

# Packing a Winning Lunch for Student Athletes

*School is back in session! While many parents welcome the structure, it also comes with some new stressors – planning and preparing the lunch box. Knowing what foods to pack, and how much, can be overwhelming for parents and athletes alone. Especially if you have a picky eater. Here are 3 simple tips along with some meal ideas to make packing and eating a winning lunch easier.*

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## HAVE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

Imagine cross-country practice without running shoes – it wouldn't go so well, right? Most athletes understand the importance of having the right equipment for their sport, but fueling for that sport requires the same attention. To pack a winning lunch, you'll need some equipment to keep it fresh until it's time to eat. A mini lunch box cooler is a great start, but other equipment is necessary to maintain foods at a safe temperature and encourage variety. Keep a variety of containers on-hand to pack your foods, as well as a few ice packs to keep foods cold. If you prefer hot meals, be sure to have a high-quality soup thermos or food jar that keeps foods hot until it's time to eat. You can also buy fancy containers designed specifically to hold salads, salad dressing, and to keep foods separate until ready-to-assemble.



## KEEP HEALTHY FOODS ON HAND

Mornings are busy enough without worrying about what to pack for lunch. That's why planning, prepping and preparing foods in advance is key to packing a winning lunch. Take some time over the weekend to plan what you want to pack for lunch in the coming week, and make sure your refrigerator and pantry is stocked with those foods. Do some prep work in advance, like cleaning and cutting vegetables, making a pot of soup, or slicing cheese to pair with crackers, fruit or on a sandwich. If portioning foods into containers isn't your thing, consider buying pre-packaged in single-serve containers – such as Greek yogurt cups, cottage cheese and fruit, nuts and cheese or pretzels and hummus.

## PACK WINNING COMBINATIONS

There is no such thing as the perfect food or meal – student athletes need a variety of nutrients, from a variety of foods, for proper growth and development, and to perform well at their sport. When packing lunch, try to include something from each of the food groups. This is the best way to assure you are packing/getting a variety of nutrients.



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The following are a few hot and cold lunch ideas to get you off to a great school year:

# COLD

(in mini cooler with ice packs)

## SCHOOL LUNCH IDEAS

	Grains/Starches (Carbohydrates)	Fruit (Carbohydrates)	Meat, Seafood, Eggs, Beans/Legumes (Protein)	Dairy (Protein)	Fats
<b>Turkey and Cheese Sandwich</b> on whole grain bread with an orange, carrot sticks and bottled water	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>Greek yogurt cup</b> topped with nuts and berries with a side of pita chips, green pepper slices and hummus	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>Mixed Green Salad</b> with a hard-boiled egg, shredded cheese, chickpeas, tomatoes, peppers, dried fruits, croutons, favorite salad dressing and a container of low-fat milk	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>Cottage cheese with mixed fruit</b> , a side of pretzels, cherry tomatoes & Ranch for dipping	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>Roast Beef and Cheese wrap</b> served with an apple and small side salad with favorite dressing	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

# HOT

## SCHOOL LUNCH IDEAS (packed in food jar or soup thermos)

	Grains/Starches (Carbohydrates)	Fruit (Carbohydrates)	Meat, Seafood, Eggs, Beans/Legumes (Protein)	Dairy (Protein)	Fats
<b>Chili</b> (made with meat/beans and tomatoes) topped with shredded cheese and served with a side of crackers and some grapes	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>Turkey, Rice &amp; Vegetable Soup</b> served with a banana & a container of low-fat milk	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>Beef &amp; Cheese Soft Tacos</b> (keep meat warm in food thermos until ready to assemble tacos) topped with lettuce, tomato, salsa and sour cream served with 4 ounces orange juice	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>Macaroni and Cheese</b> served with a kiwi, carrot sticks and hummus	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>Chicken &amp; Vegetable Casserole</b> served with an orange and a container of low-fat milk	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

