

Are your kids tired of the same old snacks? Do they cringe at the thought of peanut butter and jelly, yogurt or spaghetti in a can? Do you disagree with their choice of snack cakes, frozen pizza and ice cream?

The following ideas are just a few of an almost unlimited number of tasty snacks for busy kids. Use these suggestions as a starting point and adapt them as you see fit.

If your kids love fruit, use it to your advantage. Try pairing fruits such as apple slices, banana slices, strawberries or pineapple chunks with chocolate, butterscotch or vanilla pudding "dip."

Homemade pudding is easy to make and usually preferred over store bought brands. But, ready-to-eat pudding cups work just as well when you don't have time to make it from scratch.

A simple potato can be turned into a healthy, delicious, snack in just a matter of minutes. Keep a variety of ingredients on hand to create a "potato bar," right in your own kitchen. Allow your kids to smother their potatoes with yummy toppings like shredded cheese, salsa, bacon bits, sour cream, broccoli and left over chili.

(Tip: Potatoes can be microwaved right before serving or baked in advance and refrigerated, until ready to eat.)

Salads are nutritious snacks, either "on the go" or right at home. They are quick to fix and can be made up individually to satisfy different tastes. Don't be afraid to get creative. Many fruits and nuts compliment a vegetable salad perfectly. You may actually find your kids eating more salad, if you jazz it up a bit.

When packing a salad in a lunch, remember this tip to keep it fresh. Send the dressing in a separate container, so the salad won't be soggy when it's time to eat. If croutons, nuts or bacon bits will be added pack those separately, as well. That way they'll remain crunchy and delicious.

Consider purchasing a sandwich maker. They are inexpensive and a big time saver when your kids are in need of a healthy snack. Depending on their age, they can use the machine on their own.

Did you know that sandwich makers are great for making other things besides sandwiches? You can whip up speedy omelets, corn dogs, French toast, pizzas, muffins and more.

(Tip: Mix up a cake mix or your favorite muffin recipe. Cupcakes and muffins are a breeze to make, in this machine. Fill the cavities, close the lid and in about 4 minutes you'll have a yummy treat. Leftover batter can be stored in the refrigerator for a couple of days, although it probably won't last that long.)

Don't forget about tortillas. They are extremely versatile and most kids love them. For a simple snack, top a tortilla with shredded cheese and then a second tortilla. Microwave until cheese melts. Cut into triangles and serve with salsa and sour cream. What could be easier than that?

Remember, tortillas can be topped with almost anything. Chicken salad, chili, sloppy joe filling, ham and cheese, tuna, peanut butter or fresh cooked veggies are just a few suggestions, to get you started.

Filled tortillas can be heated in the microwave, baked, fried or even used in the sandwich maker, mentioned above.

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