



Have Snacks, Will Travel

To fuel your summer fun, turn your drive-through plan into your make-ahead plan. Here are some easy tips.

BY CARA ROSENBLOOM, RD

AS YOU PLAN YOUR SUMMER beach days, road trips and picnics, make sure you pack healthy snacks along with the sunscreen. Our eating behaviour changes during warmer weather: Popsicle consumption goes up, hydration becomes more crucial and lax schedules can lead to all-day, unbalanced grazing. It's difficult to maintain healthy eating habits, such as getting enough milk products or keeping vegetable intake high, when snacks are served miles away from the kitchen table. But with some advanced planning and creative ideas, you can make nutritious summer snacks part of your fun in the sun.

PHOTOGRAPHY, MASTERFILE

SNACKS ARE FUEL

"A healthy snack should be satisfying and nutrient-dense, and leave you feeling full until your next meal," says Stephanie Clairmont, a registered dietitian at the Clairmont Digestive Clinic in Waterloo, Ont. "It should include carbohydrates to balance your blood sugar, keep your metabolism working and give you a little boost of energy to make it through the day. It also needs fibre and protein to slow digestion and keep you full."

Eddie Shaw-Ewald, a dietitian in Halifax and the creator of the nutrition workbook *The Family Food Project*, says a good snack should include at least two major food groups. »

The well-balanced and tasty snacks in the following summer scenarios will keep your days filled with sunshine – and your tummy filled from nutritious noshing.

AT THE BEACH

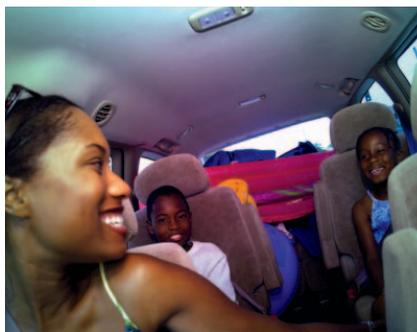
Pack snacks that keep you hydrated when the temperature rises. “Many people don’t actually feel thirsty, so they forget to continually drink,” says Clairmont. She recommends eating foods with high water content. Fruit is juicy and refreshing, especially ripe peaches, honeydew and watermelon (turn to page 157 for five great watermelon recipes). “If you’re out for the day, pack easy to eat fruit in small containers,” Clairmont suggests. (See Freezing Fruit on page 79 for some tips from The Test Kitchen.)

More than 60 percent of Canadians consume fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables daily, even though Canada’s Food Guide recommends at least seven servings. Enjoying these foods as snacks is a smart way to help fulfil your requirement each day.

A surprising two-thirds of Canadians also underconsume milk products, with teen girls being the worst offenders (up to 83 percent fall short). Since milk contains 16 essential nutrients, including calcium and protein, it’s important to get enough each day. Plus, milk is 87 percent water, so it’s great for hydration.

The night before your excursion to the beach, freeze single-serving cartons of milk. The next day, you can enjoy them partially melted for refreshing milk slushies.

Hot weather can make fresh food wilt, so be prepared with the right equipment. Teresa Makarewicz, a professional home economist in Ancaster, Ont., packs her snacks in portable insulated coolers with ice packs, so even yogurt stays cool at the beach. Makarewicz’s favourite family-friendly beach snacks include berry yogurt cups (yogurt, whole grain cereal and seasonal berries) and tutti-frutti ice cream cones (chopped fruit in ice cream cones topped with yogurt).



Prechill your coolers to keep them cold longer. Drop a few ice cubes in them an hour or so before loading in your goodies. If you can, pack food and drinks in separate coolers. The one containing beverages will likely be opened more frequently, and food will stay fresh longer if it’s in a cooler that stays closed until mealtime.

ON A CAMPING TRIP

Hiking up rugged terrain and paddling a canoe can expend a ton of energy. Your between-meal snacks should invigorate you and replenish the calories you’ve burned.

When she’s hiking or camping, Wendi Hiebert, a professional home economist at FoodWise Consulting in Kitchener, Ont., packs lots of fresh fruit and pairs it with trail mix made from whole grain cereal, shredded coconut, nuts, seeds and dried fruit. This nutrient-dense combination is easy to eat on the go and provides a good balance of carbohydrates, fat and protein to keep energy levels up.

With no fridge in sight, it’s a bit challenging to get enough milk when you’re camping. Try Tetra Pak milk, which does not require refrigeration and can be found in any grocery store (usually near the juice boxes). It can be used as a beverage, on cereal or for cooking. Try poaching your freshly caught fish in milk. Here’s how: In a pan, bring about two cups of milk to a boil. Reduce to a gentle simmer and add fillets, pepper, salt and your favourite herbs. Cook over low heat until the fish flakes when tested with a fork, usually about five minutes. Top with a squeeze of lemon juice.

Since liquids are heavy to lug, consider powdered milk, which can be rehydrated with clean water. Put

KEEP IT COLD

Nathalie Roy, a registered dietitian and the assistant director of nutrition at Dairy Farmers of Canada, tells us that “to help prevent foodborne illnesses, milk products should be kept cold at all times.”

When taking milk products as on-the-go snacks, Roy suggests using ice or ice packs to help keep them cold, and not leaving them exposed to sunlight or heat. Chef Dez, a B.C.-based chef and culinary instructor, and his family take drink boxes of milk from the freezer and throw them in a bag with other perishable snacks. “This helps keep everything cold. And when the drink boxes have thawed, you’re left with chilled milk to drink after your snack!” he says. And just how long will milk products stay fresh when kept on ice? “For as long as the products are cold and the ice packs are at least partially frozen,” says Roy.

it in pancake batter, coffee or cereal, or use it to make your morning cinnamon-infused oatmeal.

