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Out to lunch

Send them back to school with healthy grab-and-go meal ideas

By Deborah Everest-Hill
Photography by Sandra Mulder

Maintaining a healthy, nutritious diet is an ongoing challenge if you're busy juggling work, extracurricular activities and family life. Some of us can barely pull ourselves away from our Blackberry long enough to drink a coffee or wolf down a burger. Add to that the back-to-school crunch, and the pressure is on to prepare lunches to satisfy picky eaters' appetites while adding variety and nutrition. So what's a busy professional to do?

The key to stress-free, tasty and nutritious lunches for both your kids and yourself is having the right foods on hand, says Rosanne Longo, food expert and spokesperson for Longo's. She suggests stocking your refrigerator with no-fuss healthy lunch items such as pre-cut veggies, shredded cheese, yogurt, ready-to-eat salads, deli meats and gourmet "heat and eat" products.

"Brown-bagging," says Longo, "is the best way to eat healthier lunches and manage portion control. Taking your lunch to work is not only less expensive than eating out, there's a better chance of eating well when hunger pangs strike."

A healthy lunch doesn't have to be boring. With a little planning and preparation and a well-stocked kitchen, you can create delicious, healthy lunches for school or work.

She suggests adding variety by using different breads, such as artisan breads, flavoured wraps, pita breads and ciabatta buns as flavourful alternatives to sliced bread. Salads can be jazzed up with nuts, fruit and cheese. Longo's own favourite is chicken salad, consisting of romaine lettuce, goat cheese, cherry tomatoes and pine nuts with diced grilled chicken sprinkled on top.

For the lunch-box toting crowd, Longo suggests cookie-cutter shaped sandwiches, make-your-own pizzas using pita bread and toppings stored in containers, salads (if your kids will eat them), yogurt, fruit, homemade rice squares, veggies and dip and crackers with cheese. While milk, chocolate milk and water are still the best drinks for lunches, there's also a growing assortment of tetra pack juices that contain real fruit juice and less sugar.

Offering customers healthy, high-quality foods has always been top priority at Longo's. Members of the Longo family still visit the Ontario Food Terminal six days a week to select the produce for the stores. The chain, with 16 locations across the GTA, offers more than 800 natural, organic or whole food products in addition to their brand name counterparts. Longo's deli meats, for example, contain less sodium, fewer nitrates and preservatives and less fat. Some of Longo's private label deli meats are nitrate and preservative free.

With the help of registered dietitian, Sandra Saville, Longo's offers health-conscious customers foods that are both nutritious and delicious. In-store seminars cover topics such as ideas for picky eaters and back-to-school healthy lunches. Longo's also features articles, tips and recipes both in its in-store flyers, magazine and on the company's website (**www.longos.com**). Grocery store nutrition tour programs are available to schools, a timely initiative considering Statistics Canada reports that the number of obese adolescents has tripled over the past 25 years.

These products and other unique offerings will soon find its way to Longo's newest location on North Service Road west of Burloak Road in Burlington, which is scheduled to open in spring 2008. The new 50,000-square-foot store, which will feature a larger kitchen area as well as a Starbucks, will be part of a new retail power centre being built in this area. | IB

Packing peanut and nut-free lunches

Life-threatening allergies are a fact of life for an estimated 600,000 Canadians. In an effort to make schools safer for children who have food allergies in Ontario, a new law (Sabrina's Law) requires school boards to have policies and action plans in place for dealing with at-risk students. (For more information on Sabrina's Law, visit www.anaphylaxis.ca.) If you find lunch preparation challenging without packing the standard peanut butter and jelly sandwich, here's a few safe and delicious alternatives for your child's lunch box:

- fresh fruits and vegetables with dip
- raisins
- yogurt (in tubes or cups)
- left-over pizza
- pudding cups (Smart Choice, Hunt's and Kraft)
- cheese (cubed, cream, string, or cottage cheese)
- cold cuts (ham, turkey, roast beef, etc.)
- cookies/snacks (Teddy Grahams, Snack Wells, Nestle/Dare/Letourneau, Nutrigrain bars, Chips Ahoy, Oreos, Arrowroot, Rice Krispie Squares and Quaker nut-free granola bars)

Remember to always read the label of whatever product you are buying to check that it is peanut and nut free.

Lunch Kebobs

Choose one each from the following and cut into cubes.

