use cooked chicken breast or minced beef, tuna, ham and cheese, always also include vegetables of your choice (you can use mixed vegetables or so). Also add tomatoes, finely sliced onions, olives and fresh or dried herbs (parsley, basil, coriander or mint) to taste.

Grease an oven proof dish with oil. Spread half the mixture evenly; add the filling and then top with the other half of the mixture. You can sprinkle grated cheese on top. Bake in a pre-heated oven (180C) for about 35 minutes.

Guacamole (Mexico)

A delicious dip or spread, with nachos, crisps, sliced carrots or celery.

2 ripe avocados

1 tomato, peeled and finely chopped

1 Tbsp of olive oil

1 Tbsp lemon or lime juice

1 small onion, sliced very finely (optional)

Little chilli powder, paprika powder and/or chopped fresh parsley/coriander (optional)

Salt and pepper

Mash the scooped out avocado with a fork and add tomato (chilli and onion if you like), olive oil, lemon/lime juice and salt and pepper. Mix everything until it becomes a creamy dip.

Empanadas – Lentil or cheese turnovers (Chile)

These tasty filled turnovers are easily prepared in the evening and (if there are any left!) will make a great lunch, with a salad or chopped fresh vegetables.

225 g flaky pastry (thawed if frozen pastry)

Filling 1:

1 cup red lentils, cooked

1 onion, chopped

1 clove garlic, chopped

1 Tbsp oil

1/2 tsp chilli powder

1/2 cup sultanas/raisins

1/4 tsp marjoram

2 Tbsp tomato paste

1-2 Tbsp lemon juice

1/4 tsp paprika

Salt and pepper

Filling 2:

1 cup cheese, grated

1 hard boiled egg, chopped

2 cardamom pods seeds, crushed

Salt and pepper

Mix together all these ingredients in a bowl.

Heat oil in a pan and fry onion and garlic until soft. Add chilli powder, cooked lentils, tomato paste and raisins/sultanas. Sprinkle in paprika, marjoram, add lemon juice and cook on low heat until everything is well combined. Season with salt and pepper.

Heat oven to 200C. Roll out pastry on a floured surface and cut into circles about 10cm across, using a saucer or a small bowl. How many you make depends on how thin you like the pastry.

Cover one half of each circle with filling (filling 1 or filling 2 or any other filling you like) – then brush the edges with a little water and fold the empanada together, pressing the sides closed with a fork. Place the empanadas in a shallow baking tin and put into oven for about 35 minutes, until pastry is golden brown.

Europe



Little Pizzas

The Italians invented a wonderful and well loved and known snack! Take some pita bread or a pizza base (whole meal if you like) and spread on it some tomato puree, top with freshly chopped veges, herbs, ham or salami, olives and grated cheese. Bake or grill in the oven at 180C for 10 mins or so. Buon appetito!

Omelet sandwich

Another popular and easy European snack is the simple omelet sandwich. Take some bread (cut a nice whole meal bun in half, a pita bread or take two slices of whole meal toast). Beat an egg or two, add a little milk, add some salt and pepper and some herbs (chives or parsley) and fry in a little olive oil until you have a nice golden omelet. And 'voila' here is a yummy and healthy lunch! Bon appétit!

'Potee' with potatoes (Belgium)

The "Potee" (pronounced "Potae" in English) is a classic traditional food all over Belgium, and every region has its own recipe (for example potee Liegeoise from Liege). Originally the Potee is a meal that is prepared in a "pottery pot". However, nowadays it is a meal that mixes meat, vegetables and potatoes, prepared often during winter. This dish has low calories (337 Kcal per serve), has vitamins A, C, and E and is particularly rich in vitamin A. Makes 4 servings, Preparation time: 20 minutes, Cooking time: 1 hour 30.

