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What's for Lunch?

August is here and the summer will soon be over. Parents have been busy buying school supplies and packing college bags. Those with younger children are buying new backpacks and lunchboxes too. How many have given thought, I wonder, to what will be for lunch?

Whether our children buy lunch at school or we pack it up for them, it is vital that we think about the food our children are eating. Nutrition influences the success our children find in school. Children who have a nutritionally sound diet have more energy and stamina than children who eat poorly. This enhances their ability to attend to instruction and absorb the material taught. Studies show that children who eat healthy breakfasts perform higher on tests and in school in general because their concentration is more focused.

Obesity in children is a growing problem in the United States. This is due to both poor food choices and less physical activity. Since overweight children usually become overweight adults it is imperative that they learn and develop healthier habits of eating and exercise. Obesity in childhood and adolescence also increases the incidence of heart disease and diabetes. do what we do than what we say!

Schools are playing a much more active role than in the past insomuch as nutrition is concerned. Legislation has been passed nationwide mandating school districts to come up with and adhere to policies on wellness. Food that is available for purchase in school buildings has to comply with regulations. There have even been bans on fundraising bake sales and birthday cupcakes that are brought into the buildings from home. This is all being done to send a message to children that it is very important to eat healthy. No matter how many times we tell this to our kids they learn it best by watching us and following our lead. Ask yourself whether you personally are eating a nutritious diet and getting enough exercise. Children are much more apt

to do what we do than what we say!

It's often said that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. The reason is that it fuels the body and gets us going. We have better control with younger children because we are preparing and serving their meals. Many older children and teens skip breakfast or buy what they perceive to be a "quick fix" from vending machines or stores. One of our jobs or responsibilities as parents is to provide healthy food, or at least, give our kids access to it. In their wellness initiatives, schools are continually updating the items available to eat and drink. Most schools provide lunch menus in advance and I recommend that you go over the choices with your children and show them how they can make the wisest choices. Schools are also taking much more care in their lunchtime offerings and in many cases the kids are choosing between various vegetable and fruit options rather than swapping veggies for fries.

Let's go back to the lunch box for a moment (or the good old brown paper bag) for those who are still packing it up... What can you put inside that will be nutritious and appealing? There really are things that meet both criteria! Talk to your children and let them play an active role in making decisions. Younger ones even enjoy helping out with the preparation.

Try using whole grain breads, wraps and tortillas instead of highly processed products made with white flour. Use chicken or turkey breast and lean cuts of meat as a filling and stay away from fattier selections. You can also fill sandwiches with low fat cheese, natural peanut butter or tuna fish. As an alternative to sandwiches you can make dips from plain yogurt and send them in small containers along with cut up carrots, celery, peppers, grape tomatoes, apples, oranges or berries... The choices are endless once you start thinking about them... Hard boiled eggs, low fat string cheese and containers of yogurt can be satisfying and leftovers from dinner the night before work too!

As a Nutritionist, I believe that the most important thing we can teach our children is the importance of good nutrition and eating healthy. If you emphasize the positive, you will make more of an impact than if you criticize the negative. Children want to please their parents but they want to be children too – and they need to be. You can't expect that everything will change all at once. It takes time and kids adapt. They watch us carefully even when we don't think they are looking. Think about the kind of model you are and the kind you want to be. When they ask, "What's for lunch?" they will learn to understand the answer, "Something good for you" because after all "we are what we eat" and that is for sure!

AHI TUNA TARTARE

Ingredients:

1 lb. Sushi Grade Tuna
3 Scallion Bulbs
1/2 Red Onion (chopped)
Juice of 3 Limes
2 tbsp. Ponzu Sauce
Alfalfa Sprouts
1 tbsp. Cilantro
1 Clove Garlic
Fresh Pepper to taste
Avocado Slices (Optional)



Directions:

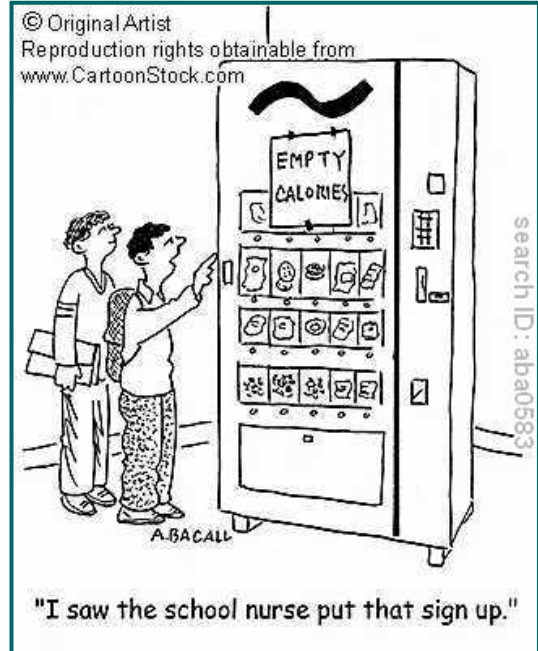
Using the plastic blade of food processor quickly chop salmon, scallions, red onion cilantro and garlic, Ponzu Sauce and juice from limes. Remove from food processor and form into small patties. Sprinkle sprouts and fresh pepper on top. Eat raw. Option—Serve over sliced avocado.

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Do you know...

1. What milk product did the U.S. Agriculture Department propose as a substitute for meat in school lunches, in 1996?
2. What vegetable symbolizes eternity?
3. What was margarine called when it was first marketed in England?
4. What nation produces two thirds of the world's vanilla?
5. What was frozen food called when Birdseye first introduced it?
6. Where did the pineapple plant originate?

(Answers below)



Linda Says...

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others -
You need to take care of
yourself..



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Answers: 1) Yogurt. 2) Onion. 3) Butterine. 4) Madagascar. 5) Frosted Food. 6) South America

Do you have a question or suggestion?

A personal strategy that you use?

Please let us know—we'll consider it for a future edition!

You may send an email to:

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