

Healthy Celebrations = Healthy Kids!

School celebrations like “Birthdays”, “Mother’s Day”, “Father’s Day”, “End of Year Parties” often include unhealthy food such as cupcakes, lollies, chips, biscuits, cake and soft drink.

These school celebrations can be a great opportunity to encourage families to provide healthy, nutritious, cheaper, creative plates of food that not only taste good but make healthy eating fun and interesting for children!

But it’s a special occasion

One child’s birthday can mean multiple celebrations: **one at home with the family, a party with friends, and then another at school.** Just one party can include pizza, sugary drinks, chips, cake, plus a lolly bag. Then multiply this by all the children in the class.

Constant exposure to high fat, high sugar, high sodium, low-nutrient foods compromises children’s health.

Facts on Obesity, Monash University (2013), states obesity has overtaken smoking as the leading cause of premature death and illness in Australia and is now the single biggest threat to public health.



In Mildura Rural City alone only 4.4% of males and 9.6% of females eat the recommended 5-6 serves of vegetables per day (*Victorian Population Health Survey*).

Benefits of Healthy Celebrations

Provides Consistent Messages: Providing healthy classroom celebrations demonstrates a school’s commitment to promoting healthy eating habits and behaviours.

Promotes a Healthy School Environment: To improve eating behaviours, students need to receive consistent, reliable health information and ample opportunity to use it. Healthy celebrations are an important part of providing a healthy school environment.

Creates Excitement About Nutrition: Children are excited about new and different things, including fun party activities and healthy snacks. School staff, parents and carers need not worry that children will be disappointed if typical party foods aren’t served in the classroom. Schools can take advantage of providing a lesson in nutrition and making healthy lifestyle choices that can last a lifetime!



Following are some ideas to help parents, carers, guardians or family members make a healthy contribution towards any Celebration at school!

Healthy Party Food Ideas

Party platter: Include veggie pieces (e.g. tomato, red capsicum, cucumber, celery, carrot sticks) and dips such as hummus, guacamole or tzatziki for flavour. Add fruit, reduced fat cubed cheese and lean cold meats.



Fruit platter: Include seasonal fruit & kids love cuts of watermelon, pineapple, rockmelon & mandarins if in season or just slice some seasonal fruit with a yoghurt dip!

Ants on a log: Fill celery sticks with cream cheese and dot with currants or sultanas.

Corny cobs: Steam corn on the cob or cook frozen corn cobbettes.

Veggie crackers: Top wholemeal crispbread, corn thins or rice crackers with cottage or cream cheese and your choice of avocado, lettuce, tomato and cucumber.



Homemade cuppa soup: Bring in a pot of soup and serve small portions in cups on a cold day. For fun, try *Pumped up pumpkin* or *Shrek soup* (green pea and ham).

Veggie 'chips': Make sweet crunchy chips by slicing carrot, zucchini, potato, sweet potato or apple, spraying with some olive oil and baking until golden.

Veggie slice: Mix grated vegetables such as zucchini with chopped onion, cheese, flour and eggs and bake in a moderate oven until golden brown.

Veggie muffins: Try pumpkin and zucchini, carrot and sultana, cheese and corn, pumpkin and date, sweet potato, zucchini and poppy seed. Mini muffins can stretch to more people.

Yoghurt and fruit in a cup: Buy reduced fat yoghurt in bulk and scoop out into plastic cups. Try adding 100% fruit puree, chopped fruit or berries on top or layer the yoghurt with the fruit!

Air popped popcorn: Serve in patty pans, paper bags or popcorn cups. Have your child help decorate plain paper cups with stickers, glitter glue or even a photo, and then fill with homemade popcorn.

Veggie pita pockets or wraps: Encourage kids to fill pita pockets with their choice of chopped salad and vegetables.

Jelly Jumbles: Jelly with canned fruit (in natural juice) or fresh fruit set in small plastic cups. Colour co-ordinating the fruit and jelly works really well!

Banana Bubbles: Skewer a banana piece onto a paddle pop stick. Coat with low fat yoghurt, roll in puffed rice.

A Fruit Cake! Compile layers of watermelon or other fruits & decorate to your heart's content.

Nibble Mix: Mix air-popped popcorn and dried fruit. Serve in bags or patty pans.

Sushi or Vietnamese rolls: Rice paper filled with grated and fresh ingredients!



Strawberry Alohas: Place strawberries on an icy pole stick, dip in low fat yoghurt, roll in coconut and freeze.

Chicken Faces: Shell hard boiled eggs, thread onto icy pole sticks (optional), wrap egg in cling wrap and draw smiley faces on the cling wrap with a permanent pen, or cut boiled eggs in half, mash the yolk add a bit of low fat mayo or a bit of paprika or curry powder and add eyes with little bits of olive and a nose with carrot and put on platter of lettuce leaves.



Fruit Juice Ice Cups: Water down 100% fruit juice, pour into cups (250ml or smaller) and freeze. For added nutritional punch, add some diced fruit.

Dried fruit 'lolly' jars: Display dried fruit in large clear jars like in lolly shops. Serve a small amount straight into students' hands.



