

Nutritional Lunch Box Cheat Sheet

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Guest post by Carla Rodan, [Styling The Tribe](#)

When people first learn, I'm mum to four boys, their remarks usually include a reference to high energy levels and high grocery bills!

It's true. Moving bodies need to be regularly refueled to meet their energy demands and keep bodily organs functioning in peak condition.

Now I'm no nutritionist, but completing a Physical Education degree, Personal Training certificate and living with a professional athlete for 14+ years gives me a pretty good grounding when it comes to understanding what foods serve our body best.



The daily ritual of preparing lunch boxes and after school/pre-sport snacks isn't one I'm overly enthusiastic about. Anything pre-coffee is a struggle and when dealing with three sets of taste buds and bouncing toddler, I often struggle to find the inspiration to keep it fresh and fun. So, I thought I'd compile a list of "sure things" that will remove any confusion/doubts/need to think and make the morning hustle run a whole lot smoother!

First of all, good nutrition it's all about balance ...and moderation. To meet school day energy demands and/or combat a

3pm energy lull, it's essential kids are snacking on foods rich in carbohydrates, fats and protein. Carbs are the easiest food group for the body to breakdown and absorb so they're the 'premium' fuel choice. Fats and Protein however are essential to aid the production of energy (glucose) so don't exclude them either! Good stores of protein, fats and carbohydrates are also needed for muscle growth, immunity and their regular growth spurts!

We all know fruit and veg are lunch box heroes – but making them enticing enough to eat can be struggle at times! Below I've shared some of my favourite 'mum hacks' to encourage healthy eating habits, but first I want to share a delicious new range by Australian owned, Melbourne made, Chris' that will win over even the fussiest of eaters!

First up it's Chris' Dip and Cracker snack packs. As their name suggests, each pack contains a perfect portion of Chris' classic flavoured dip paired with five crispy crackers. These packs are music to my ears – nutritional (no hollow calories!), easily transportable, tasty and substantial enough to fill their tummies. The boys will munch on these pre-swimming, at recess and during 'long' car rides spanning 10+ minutes. French Onion is their dip of choice, however we alternate between the other flavours available, Corn Relish and Hommus too.



Next up is Chris' Fun Sized Snacks. Take my word for it, these are SO handy!!!! No more discarding $\frac{1}{2}$ eaten tubs of dip or being limited to one flavour because they simply don't consume enough to warrant opening multiple dip tubs! Individually wrapped mini tubs are the answer and have been a huge hit in our household. We often open two or three for after school share platters and often pop a Tzatziki in their lunch box with some vegie sticks. One packet of Chris' Fun Sized Snacks contains three dips – so that's three servings or three

siblings sorted! The range is completely gluten free and comes in four delicious varieties Corn Relish, French Onion, Hommus and Tzatziki.



Some of our favourite pairings for Chris' Fun Size dip platters and snack boxes

- Veggie Sticks: Celery, cucumber, carrot, capsicum (red, green and yellow)
- Breads: Pita bread triangles, bread sticks, mini toasts
- Crackers: Assorted; from high fibre and wholemeal to wafer thins
- Meats: Twiggy sticks, cabana cubes, mortadella flutes (rolled), salami circles
- Cheese: Cubes or sticks
- Dried fruits: Apricots, apple, sultanas
- Pretzels
- Plain popcorn
- Cut fruit (easily manageable portions): Strawberries, bananas, blueberries, grapes, cherry tomatoes

Additional healthy lunch box ideas: museli bars, yogurt pouches, rice cakes, banana bread, savoury rolls and health muffins

Carla's tips to getting her kids to eat the fruit & veg

1. Presentation is key – everything looks more appetising on a platter, cut into manageable pieces with lots of colour. Add some flair and reap the rewards. Hats off to the crafty mums and dads creating mosaic images from food cubes – my everyday heroes!

2. Add a novelty 'distraction' – we love adding Chris' Fun Size Dips to our platters – it really works as added incentive to devour their veggies. My boys are so keen to dip and dunk that they chomp away blissfully unaware of what's being consumed! **warning: double dipping is inevitable.

3. Keep it tasty – eating 'raw' can sometimes be a little bland for young tastebuds, so ensuring there are some tasty options on hand help to. My boys go nuts for Tzatziki and French Onion dip varieties, so they're always present.

4. Change it up – surprise them with 'new' additions to their snack box or platter. It may be simply swapping celery sticks for cucumber sticks, breadsticks for crackers, incorporating seasonal fruit or alternating dip flavours (there's four Chris' Fun Size Dips to choose from.) Being inquisitive, my kids also like something 'unusual' – marinated olives, dried fruits, gourmet meats and varieties of cheeses are winners.

5. Make it Fun – the old saying 'don't play with your food' goes out the door when trying to convince a fussy 5-year old to try new fruit and veg! Games, reward charts and 'challengers' work a treat when it comes to competitive siblings. Our current favourite is loosely based on I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here "Tucker Challenges." Basically, give each fruit, veg and dip a points value per piece. Least favourite food = 5 points to most favourite = 1 point. Then hand them a platter, paper and pen and watch them devour everything. They even cheer one another on to try the ghastly "tomato of doom" – it's hilarious, but it works, and after a few rounds their taste buds catch up and realize they no longer dislike the food! Win Win. Thanks channel 10.