ON A ROAD TRIP

Whether you’re driving five hours to visit Grandma or making the trek to Disneyland, road trips can require caffeine to help you stay alert.

Chef Dez, a B.C.-based chef, culinary instructor and author of *Chef Dez on Cooking* (Trafford, 2012), recommends replacing coffee with a homemade iced vanilla latte. This helps you get the benefits of milk in your diet, and it tastes divine. “Mix ¾ cup nonfat milk, ¾ cup strong chilled coffee and ½ teaspoon vanilla extract,” he says. “Instead of adding ice, make milk cubes in your freezer so you keep



your beverage chilled without diluting the flavour. Then sweeten as desired.”

Snacking in the car is quicker and cheaper than pulling over at a rest stop. And when you bring your own nutritious snacks, it’s healthier too. However, calories add up quickly with unlimited munching. Solve this problem by portioning snacks in reusable bowls rather than eating out of a box.

In addition to packing fresh-cut fruit as a calorie-conscious snack, Makarewicz shares these fun ideas.

- **Pirate Sticks:** Skewer cheese cubes and grape tomatoes on unsalted pretzel sticks.
- **Cake ‘n’ Ice Cream:** Freeze individual yogurt cups overnight and serve them half-thawed with whole grain muffins.
- **Apple Smiles:** Spread nut butter between two apple wedges. (Check out our recipe for Almond Pepita Butter on page 159.)

A backseat cooler will come in handy for keeping perishable food cold for hours. If you take lots of road trips, you may want to invest in a mini fridge that plugs into a 12-volt car lighter.

AT AN ALL-DAY SOCCER TOURNAMENT

Focus on providing enough fluid to keep your child properly hydrated, and serve healthy, easy to digest snacks to energize her for the game. Even one percent dehydration can result in up to a 15 percent decrease in athletic performance.

Kids should drink water before and during the game. If exercise lasts more than an hour, they will need to replenish carbohydrates lost during activity by sipping a sports drink or eating fruit. “Fresh, hydrating fruit, such as oranges, cantaloupe or

grapes, gives young athletes a little energy boost from carbohydrates,” says Clairmont.

After the game, offer kids carbohydrates to replenish energy and protein to help muscles recover. Hiebert suggests offering yogurt, whole grain crackers with sliced cheese, or vegetables with hummus.

Milk is an ideal postgame recovery drink. It rehydrates and contains protein to help repair muscle tissue that is worn down during vigorous activity. Plus, it replaces the sodium and potassium that are lost through sweat. (But it’s difficult to keep milk cool until the late-afternoon finals, so designate one parent to go on a midday milk run.)

AT THE PLAYGROUND

Kids need a constant flow of energy to swing, slide and play hide-and-seek. Bring a blanket and turn your snack into a picnic!

Since park visits last for only a few hours, food will stay fresh and your options for nutritious snacks are endless. Try some of these interesting ideas from Makarewicz.

- **Chips ‘n’ Dip:** Dunk whole wheat pita in a Cheddar-salsa dip.
- **Easy Sushi:** Roll whole wheat tortillas tightly around romaine lettuce, red pepper strips and cheese, then slice into circles.
- **Fresh Fruit Kabobs With Orange Yogurt Dip:** Mix yogurt with orange juice concentrate and serve with skewered fruit to dip in it.

Chef Dez likes to prepare smoothies with milk, yogurt and fresh fruit, but his favourite healthy on-the-go snack comes with a twist: “Purée low-fat cottage cheese with lemon zest, vanilla and honey. If you don’t like the texture of cottage cheese, puréeing takes care of this nicely,” he says. ■

FREEZING FRUIT

Freezing is a great way to preserve a large batch of perfectly ripe fruit. It makes an easily transportable snack on a hot summer day. And while you may only be interested in freezing healthy snacks for this weekend’s beach trip, fruit will last for up to 12 months in the freezer. Here’s how to get started.

- **Berries and grapes:** Wash and dry thoroughly. Spread in a single layer on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Freeze until firm, breaking up any fruit that sticks together. Transfer to a resealable freezer bag, label and freeze.
- **Melons:** Wash and remove rind. Remove seeds and cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm) cubes. Spread in a single layer on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Freeze until firm, breaking up any pieces that stick together. Transfer to a resealable freezer bag, label and freeze.
- **Soft fruit (such as peaches, apricots and plums):** Blanch in boiling water for 20 to 30 seconds. Plunge into a bowl of ice water to cool. Remove skin and cut into wedges. If desired, toss in a bit of lemon juice to preserve the colour. Spread in single layer on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Freeze until firm, breaking up any pieces that stick together. Transfer to a resealable freezer bag, label and freeze.

– Rheanna Kish, senior Food specialist

MILK TO GO

No time to pack your own snacks? Edie Shaw-Ewald, a dietitian in Halifax, serves up some restaurant options that will help you get more milk products in your diet when you’re away from home.

- Order a milk-based iced coffee or cappuccino at a coffee shop.
- Try soup or chowder made with milk.
- Choose a milk- or yogurt-based smoothie.
- Ask for some grated Cheddar on your garden salad.
- At the end of a meal, order a real-milk hot chocolate or café latte.