Fruit Kebabs: Pick your child's favorite fruits - strawberries, blueberries, pineapple, kiwi, grapes and melon, etc and assemble colorful fruit kebabs. Serve with yogurt dipping sauce.

UFOs: Canned pineapple rings in natural juice wrapped in cling wrap and frozen.

Apple Slinkies: Turn apples into fun slinkies with the apple slinky machine (appleslinky.com.au).

Guacamole: Mash avocado, fresh lemon or lime juice, then mix in chopped tomatoes, diced red onions and a little bit of sea salt. Serve with veggie sticks (celery, carrots and red peppers).

Fruity Cones: Serve four pieces of fresh fruit of varying colours in a square ice cream cone. Serve straightaway to stop the cone going soggy. Just send in cut up fruit, packet of ice cream cones and instructions for the teacher at school.

Frozen yogurt tubes: Serve with fresh fruit.

Dark-chocolate dipped strawberries: Say no more!

Fruit smoothies in the classroom! Bring a blender into school and blend frozen berries, bananas or any crazy fruit variety with some low fat yoghurt and low fat milk.

Whole-grain waffles or pancakes topped with fruit

Home made pizza - low fat cheese on pita bread baked - served with salsa

A plate of healthy sandwiches or wraps with low-fat cheese

HEALTHY DRINKS FOR PARTIES!

1st Choice: **WATER – WATER – WATER!!!**

2nd Choice: Water flavoured with fresh cuts of fruit. It's colourful & looks great!

3rd Choice: Milk (low-fat or non-fat)

Fizz it up. Mix 100% fruit juice with plain sparkling water (limit to one cup)



RECIPE SUGGESTIONS

Chicken and Cucumber Rice Paper Rolls – makes 24

1 lebanese cucumber
1 medium carrot, peeled
24 square (17cm) or small round rice paper sheets
1-2 chicken breast fillets (depending on size), steamed and sliced into sticks
1 cup bean shoots
24 mint leaves
Optional: lettuce, other sprigs or vegetables
Hoisin sauce, to serve

Cut cucumber and carrot into 6cm sticks. Place one sheet of rice paper in a bowl of warm water until just softened. Remove and place on a tea towel. Place a piece of chicken in the centre of the rice paper, top with a stick each of cucumber and carrot, two or three bean shoots and two mint leaves, fold over and roll rice paper to enclose filling. Repeat with remaining rice paper sheets and fillings.
Serve with hoisin sauce.



Chicken Balls

500g ground chicken mince
1 cup pureed veggies (a mixture of broccoli, carrots, onion, spinach, and mushrooms)
1/2 cup dried bread crumbs
1 egg
1/4 tsp salt, 1/8 tsp pepper, 1/4 tsp garlic powder, 1/4 tsp onion powder
Serve with a salsa or tzatiki dip

Take a few broccoli crowns, a quarter of an onion, about 6 baby carrots, a few spinach leaves, and a few sliced mushrooms. Chop until they fit well into your food processor. Process them until they are well incorporated and chopped. Combine ground chicken mince, veggies, bread crumbs, egg, and spices into a bowl. Shape meatballs and arrange on a baking dish. Bake at 200°C for 15 minutes.



Fruit Salad Muffins – Makes approx 12 muffins

2 cups self-raising flour
1 egg (free range)
1 cup natural yoghurt
1/2 cup low fat milk
(can use rice or soy milk)
2 bananas mashed
1/2 punnet strawberries or blueberries finely chopped
6 large oranges if you would like to present muffins in orange skins



Pre-heat oven to 180°C. Lightly grease large muffin tin. Slice oranges in half and squeeze juice. Retain juice for another recipe and ensure all the pulp is removed. Place orange halves in muffin trays...these are your cake paper cases! Sift flour in a bowl. Mix together the egg, yoghurt and milk and add to the flour mix, stirring until just combined. Stir through the mashed bananas and chopped strawberries. Spoon into the orange halves until the orange halves are half full...kids love the look of these. Bake for 20 minutes in moderate oven. Enjoy!

Pork Vegetable Sausage Rolls

250g lean pork mince (chicken mince – optional)
1/2 cup fresh wholemeal breadcrumbs
1 egg yolk
1/2 stick celery, finely chopped
1 small carrot, finely grated
1 small zucchini, finely grated
1/4 onion grated
2 sprigs flat-leaf parsley, picked and chopped
2 sheets frozen puff pastry, thawed (low fat)
1/2 tbsp poppy seeds
1 egg mixed with 1 tbsp cold water
Sweet chilli sauce

Pre-heat oven to 200°C. Whiz mince, breadcrumbs and egg yolk in a food processor until well combined. Remove to a bowl, season and add vegetables and parsley. Cut pastry sheets in half and spoon a quarter of the mixture lengthways along centre of each piece. Brush eggwash along long edges of each piece and roll up pressing down lightly to seal. Cut each roll into 3cm pieces and make a small incision in each to prevent splitting. Brush tops with eggwash and sprinkle with poppy seeds. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden and cooked.