600 g of lean pork, cubed

3 onions, sliced

3 carrots, sliced

4 potatoes, sliced

Aromatic herbs (for example bay leaves, rosemary) - optional

Salt, pepper

1 tsp olive oil

25 ml water (or dry white wine if for adults)

Peel, wash and slice potatoes, carrots, and onions. Oil the terracotta pot, and layer the sliced vegetables, pork and add salt and pepper to each layer. Add herbs and water (or wine). Cover the pot and bake for 1 ½ hours at 180C. Serve with seasonal salad. Bon Appétit!

Polpete – tasty hamburgers (Slovenia)

Hamburgers are eaten in all sorts of versions all around the world. They are easy to prepare in advance and make a very tasty lunch when combined with some bread and vegetables. This version is from Slovenia, which is a small country (population: 2 million) in Central Europe (neighbouring Hungary, Croatia, Italy and Austria).

500g lean minced beef

1–2 eggs, beaten

1 onion, finely chopped

Fresh herbs (such as parsley)

Salt and pepper

Some flour on a plate

Some oil for frying

Combine the minced beef, chopped onion, fresh herbs, salt and pepper and beaten eggs (if mixture is too wet add a little sifted flour). Form patties and dust with flour on both sides, pan fry until golden brown and cooked in the middle (about 5 mins each side). These are delicious eaten cold also and keep in an airtight container in the fridge for a couple of days. Dober tek!

Bircher muesli (Switzerland)

This is world-famous Swiss health food! Not everyone likes it – but if you do, it is extremely healthy and nourishing. Easy to prepare in advance and eaten cold, it also contains protein, carbohydrates and is full of vitamins and minerals. (serves four)

2.5 cups rolled oats

1.5 cups apple juice

1 apple, grated

0.5 cup low fat natural unsweetened yoghurt

Juice of 1 lemon

Some almonds, flaked and toasted (optional)

0.5 cup of mixed berries (optional)

1 cup fresh peaches or apricots, slices (optional)

2 Tbsp of honey or raw sugar

Place oats and apple juice in a bowl. Allow to soak for 2 hours or overnight in the fridge. Stir in grated apple, yogurt and lemon juice and mix well. Place into serving bowl (lunchbox) and top with toasted almonds, fresh fruit (with whatever you enjoy) and sprinkle with some sugar or even better drizzle with honey. En Guete!

Middle East



The Middle East comprises many different countries, cultures, religions and languages and is often called the ‘cradle of civilization’.

The Middle East has some very healthy and delicious dishes to offer for your lunchbox. Even though much land in the Middle East is very dry, citrus (lemons and oranges) and herbs (for example parsley, mint) are very popular. Chickpeas, flat breads (pita bread), rice and tahini (sesame seed paste) are very commonly eaten. The spices used are coriander, cardamom, ground cumin, cinnamon and paprika.

Hummus (Lebanon)

Hummus is a tasty dip or a very healthy and nutritious spread in pita bread, to eat with carrot sticks for example.

1.5 cups of chickpeas, soaked & cooked (or tinned)

1 Tbsp tahini (this is sesame seed paste – you could use smooth peanut butter instead)

Little milk

Juice of 1–2 lemons

Olive oil

Salt and pepper

Chopped fresh parsley or coriander (optional)

1–2 cloves of garlic, crushed (optional)

1 tsp sesame seeds (optional)

Puree the cooked chickpeas in a blender together with tahini paste (garlic if you like), little milk, oil, salt and pepper to make a smooth but not runny mixture. Empty the mixture into a bowl and adjust the taste if necessary, adding more lemon juice or salt according to your preference.

Facts about chickpeas:

Chickpeas are a legume or pulse (same family as beans and lentils). Chickpeas probably originate from what now is Turkey and were taken overland to India. India is the main producer of chickpeas today.

Chickpeas are very nutritious and healthy and high in good protein.

Beid Mahshi – Stuffed eggs (Egypt)

These easy to make stuffed eggs will make a good and tasty protein dish for your child's lunchbox. Great with lettuce leaves.

