



September 9, 2015

Creative Lunch Inspiration for Back to School

Another summer has come and gone, and parents are yet again faced with the age-old question – what’s for lunch? If your kids are getting tired of ham and cheese sandwiches, here are some ideas that they will definitely eat up!

Our Zucchini and Pasta Alfresco is delicious warm or chilled, so you can serve it for dinner the night before, then put it in your kids’ lunches as a pasta salad for the next day.

Our bite-sized Fiesta Roll-Ups are perfect for younger children who enjoy nibbling on finger foods.

For dessert, our sweet-and-tangy Berry Oatmeal Squares can be easily made ahead and stored in the refrigerator for several days, or will keep in the freezer for a few weeks.

ZUCCHINI AND PASTA ALFRESCO

2 cups (500 mL) diced zucchini
2 cups (500 mL) diced tomatoes
1/4 cup (50 mL) sliced green onion
2 tbsp (25 mL) olive oil
2 tbsp (25 mL) chopped fresh parsley
1/2 tsp (2 mL) basil, crumbled
1/2 tsp (2 mL) oregano, crumbled
1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
1/2 tsp (2 mL) pepper
Dash hot pepper sauce
3 cups (750 mL) spiral pasta

Combine all ingredients except pasta in a serving bowl. Let stand 15 - 20 minutes. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and immediately toss hot pasta with mixture. Serve warm, at room temperature or chilled. Refrigerate for up to 24 hours. Serves 4.

FIESTA ROLL-UPS

16 oz (500 g) cream cheese, softened
1 envelope (28 g) ranch dressing mix
1/3 cup (75 mL) chopped green onions
1/3 cup (75 mL) chopped ripe olives
1/4 cup (50 mL) chopped canned roasted red peppers, well drained
1 small can diced green chilies, drained
6 burrito-style flour tortillas (10 inch/25 cm)

Using medium speed of an electric mixer, beat together cream cheese and dressing mix until fluffy. Add onions, olives, roasted peppers and chilies; stir until blended. Spread mixture evenly over one side of each tortilla, leaving a 1/2 inch (1.25 cm) border. Tightly roll up each tortilla jelly-roll fashion. Wrap rolls individually in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours or up to 24 hours. Rolls may also be frozen for up to 1 month. Thaw in refrigerator. To serve, trim ends off each roll. Cut each roll into 8 pieces. Makes about 4 dozen roll-ups

BERRY OATMEAL SQUARES

2 cups (500 mL) quick-cooking or old-fashioned rolled oats
3/4 cup (175 mL) flour
3/4 cup (175 mL) packed golden brown sugar
1 tsp (5 mL) grated orange peel
1/4 tsp (1 mL) baking soda
1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt
1/2 cup (125 mL) butter, melted
Berry Filling (recipe follows)

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line a 9 inch (23 cm) square baking pan with nonstick foil, leaving a 2 inch (5 cm) overhang.

Combine first 6 ingredients (oats through salt) in a bowl. Add melted butter and stir just until combined. Mixture will be crumbly. Reserve 3/4 cup (175 mL) of oats mixture for topping. Press remaining oats mixture into prepared pan.



Bake for 10 – 15 minutes or until light golden. Meanwhile, prepare Berry Filling. Remove pan from oven. Gently spread hot filling over hot base, leaving a 1/2 inch (1.25 cm) border around edges. Sprinkle reserved oats mixture over filling.

Return pan to oven and continue baking for 30 – 35 minutes or until golden brown and bubbly. Cool in pan on a rack. Using foil as an aid, lift square from pan and cut into squares. Remove squares from foil. Store in an airtight container in refrigerator for up to 4 days. Makes 36.

Berry Filling

3 cups (750 mL) fresh raspberries or blueberries
1/3 cup (75 mL) sugar
2 tbsp (25 mL) fresh orange juice
1 tbsp (15 mL) cornstarch

Combine all ingredients in a small nonreactive saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened.