

Back to school lunch ideas

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By: Mandy Copenhaver (Grassi), RDN LD



Mandy trained with Saint Louis Ballet School from the age of 3 until she graduated high school and became a company member with Saint Louis Ballet for the 2005-06 season. In 2009, she graduated Magna Cum Laude from Saint Louis University with her Bachelor of Science Degree in nutrition and dietetics with a minor in psychology and completed her dietetic internship at The Christ Hospital in Cincinnati, OH. She is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian Nutritionist and has worked with a variety of populations in weight loss, wellness, sports nutrition and child nutrition. She currently lives in Cincinnati, OH with her husband, Sean and their daughter, Sydney. Mandy visits her family in Saint Louis often and loves to catch a SLB performance when she is in town.

School is back in session and that means either packing your lunch each day or buying lunch at school. What you eat

for lunch not only affects your ability to make it through the school day, but will also affect how you feel in dance class later that evening. It is essential to fuel your body properly throughout the day in order to achieve optimal performance in the studio. Keep these tips in mind for a healthy lunch:

- Aim to have whole grains over processed white flour. Stick with 100% whole wheat bread or pita for sandwiches, or choose whole wheat pasta, quinoa, couscous or brown rice paired with the items listed below.
- Choose a lean protein to help keep you full until the school day is over. Try peanut butter, hard boiled eggs, string cheese, beans, nitrate free deli turkey, chicken or tuna.
- Add your favorite fruit for something sweet! I love making a fruit salad with grapes, pineapple and strawberries!
- Add some color with your favorite veggies! Try raw veggies with hummus or low fat dressing. Bonus tip: Avoid fat free dressings! Your body needs some fat to absorb all the vitamins packed in veggies.

- Balance the healthy fat! If you really want some staying power, add avocado to your sandwich or have a handful of nuts with your meal.
- I always recommend drinking water as your go to beverage, but if you are looking to add a bit of variety try sparkling water, such as La Croix! Avoid all soda. Both regular and diet soda are filled with unnecessary additives. Some research even suggests that diet soda can actually confuse your body and make you hungrier!

Simple lunch box ideas:

- Turkey sandwich on 100% whole wheat pita topped with spinach, tomato, avocado and mustard. Pair with bell peppers with hummus to dip, fresh grapes, string cheese and water to drink.

- Natural peanut butter and blueberry sandwich on 100% whole wheat bread. Pair with carrots, cauliflower and broccoli w/ low fat dressing, fresh apple, a Greek yogurt and water to drink.
- Tuna salad made with low fat mayonnaise and 3 TBSP avocado. Pair with whole grain crackers, fresh strawberries, side salad with cheese, olive oil and balsamic vinegar and La Croix sparkling water to drink.
- Fresh mozzarella (diced) with tomatoes, olive oil and balsamic vinegar with whole grain crackers, cucumber slices with hummus, a fresh pear and water to drink.

Always listen to your body and adjust your portions based on how you feel. Best of luck in the new school year!