

# THINK OUTSIDE THE (LUNCH) BOX

**ATTENTION, BROWN BAGGERS: WE'VE ROUNDED UP INSPIRED RECIPE IDEAS FROM TOP CELEB CHEFS.**

BY CHERYL LOCK

One way to take control of your child's midday meal is to pack it yourself. But it's not always easy. It has to win your kid's approval, and it has to fit neatly in a box or bag. You're not alone in the struggle. Even First Lady Michelle Obama used to have issues when it came to packing school lunches. "Fortunately my kids go to a school where they are given lunch, and that was the biggest relief, that lunch was no longer my issue," she told *Parents* when we met her in June. "But before that, it would change from week to week. One minute a turkey sandwich was fine, and I'd stock up on turkey, and then Sasha would come home and say, 'I don't like turkey anymore.'"

To help all moms struggling with packing a healthy lunch, we enlisted the creative culinary talents of some of the country's best chefs. We got 11 super-healthy lunch-box recipes that are so tasty you'll probably want to pack a second lunch for yourself!



## Cat Cora

**Her kids** Sons Zoran, 7, Caje, 3, Thatcher, 1½, and Nash, 1

**Claim to fame** Only female Iron Chef on *Iron Chef America*; the owner of Kouzzina by Cat Cora restaurant at Walt Disney World BoardWalk Resort

**Menu note** Hummus is a tasty protein alternative to lunch meat.

### Whole-Grain Hummus Sandwich With Veggies

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|--------------------------------|--|
| ½ cucumber, sliced             | 8 thin tomato slices                     |
| 1 Tbs. chopped kalamata olives | 1 handful fresh sprouts, rinsed          |
| ¼ cup grated/shredded carrots  | ½ cup arugula, romaine, or spring greens |
| 5-6 Tbs. hummus                |  |
| 4 slices whole-wheat bread     |  |

**1** Mix cucumber, olives, and carrots into hummus. **2** Spread hummus on bread; add tomato slices, sprouts, and arugula, romaine, or greens. Makes 2 servings.

**Nutrition per sandwich** 248 calories; 12g protein; 6g fat (1g sat. fat); 40g carbs; 8g fiber; 115mg calcium; 3mg iron; 395mg sodium



Olives add an antioxidant boost.



Only serve popcorn to kids over 4.

### Trail-Mix Popcorn

- 1** 2.9-oz. bag microwave popcorn, cooked according to package directions
- 1** cup raisins
- ½** cup dried apricots, chopped
- ½** cup dried cranberries and/or cherries
- ½** cup honey or agave nectar
- 2** Tbs. butter
- ¼** cup finely chopped pecans, walnuts, and/or peanuts
- ¼** cup raw sunflower seeds
- 1** tsp. ground cinnamon

**1** Oil hands to keep popcorn from sticking. **2** In a large bowl combine popcorn with dried fruits and set aside. **3** In a medium saucepan over low heat, stir honey with butter, nuts, sunflower seeds, and cinnamon and mix until well combined. **4** Carefully drizzle mixture over popcorn and fruit, stirring constantly, until everything is well coated. Let sit overnight. Makes approx. 4 cups.

**Nutrition per ½ cup** 291 calories; 3g protein; 11g fat (3g sat. fat); 50g carbs; 4g fiber; 27mg calcium; 1mg iron; 104mg sodium



Mangos are packed with vitamin C.

## Richard Blais

**His kid** Daughter Riley, 2

**Claim to fame** Concept Chef at FLIP Burger Boutique in Atlanta and Birmingham, Alabama; veteran of *Top Chef*, *Top Chef Masters*, *Iron Chef America*, and *Food Detectives*

**Menu note** When your kid is bored with sandwiches, a crunchy wrap is a game changer. These also can be sliced into pinwheels.



### ■ Tropical Turkey Spring Rolls

- 2 big Napa cabbage leaves
  - 2 oz. pomegranate juice
  - 8 oz. cooked shredded turkey
  - 2 oz. chopped mango
  - 4 oz. chopped avocado
  - 2 oz. pea sprouts
  - A few sprigs of cilantro
  - Salt and pepper
- 1** Blanch cabbage. **2** Reduce pomegranate juice in saucepan on low, about 5 minutes, until syrupy. **3** In the center of each cabbage leaf, place shredded turkey, mango, avocado, sprouts, and cilantro. Drizzle with pomegranate syrup and season with salt and pepper to taste. Roll leaves tightly. Makes 2 servings.

**Nutrition per serving** 415 calories; 34g protein; 24g fat (5g sat. fat); 17g carbs; 6g fiber; 113mg calcium; 3mg iron; 429mg sodium



Sweet but still light

### ■ Aloha Chicken With Pineapple Dip

- ½ 8-oz can crushed pineapple in juice
- 4½ tsp. honey
- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed
- Salt and pepper to taste

**1** Whisk pineapple with its juice and honey in a bowl until combined. **2** Season chicken cubes with salt and pepper and place in a plastic bag covered with ¾ of the pineapple sauce. **3** Refrigerate for at least an hour. **4** Place chicken on baking pan lined with foil and broil on middle rack for 6 to 8 minutes per side, or until cooked through. **5** For dipping sauce: While the chicken is broiling, put the remaining sauce in a saucepan and cook over medium heat for 1 minute or until thickened. Makes 2 servings.

**Nutrition per serving** 278 calories; 24g protein; 11g fat (3g sat. fat); 22g carbs; 1g fiber; 23mg calcium; 1mg iron; 363mg sodium



## Candace Nelson

**Her kid** A 3-year-old son

**Claim to fame** Founder and pastry chef of Sprinkles Cupcakes, The Original Cupcake Bakery; judge on Food Network's *Cupcake Wars*

**Menu note** Kids will love being able to pull out a lunch that they can dip into.

### ■ Crunchy Baked Mozzarella Sticks

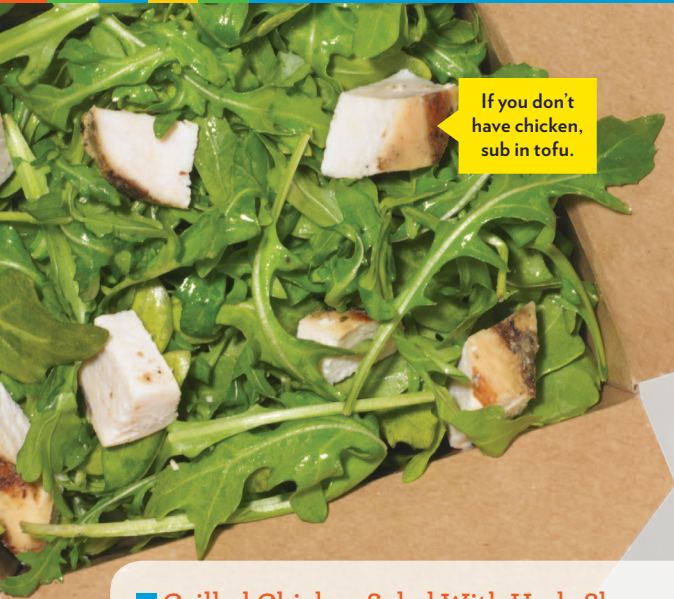
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. water
- ½ cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs)
- 1 tsp. Italian seasoning
- Shake of pepper
- 4 pieces mozzarella string cheese
- 1 Tbs. flour
- Handful of raw sugar snap peas

**1** In a small bowl, beat egg and water. **2** Place panko, Italian seasoning, and pepper in separate dishes. **3** Coat cheese sticks in flour, then dip in egg mixture and the 3 bowls. **4** Cover and chill for at least 4 hours. **5** Place on an ungreased baking sheet and bake, uncovered, at 450°F for 5 minutes, until warm, then run under the broiler quickly to brown. **6** Cool before serving. Serve with snap peas. Makes 4 servings.

**Nutrition per serving** 134 calories; 11g protein; 7g fat (3g sat. fat); 7g carbs; 0 fiber; 215mg calcium; 1mg iron; 209mg sodium

Mozzarella is a great source of calcium.





If you don't have chicken, sub in tofu.



## Sam Kass

**Claim to fame** Assistant White House chef; Mrs. Obama's food initiative coordinator

**Menu note** Kass used these recipes to feed local kids at an event on the South Lawn of the White House to kick off First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign.

### ■ Grilled Chicken Salad With Herb-Sherry Vinaigrette

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>½ cup sherry vinegar</li> <li>½ lemon, juiced</li> <li>⅓ shallot, finely minced</li> <li>1 tsp. oregano, chopped</li> <li>1 tsp. basil, chopped</li> <li>1 tsp. honey</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salt and pepper to taste</li> <li>½ cup extra-virgin olive oil</li> <li>6 to 8 ounces leftover chicken breast</li> <li>1 pound assorted garden greens, arugula, and baby spinach</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

1 Place first seven ingredients in a bowl. 2 Slowly whisk olive oil into mixture until emulsified. 3 Chill, then toss lightly over chicken and salad greens. Save leftover dressing in refrigerator. Makes 2½ cups.