4 hardboiled eggs, shelled
1–2 tsp sugar
1 tsp ground cinnamon
Handful of freshly chopped parsley
1 cup yoghurt
1 small onion finely chopped
2–3 Tbsp of olive oil
Pinch of paprika
Lettuce leaves
Salt & pepper

Pour the yoghurt into a small bowl and mix in sugar and sprinkle half the cinnamon on top. Cut hardboiled eggs in half lengthwise and scoop out yolk and put in a separate bowl. Mash the yolks with a fork and mix in chopped parsley and onion—then add the olive oil, rest of cinnamon, the paprika, salt and pepper and mix well until smooth. Spoon some of each mixture into each of the egg white half and place on a lettuce leaf. Spoon a little yoghurt-cinnamon dressing on top of eggs and enjoy.

Hab el Jose – Walnut Balls (Turkey)

This is a specialty from the city of Antakya, formerly Antioch, an early centre of Christianity in Turkey. Easy to make, nourishing and don't require baking or cooking. Great with a side of chopped fresh veges or a salad. These are great fun to make with your children.

1 cup ground walnuts
0.5 cup breadcrumbs
0.5 tsp ground cumin
1 Tbsp Tahini (sesame seed paste)
Little chilli powder and paprika (optional) and salt and pepper
1 Tbsp of finely chopped fresh mint (optional)
0.5 cup of sesame seeds

Mix the ground walnuts, breadcrumbs and ground cumin in a bowl. Add tahini paste to make a soft paste and flavour with chilli powder (if you like it spicy), salt and pepper, paprika and finely chopped mint. Shake the sesame seeds on a plate. Grease your fingers with some olive oil and take up small pieces of the paste, shaping them into walnut-sized balls by rolling them between your palms. Trail each walnut ball in the sesame seeds to coat them — and enjoy!

Mutabbal – Eggplant dip (Palestine)

This is a great dip or spread for the whole family. Very tasty in pita bread or with crackers and some chopped veges on the side.

450g eggplant
3 cloves of crushed garlic
1–2 Tbsp of tahini (sesame seed paste)
Juice of 2 lemons
1 tsp ground cumin
1 Tbsp olive oil
a few black olives
1 Tbsp freshly chopped parsley
Salt and pepper

Facts about eggplant:

Eggplants are thought to come from India originally and have been known in China since the 5th century BC. Taken to Africa by Arab and Persian traders it is now widely grown in many warm countries. It has many uses including medicinal ones and is a great vegetable to cook with.

Heat oven to 190C. Make several slits in the skin of the eggplant and put them in the oven for 30–40 mins until the skins are very dark and flesh feels soft when squeezed. Set them aside to cool. When cool, scoop the eggplant flesh into a bowl. Mash with a fork, add garlic and salt and pepper to taste. Add tahini and lemon juice and mix very well or blend in a food processor. Then sprinkle the cumin on top, pour over olive oil, and garnish with olives or parsley.

Tabouleh – Bulgur salad (Lebanon)

This is a very healthy and filling salad. You can omit the olives and replace them with chopped green peppers if you prefer. It can be prepared in advance and stored in the fridge in an airtight container for a few days.

1 cup of bulgur or cracked wheat (soaked and cooked as to packet instructions)
450 g tomatoes, cubed
1 finely sliced onion
Handful of freshly chopped parsley
Handful of freshly chopped mint
6 Tbs olive oil
Juice of 2–3 lemons
1 cup black or green olives
Salt and pepper

Put the prepared bulgur in a bowl and mix well with chopped tomatoes, onion, parsley and mint. In a smaller bowl beat the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Then pour over the salad and mix thoroughly. Add the olives (or green peppers) and chill the salad for 2 hours before eating.

Africa



Africa is a most amazing and diverse continent with over fifty countries. A lot of its people eat very basic foods. They would commonly eat staple foods (millet, peanuts) for protein and carbohydrates, with a little sauce of veges (for example tomatoes), fish and/or meat if available. Here are two recipes that are both high in protein and easy to take to school for lunch or a snack. You could combine them with a nice home-made tomato sauce or serve with some jam, cheese, marmite or any other spread your child likes.