Meat:
chicken breast, turkey, roast beef, ham, sliced luncheon meat, tofu

Cheese:
cheddar, mozzarella

Vegetables:
green, orange, yellow or red pepper, mushrooms, zucchini, onion

Fruit:
apple, pineapple, orange sections, melon

Sauce for dipping

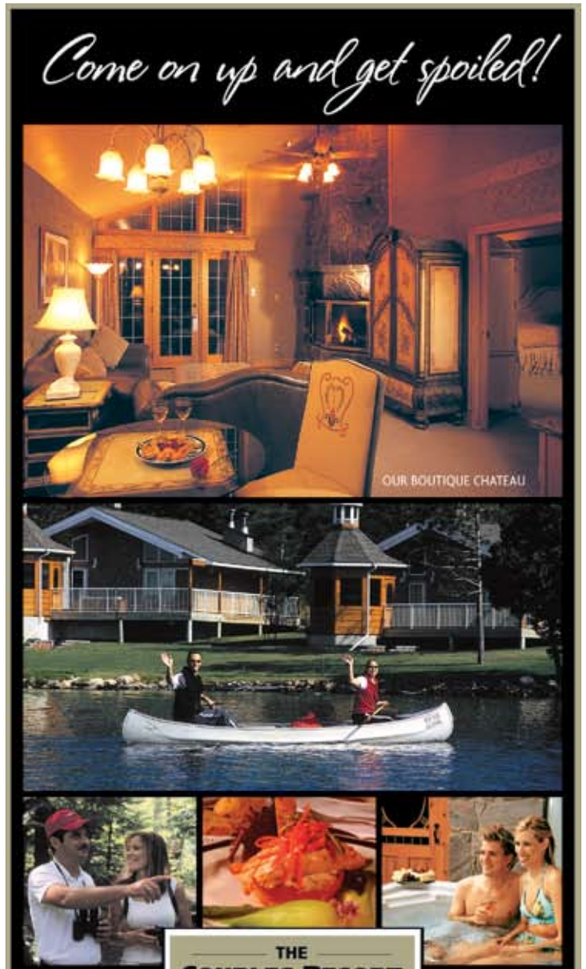
Thread the ingredients onto a skewer in varying order.

For younger children, cut the tip off wooden skewers to prevent injury, or skewer the food onto uncooked long pasta like linguine.

Turn last night's supper into tomorrow's lunch

- Cook an extra serving of meat, chicken or fish for dinner and use it in a salad for lunch (ready-to-eat bagged salads offer choice and convenience)
- Chop up leftover meat and veggies and place in a wrap sandwich
- Make extra salad, pasta salad or casserole dishes

Come on up and get spoiled!



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Hawaiian Pita Sandwich

½ cup	cooked shrimp, peeled and de-veined, or artificial crab/lobster	125 mL
¼ cup	plain low fat yogurt	75 mL
1 tsp	curry powder (optional)	5 mL
1 tsp	relish	5 mL
2 tsp	chopped onion	10 mL
¼ cup	diced pineapple (fresh or canned Western Family), well drained	75 mL
½ cup	celery, diced	125 mL
¼ cup	green or red pepper, diced	75 mL
1	pita, cut in half	1

Combine filling ingredients in a bowl and stir well.
Serve in the pita bread.

Makes 1 serving.

Recipes courtesy of Sandra Saville, registered dietitian for Longo's.

Find more healthy lunch recipes at www.inburlington.com

IN Burlington's Style Guide

Whatever your taste or budget, Burlington's diverse range of retail establishments is sure to offer a unique shopping experience. In each issue, *IN Burlington*'s Style Guide is pleased to feature a selection of some of the city's finest retail businesses.

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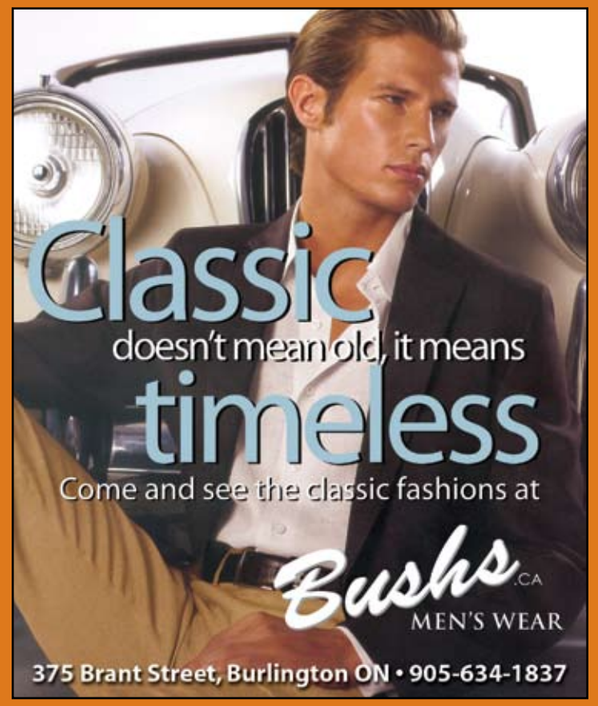
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