**Nutrition per Tbs.** 48 calories; .06g protein; 5g fat (1g sat. fat); 1g carbs; 0 fiber; 3mg calcium; .07mg iron; 42mg sodium



### ■ A Presidential Veggie Dip

- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- ½ cup cucumber (peeled, seeded, and diced)
- ¼ cup diced onion

Try adding a spice such as cumin or paprika.

1 Add lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, and salt to yogurt. 2 Add cucumber and onion; mix well. 3 Chill for at least one hour and pack in thermos for travel. Makes 1½ cups.

**Nutrition per 2 Tbs.** 67 calories; 1g protein; 6g fat (2g sat. fat); 1g carbs; 0 fiber; 19mg calcium; 1mg iron; 166mg sodium

## Hugo Matheson



**His kids** Twin boys Oliver and Rory, 7

**Claim to fame** Executive chef and co-owner of The Kitchen, an eco-friendly restaurant in Boulder, Colorado

**Menu note** This sandwich with the English name is loaded with protein and healthy whole grains.

### ■ Ham and Cucumber Sarnie

- Makes 1 serving
- 2 slices 100% whole-wheat bread
  - 2 thin slices low-sodium ham
  - 6 slices cucumber
  - 1 whole carrot (served on side)
- Salt and pepper to taste

**Nutrition per serving** 159 calories; 11g protein; 3g fat (1g sat. fat); 23g carbs; 4g fiber; 60mg calcium; 2mg iron; 437mg sodium

Kids love to eat whole vegetables.

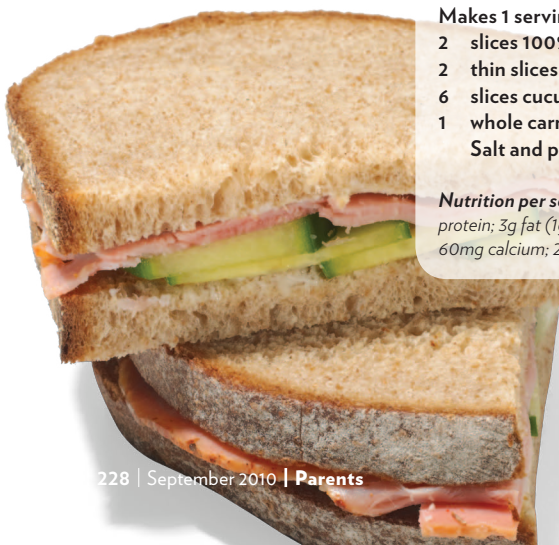
## LUNCH LINKS

Even if you're packing lunch this year, your kids could be on the cafeteria line next year. Check out these resources for advocating for nutritious school food.

**The Lunch Box** ([www2.thelunchbox.org](http://www2.thelunchbox.org)) Chef Ann Cooper offers information and advice for parents and schools wanting to make the transition to healthier meals. Includes everything from recipes to budget planning.

**Food Politics** ([foodpolitics.com](http://foodpolitics.com)) Nutrition and food-policy expert Marion Nestle, Ph.D., has a site that's a must-read for staying in the know about how politics shapes what goes on our kids' plates.

**CSPI School Foods Tool Kit** ([cspinet.org/schoolfoodkit](http://cspinet.org/schoolfoodkit)) Includes downloadable guides with tools, strategies, case studies, and advice





### ■ Vanilla Almond Butter and Banana Sandwich

- 1 cup roasted almond butter
- 1 Tbs. agave nectar
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp. sea salt
- 4 slices gluten-free whole-wheat bread

**1** Combine almond butter, nectar, vanilla, and sea salt in a 2-cup-size jar. **2** Stir ingredients until well combined. **3** Spread 2 Tbs. on sandwiches with banana and store leftover butter in fridge. Makes 1 cup almond butter. Makes 2 servings.

**Nutrition per serving** 264 calories; 8g protein; 14g fat (2g sat. fat); 31g carbs; 4g fiber; 64mg calcium; 1mg iron; 252mg sodium

Almonds are a great source of vitamin E.



## Elana Amsterdam

**Her kids** Sons Jacob, 11, and Ethan, 10  
**Claim to fame** Creator of Elana's Pantry (elanaspantry.com), devoted to gluten-free resources including family-friendly recipes, ingredient selection ideas, and preparation tips; author of *The Gluten-Free Almond Flour Cookbook*  
**Menu note** They're as yummy as regular potato chips, but they pack an incomparable nutritional punch.