Nut bread

- 4 Tbsp finely chopped nuts (walnuts, almonds or cashew nuts)**
- 3 cups flour**
- 4 tsp baking powder**
- 2 Tbsp raw sugar**
- Salt**
- 1 egg**
- 1.5 cups milk**

Heat oven to 180C. Sieve flour, baking powder into a bowl and add sugar and salt. Crack the egg into a second bowl, beat it and stir in the milk. Now pour this into the bowl with the dry ingredients and mix. Add chopped peanuts and blend them well into the mixture. Spoon this into a greased tin and leave it to stand for 20 mins. Put the bread into oven and bake for an hour and let it cool on a wire tray before eating.

Soybean scones

Soybean flour is high in protein and low in carbohydrates. In this recipe it is mixed with wheat flour.

- 1 cup soybean flour**
- 3.5 cups wheat flour**
- Salt**
- 1 egg**
- 2 Tbsp sugar**
- Little milk or water**
- Tbsp cooking oil**

Mix the soybean and wheat flour in a bowl, add a little salt. In a separate bowl, beat egg and sugar together and then stir this into the flour mix, adding enough milk or water to make a stiff dough. Heat some oil in a heavy pan and carefully put in spoonfuls of the mixture. Let these cook on both sides for about 10 minutes until done. Repeat until all the mixture is used up and serve hot or cold with a main dish or with jam or jelly.

Asia

Asia is spread out over a huge area of land, with numerous countries, hundreds of different ethnicities and languages. Most of the exotic food consumed in New Zealand is inspired by the Asian cuisine (Chinese, Japanese, Indian). Here are some interesting, simple and healthy options your children and family will grow very fond of.



Rempah – Spicy hamburger (Indonesia)

The spicy version of the popular burger—play around with spices. You could also add some chilli powder or paprika, fresh basil, parsley or coriander.

- 450 g minced beef or lamb**
- 1 1/4 cup desiccated coconut**
- 1 clove garlic, crushed**
- 1/2 tsp ground coriander (optional)**
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin**
- 1 egg beaten**
- little flour**
- 1 Tbsp oil**
- Salt and pepper**

Put the coconut in a small bowl and pour over enough boiling water to cover it. Leave for 15 minutes and squeeze out the excess liquid. Put coconut in a larger bowl. Add the minced meat, garlic, spices and beaten egg so that they combine well. Divide the mixture into 12 burger patties. Sprinkle the flour onto a plate and dust the patties on both sides. Then either fry or broil/grill them for 5 minutes in each side. Serve with rice, or inside pitas together with a salad.

Miso potatoes

This makes a good alternative to chips and fries.

- 4 medium potatoes, cut into chip/French fry shape**
- 1 Tbsp miso paste**
- 1 Tbsp oil**
- 2 Tbsp margarine, melted**

Heat oven to 180C.

Mix the miso with the melted margarine in a bowl. Spoon the oil into an oven-proof dish which has a tight fitting lid and add the cut potatoes. Pour the miso-margarine mixture over the potatoes and stir gently to coat the potatoes. Cover and bake for about 20 minutes or until the potatoes are tender.

Miso shiro — Miso paste

Miso is a fermented paste, made from soybeans or barley. It has a long history in China and Japan, being rich in protein and considered good for the digestion. It is quite salty and can be used in soups, sauces, spreads and other dishes.

Miso Spread

A great and simple but very tasty spread on crackers or bread of your choice.

Combine 2 Tbsp of tahini paste

1–2 Tbsp of miso paste (white miso paste is particularly nice)

and add a little lemon juice

Vietnamese Spring Rolls

Very tasty, simple and healthy. Great for a summertime lunch.

