



Ontario Home Economics Association

Ask a Professional Home Economist

For Immediate Release

Pack a Safe Lunch 101

by Teresa Makarewicz, P.H.Ec.

Whether it's off to school or off to work, here are a few quick tips for packing a safe bite to eat.

- **Keep It Clean**

Before preparing food, wash hands thoroughly in warm soapy water. Make sure all food preparation surfaces, cutting boards, and utensils are clean. Wash them with hot soapy water after preparing each item. Keep family pets away from the preparation counter.

- **Insulated is Best**

Insulated boxes or bags are best for keeping food cold. Look for lunch bags that are easy to keep clean. If using brown paper bags, double bag to help insulate the food. An ice source should be packed with perishable food in any type of lunch bag or box.

- **Keep Cold Foods Cold**

Pack a cold source such as a freezer gel pack, frozen juice or milk container. Beverages will thaw enough for drinking by lunchtime. Always find the coolest possible place to store your lunch. Upon arrival, store perishables in refrigerator if available. Keep lunches out of direct sunlight and away from radiators or other heat sources.

- **Keep Hot Foods Hot**

Pour hot foods like soup, chili or stew into a preheated, insulated container. To preheat, fill the container with boiling water; let stand for a few minutes. Empty and fill with piping hot food. Remember to keep the container closed until lunchtime.

- **Hand Washing**

Prior to eating, wash hands well with warm, soapy water. If this is not possible, use a disposable hand wipe.

- **Throw it Out**

Throw out any leftovers. Discard food packaging, plastic and paper bags because they can contaminate other food.

- **Wash it Up**

To keep bacteria from growing in the seams and corners of reusable lunch bags, thoroughly wash after each use.

Scoobi Doo Salad

Pack this colourful, fun and nutritious salad in an airtight container. Include a carton of frozen chocolate milk (which acts as a chill pack) and a plastic fork. A fresh fruit will round out the complete meal which boasts of the four food groups. Use leftover chicken or store-prepared barbecued chicken. Also try one of the suggested variations *.

Dressing:

¼ cup (50 mL)	seasoned rice vinegar
1 tbsp (15 mL)	vegetable oil
1	clove garlic, put through garlic press

Salad:

2 cups (500 mL)	scoobi doo pasta (or any spiral shaped pasta)
1 cup (250 mL)	small broccoli florets
2 cups (500 mL)	chopped cooked chicken *
1 cup (250 mL)	grape tomatoes
½ cup (125 mL)	chopped sweet bell pepper (orange, red or yellow)
1	green onion, thinly sliced

Dressing: Whisk together all ingredients. (Make ahead: Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days.)

Salad: In large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta for 8 minutes. Stir broccoli into pasta in pot and cook for 1 minute; drain. Rinse under cold water; drain well. Transfer to medium bowl. Add chicken, tomatoes, pepper and onion. Pour dressing over salad; toss to combine. Refrigerate.

Makes 4 servings.

* **Variations:** Substitute cooked chicken with 1 can 5.7 oz (170 g) drained, water packed tuna, or 1 can 19 oz (540 mL) beans (chick pea, kidney or black bean), drained and rinsed.

Teresa Makarewicz, a Professional Home Economist located in Ancaster, near Hamilton, was the driving force behind the concept of a grocery store chain implementing the first in-house cooking school in Canada. Currently she represents major clients by conducting food demonstrations, recipe development and product promotions. A mother of three, Teresa packs many lunches and enjoys sharing healthy food ideas and recipes.

The Ontario Home Economics Association, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

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