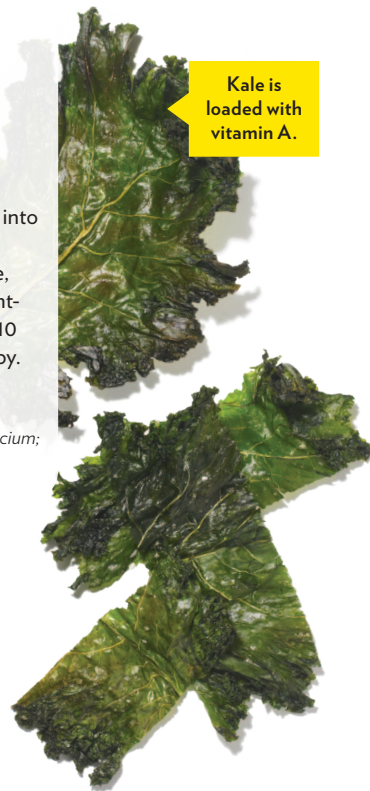
### ■ Krispy Kale Chips

- 1 bunch kale (washed and dried)
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 Tbs. lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. sea salt

**1** Preheat oven to 350°F. **2** Chop kale into ½-inch pieces. **3** Place in a large bowl. **4** With hands, massage oil, lemon juice, and salt into kale. **5** Place on parchment-lined baking sheet. **6** Bake at 350° for 10 to 15 minutes until dark green and crispy. **7** Cool and serve. Makes 4 servings.

**Nutrition per serving** 112 calories; 3g protein; 7g fat (1g sat. fat); 11g carbs; 2g fiber; 136mg calcium; 2mg iron; 143mg sodium

Kale is loaded with vitamin A.



## THERE'S MORE!

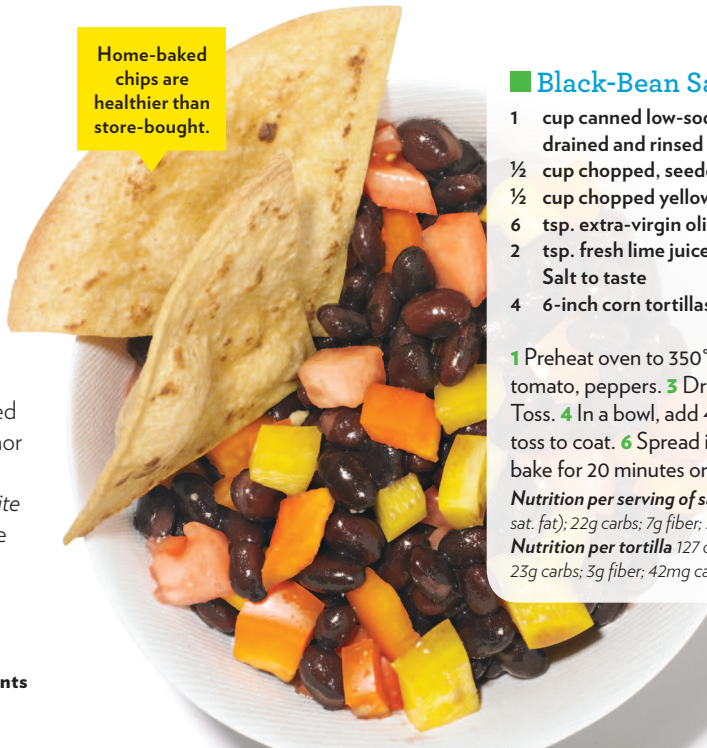
Still hungry for great nutritional lunch-box ideas? Go to [parents.com/chefs](http://parents.com/chefs) to get lots more recipes from America's culinary superstars.



## Ellie Krieger

**Her kid** 8-year-old daughter, Bella  
**Claim to fame** Registered dietitian; best-selling author of *So Easy*; host of Food Network's *Healthy Appetite*  
**Menu note** Kids will love the idea of eating chips and salsa for lunch.

Home-baked chips are healthier than store-bought.



### ■ Black-Bean Salsa and Tortillas

- 1 cup canned low-sodium black beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup chopped, seeded tomato
- ½ cup chopped yellow or orange bell pepper
- 6 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 tsp. fresh lime juice
- Salt to taste
- 4 6-inch corn tortillas, each cut into 6 wedges

**1** Preheat oven to 350°F. **2** In a bowl, combine beans, tomato, peppers. **3** Drizzle with 2 tsp. oil and lime juice. Toss. **4** In a bowl, add 4 tsp. oil and salt. **5** Add tortillas; toss to coat. **6** Spread in 1 layer on 2 baking sheets; bake for 20 minutes or until crisp. Makes 2 servings.

**Nutrition per serving of salsa** 132 calories; 6g protein; 5g fat (1g sat. fat); 22g carbs; 7g fiber; 50mg calcium; 2mg iron; 389mg sodium  
**Nutrition per tortilla** 127 calories; 3g protein; 3g fat (0 sat. fat); 23g carbs; 3g fiber; 42mg calcium; 1mg iron; 36mg sodium