12 medium rice paper wrappers

Place a rice paper wrapper in a bowl of hot water for about 30 seconds or until it has softened enough to roll. Pat dry and place on a flat surface. Then fill with:

- **Spicy chicken filling and vegetables:** Combine 1 Tbsp fresh ginger, 1 red chilli finely chopped and 400g lean chicken breast — and fry this in 1 tsp of oil. Place some chicken, cucumber and carrot (both cut into fine sticks), lettuce (shredded), coriander, mint leaves and spring onions (finely chopped).
- **Vegetables:** as above, just leave out the chicken
- **Omelet and vegetables:** Cook a small omelet and cut into strips and roll up in the rice paper wrapper with vegetables as above.
- **Dipping sauce:** Combine 3 Tbsp sweet chilli sauce, 1 Tbsp fish sauce, 1 Tbsp lime and 1 Tbsp of chopped coriander

Mok Pa — Steamed Fish (Laos)

Mok Pa is a specialty mainly from the south of Laos. It is a savory meal, using local products such as coconut and fish. "Pa" means fish in the Lao language.

500 g fish fillet

3 stick of lemongrass (if available)

6 shallots (or small onions)

Salt

1 ½ cups (400 ml) coconut milk

3 Tbsp fish sauce

3 eggs

Kaffir lime leaves (small amount)

For adults: 1 spoon of red chilli paste (half a spoon if you want it less spicy)

Chop the lemongrass and shallots (or onions) very finely. In a mortar & pestle crush and mix the lemongrass, shallots and salt (and chilli paste if any). Add this to the fish, with the fish sauce and the 3 eggs and mix well. Add 1 cup of coconut milk and put this all in a steam-proof bowl. Add very finely chopped kaffir lime leaves and sprinkle over the other ingredients. Steam this fish dish for 20 to 30 minutes (in a big pot with boiling water or a steam pot).
Sen Sep!

Sushi (Japan)

You can fill your sushi with anything you can afford and like — smoked salmon, tuna, marinated and cooked chicken, omelet, avocado, carrots, cucumbers, peppers, salad and so on.

1 cup Japanese sushi rice

2 cups water

30 ml rice wine vinegar

1–2 Tbsp sugar

6 sheets of nori — dry seaweed

Fillings of your choice, cut into long, fine strips

Bamboo mat for rolling

(You can buy a sushi kit with sushi rice, vinegar, nori and bamboo mat at the supermarket)

Soak rice and rinse well. Drain and cook the rice with the water in a rice cooker or in a pot by the absorption method. (See back of pack for details if you are unsure). When rice is cooked, place sugar and rice wine vinegar in a small saucepan and stir over low heat until sugar dissolves. Whilst still warm stir into the cooked rice. Line a baking tray with plastic wrap and spread rice so it cools.

Lay out your bamboo mat (with a short end towards you) and lay a sheet of dry seaweed on it. Wet your fingers and evenly spread a layer (about 1cm) of rice on the seaweed sheet, leaving out 2cms at the top of the seaweed (the side furthest away from you). Then you lay your fillings of choice in a line, 1–2cm from the end closest to you. Then you start rolling, by rolling away from you, applying firm and even pressure with the help of the bamboo mat. At the end you wet the rice-free seaweed with a little water and seal it. Wet a knife to cut the sushi roll into several pieces. Serve with soy sauce to dip in, with pickled ginger and wasabi if you like it spicy.

Chinese Green Tea Eggs

This is a very traditional Chinese recipe and much loved by Chinese school children.

Chinese green tea

Some soy sauce and rice wine

About ten eggs

Some finely chopped ginger and onion

Some aniseed

Little salt

Chinese cassia (in a bottle from Asian shop or supermarket)

Water

Hardboil eggs for about 15–20 minutes. Peel the eggs and with a small knife cut three lines into each egg. Put the eggs back into the cooking pot and add soy sauce, Chinese green tea, some salt, rice wine, chopped ginger and onion, aniseed, some Chinese cassia and water and cook for about 20m minutes.

New Zealand

New Zealand cuisine is a melting pot of many different countries. You will find Maori, European, Pacific and Asian influences.



If you would like to find out more about New Zealand style cooking you could buy the 'Edmond's Cookbook', which covers the basics of New Zealand cooking (baking, making preserves (jams, pickles and chutneys) and so on). You can often find this in supermarkets and some book shops.

Birdseed slice

Make your own muesli bar! Very easy to prepare, to store in a tin and great high energy food. You can make a whole week's supply at a time — everyone will love you for it!

- 1 cup sesame seeds**
- 1 cup sunflower seeds**
- 1 cup of desiccated coconut**
- 1 cup nuts (chopped walnuts, almonds or hazelnuts)**
- 1 cup rolled oats (or crushed cornflakes)**
- 1 cup raisins or dried (chopped) apricots (or any dried fruit you like)**
- A slab of butter (about 50 g)**
- 0.5 cup of raw sugar**
- 3 Tbsp of honey**

Separately, dry roast the sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, coconut, nuts, rolled oats in that order in a frying pan. Combine with raisins (or any other dried fruit you like) in a bowl. Melt butter in the frying pan and add the raw sugar and honey and stir until everything nicely blends together. Add the seed and nut mix and stir to coat well. Put into a greased baking tray/oven dish and press down well. Let cool but make sure to cut into pieces (as large or small as you like them) while still warm.

Fruit fingers

You can make it healthy pieces of fruit and vegetables look fun.

- 1 finger of carrot**
- 1 finger celery**
- 1 finger cheese**
- 1 finger apple**
- 1 finger banana**

Arrange on a plate in the shape of a hand—and enjoy eating all the goodness!

Scroggin'

Mix raisins or sultanas, with sunflower or pumpkin seeds, cashew nuts or walnuts and dried apricots, dates and/or prunes (or dried apple pieces or so) — put into a little container or a zip lock bag.

Banana and nuts

Put nuts — whole or ground cashew nuts, walnuts, almonds or hazelnuts — in a small container for dipping the end of a banana in while you are eating it.

Avocado and crackers

Cut avocado in half and remove stone. Slice avocado but leave it inside skin. Wrap in paper towel to prevent browning (or sprinkle with lemon juice). Eat with crackers.

Fresh fruit

Peel and slice fruit (apples, pears, watermelon, orange slices or so) and put into a container along with toothpick for eating it with. You can also use pineapple pieces.

Surfing ants

Take a piece of celery and spread peanut butter in the stem cavity. Place raisins in a line along the peanut butter.

Fruit Salad

Chop any fruit you like (apples, oranges, pears, strawberries, kiwi fruit, banana, pineapple, grapes, melon or so) that is in season (so it tastes good and doesn't cost too much!) into nice chunks, toss with some lemon juice (and a little icing sugar if not sweet enough for you) and put into a little container to take to school.

Berries and yogurt

Mix any berries (fresh or frozen blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, boysenberries, red currant or any of these mixed) with natural yoghurt, add lemon juice (and a little icing sugar if not sweet enough for you). Put into a little container to take to school — don't forget the teaspoon!

Further tips, information and inspiration

General Tips:

Go to: <http://lunchinabox.net> for fantastic ideas on how to make your child's lunchbox look fun and very delicious.

For hints and healthy eating ideas on a tight budget visit 'The Great Little Cookbook': www.nutritionandphysicalactivity.org.nz

Watch out for whole page information features in your local newspaper on healthy snacks for children by 'Feeding our Futures'.

Contact Primary Health Organisation's Community Dietician, Juliet Wiseman (ph: 03-578 3561) or the Public Health Unit at Wairau Hospital (ph: 03-520 9914) for information on nutrition and other public health issues.

Food and Nutrition Guidelines: <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagesmh/2606>

Health education resources: www.moh.govt.nz and www.healthed.govt.nz

Tips around putting in a garden:

Annie Macdonald, environmental education officer at Marlborough District Council, ph: 520 7400

Talk to your kaumatua, kuia, grandparents and other community elders (for example neighbours) who are 'living knowledge' on gardening and feeding your family.

Try to take time to cook and nourish yourself and your families—food is what connects us all and it is through food that we can forge enduring friendships and remove boundaries between different peoples, cultures and languages.

**“Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon”
The 14th Dalai Lama**

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EATING IS HEAVEN

KOREAN PROVERB



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