

Healthy lunch ideas

Making lunch each day can be time consuming and repetitive. Whether you are working from home, are back to the office, or have to feed your family, there are plenty of ways you can make a creative, inexpensive and healthy lunch that is both nutritious and appetizing. To do this, you should consider eating the rainbow in a variety of food groups. Below are four healthy, international lunch ideas inspired by Asian, Indian, Mediterranean and Mexican flavors.

Asian Chicken Lettuce Wraps

Crunchy, savory and sweet, these afternoon delights are a fun alternative to the everyday sandwich.

Ingredients:

- 1 can of drained mandarin oranges
- ¼ cup plum sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice wine or wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 4 cups of chopped cooked chicken
- 1 chopped red bell pepper
- ½ peeled and chopped English cucumber
- 2 thinly sliced scallions
- 8 leaves of romaine lettuce



Directions:

Combine plum sauce, vinegar and ginger in a large bowl and stir together. Mix the oranges, chicken, pepper, cucumber and scallions into the same bowl and toss all of the elements together. Lay out lettuce leaves on a plate. Then, add contents from the bowl onto each leaf of lettuce and enjoy. If packing a lunch, pour bowl contents into a container suitable for lunch box. Package lettuce leaves in small, plastic bag.

Carrot Mango Sesame Salad

This Indian-inspired dish is brimming with spiced vegetables and fruit. Supplement the salad with noodles, rice or chicken for a heartier midday meal.

Ingredients:

- 1 sliced carrot
- 1 sliced mango
- 1 sliced cucumber
- Handful of sesame seeds
- 1 red chili pepper
- ½ tablespoon jiggery syrup
- 1 tablespoon peanut powder
- Pinch of salt



Directions for the salad dressing:

Dry roast the sesame seeds for three minutes on low-medium heat. De-seed and tear the red chili pepper, and combine with the toasted sesame seeds, jiggery syrup, peanut powder and pinch of salt.

Directions for salad:

Toss the carrot, mango and cucumber slivers in the dressing and serve

Mediterranean Platter

This easy, light and fresh recipe is convenient and tasty. It can also make for a scrumptious after-school snack.

Ingredients:

- Flatbread or pita
- Snap peas
- Feta
- Cucumber
- Fresh mint leaves
- Coarse sea salt
- Fresh ground pepper
- Red wine vinegar
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- Hummus



Directions:

Cut your flatbread or pita into wedges and drizzle with olive oil. Place the bread on a cookie sheet and sprinkle with coarse sea salt and ground pepper. Place sheet in oven for 10 to 15 minutes. Cut the cucumbers and drizzle red wine vinegar and olive oil over them. Place flatbread and cucumbers on plate or in a lunch container. Add snap peas and feta to the platter. Sprinkle mints leaves over the vegetables, and then add a dash of coarse sea salt and red pepper. Add a dollop of hummus to platter, or secure separately in small container.

Quinoa Taco Salad

This fun and festive version of taco salad is packed with protein and nutrients thanks to special ingredient and super food, quinoa. You can even prepare it in a mason jar to keep contents fresh and make your meal easy to grab and go.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of quinoa
- 1 chopped red pepper
- 1 chopped orange pepper
- Halved cherry tomatoes
- ahalf of a red onion, chopped
- Queso fresco (Mexican crumbly cheese)
- 1 can of black beans
- ¼ cup of cilantro
- 1 sliced avocado
- 1 lime
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- Salsa
- Salt and pepper
- Whole wheat tortilla (optional)



Directions:

Add two cups of water and one cup of quinoa to a pot and bring to a boil on the stovetop. Reduce to simmer for about 25 minutes. After the water is absorbed, remove the pot from the heat and pour its contents into a large bowl. Add vegetables and cilantro, squirt a bit of lime juice onto the contents and stir everything together. Pour these contents into the container you'll be using for lunch and top off with queso fresco, avocado and salsa before covering. Add tortilla if you'd like to eat as a wrap.

For these recipies and others check out www.ahealthiermichigan.org.

Sources: [webmd*](http://webmd.com), [ahealthiermichigan.org*](http://ahealthiermichigan.org)

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