Tzatziki Dip

500g (2 cups) plain Greek-style yoghurt
1 telegraph cucumber, peeled, halved, seeded
1 large garlic clove, crushed
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh chives
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Grate cucumber and squeeze out excess moisture with your hands. Combine yoghurt, cucumber, garlic, chives, olive oil and lemon juice in a bowl and mix well. Season with salt. Cover and place in fridge for a day before serving to allow flavours to develop.

Hummus

3 garlic cloves, minced, more if you like
1/4 cup plain low-fat yogurt or water
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon olive oil
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon cumin
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 600g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped

Combine everything in blender or food processor and process until smooth. If you need more liquid to make a nice consistency, add a bit more yogurt or water. Chill.



Roast Beetroot Dip

1 bunch beetroot
1 head garlic
olive oil cooking spray
1 cup low-fat yoghurt
2 tablespoons dill, finely chopped (optional)

Preheat oven to 200°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper. Trim beetroot, leaving 1cm stalks attached. Cut 5mm off the top of the head of garlic.

Place beetroot and garlic onto prepared baking tray. Spray with oil. Roast for 45 to 50 minutes or until tender when tested with a skewer. Set aside for 15 minutes to cool.

Gently peel and discard skin from beetroot. Squeeze garlic flesh from head.

Roughly chop beetroot. Place into a food processor with garlic flesh. Process until smooth. Transfer to a glass bowl. Stir in yoghurt, dill, and salt and pepper. Cover. Refrigerate for 3 hours to allow flavours to develop. Transfer to a serving bowl.



Muesli Bars - Makes approx 16 bars

3/4 cup rolled oats
1 cup muesli*
1 cup sultanas
1 cup chopped dried apricots (or dried fruit medley)
3/4 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
1/2 cup pitted prunes
1/2 cup dates
1/4 cup shredded coconut
1/4 cup LSA
1/4 cup sunflower seeds
3 tablespoons honey
Natural yoghurt
*Use a natural muesli that is nut and sugar free.

In a medium saucepan, combine sultanas, apricots, honey and orange juice. Bring to the boil, stir for one minute, cover with lid and turn off heat. When cool, combine with remaining ingredients except for yoghurt. Press mixture into a lightly greased cake tin or mini muffin tins can create cute round bars for variety. Press down well with hands to compact mixture.

Spoon small dollops of yoghurt onto each bar. Cook in oven 160°C for 5 mins. Then refrigerate for 24 hours before serving. Can be kept in the fridge. **Tip:** Ensure you mark the container with "nut free muesli bar" to conform with current school policies.

Chicken Nuggets

500 g organic chicken breast/thigh, cut into nugget shapes
1 clove garlic, crushed
plain flour
spray – olive oil

Mix chicken with garlic and let stand for about 30 minutes. Roll chicken pieces in flour then freeze for 15 minutes. Spray with olive oil. Bake in a preheated 180°C oven for 1 hour.

Easy Zucchini Slice

6 small zucchini, grated
1 onion, grated
1 potato, grated
1 carrot, grated
8 slices of short cut bacon or light ham chopped
1 cup cheese, grated
1 1/2 cups plain flour
6 eggs, lightly beaten
1/2 tomato sliced
salt and pepper

Pre-heat oven to 160°C. Lightly grease a quiche or lasagne dish. Put all ingredients into a big bowl and mix really well. Pour into dish, top with sliced tomato and cook in the oven for one hour.

Notes.

This is simple, delicious and very cheap. If you are vegetarian simply leave out the bacon or ham.

Some additions to change it up can be corn, capsicum, tomato, smoked salmon and light sour cream, peas, grated pumpkin, mushrooms, baby spinach, diced onion, grated sweet potato, yellow zucchini and diced or shredded chicken.

This is very versatile and can also be poured into a muffin tin for individual serves that only take 25-30 minutes to cook or into mini muffins for 12-15 mins.



Apple and Blackberry Muffins – makes 12

(www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

2 cups plain white flour
1 cup wholemeal plain flour
5 teaspoons baking powder
3 eggs
1 1/2 cups apple juice
1 1/2 cups blackberries, fresh or frozen

Sift flour and baking powder into a bowl. Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients.
Lightly beat eggs. Add to dry ingredients with the apple juice and blackberries. Mix quickly to just combine.
Lightly spray muffin trays with cooking spray. Fill two-thirds of each muffin hole with the mixture.
Bake at 190°C for 20 minutes, or until muffins spring back when lightly touched.



(Image credit: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

Banana and Oatmeal Cookies - makes 12

150 g (1 cup) smashed ripe banana
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
200 g (2 cups) rolled oats
50 g (1/2 cup) desiccated coconut
60 g (1/2 cup) raisins
90 g (1/4 cup) honey or pure maple syrup
60 ml (1/4 cup) olive oil, butter, coconut oil

Preheat your oven to 160°C – fan forced.
Combine all the ingredients into a large bowl.
Mix together well with your hands, squeezing the mixture together until it starts to bind.
Use a small ice cream scoop for this or tablespoon or your hands to form cookies.
Flatten slightly then sprinkle with rolled oats.
Bake for 30 minutes or until golden.
Cool and enjoy.



For more great ideas go to:

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/mums-united
www.healthytogetharmildura.com.au