

The Importance of Variety



Vrt... Vret... Variety!

Let's compare food variety to the alphabet. Eating a varied diet is like writing with all of the letters of the alphabet. Conversely, when we remove a food group, it's as if we had taken out an entire group of letters, like vowels. So variety becomes vrt! Think about it. With just 26 letters, we can spell any word in the dictionary. Similarly, with a wide variety of foods, we can meet all of our bodily needs.

Enjoyment

It is so much nicer to write all these letters in different colours. Think about the number of choices in a box of coloured pencils. It is the same with menus. They are more enjoyable when there is a variety of food types, shapes, textures and colours. Eating well is enjoyable!



Variety all year long

It's best to opt for local, seasonal fruits and vegetables. In the summer and fall, we have a lot more to choose from because these are the seasons of abundance. In the winter, we eat more vegetables from the south. But don't forget that we still have apples, cabbage, carrots, potatoes and other foods that grow in Quebec and are available year round. This is a great conversation to have with children!



Variety in the lunch box

Don't worry!

Has a child brought the same snack or lunch two days in a row? No problem! Don't worry! Variety should be assessed over a few weeks' time, not on a day-to-day basis. There are actually some advantages to a little repetition.

- ▶ Less waste and more savings. No need to buy 8 kinds of fruit in a week. We are fine with 3 - 4 and can buy different ones next week.
- ▶ It's a simple, time-saving solution. Cooking large batches of food and using leftovers in lunches is a good idea!

Long live the thermos!

Sheppard's pie, spaghetti, chili, hearty lentil soup, ragouts, General Tso's tofu... just about any meal is good in a thermos! And children won't have to wait for their lunch to get warmed up in the microwave. Thermoses also make preparing lunches easier because we can use leftovers from the night before. Variety comes naturally when we serve a hearty soup for lunch. Choose the right thermos. Get ones made with stainless steel as opposed to plastic. Pour boiling water into the thermos and put the lid on it. Wait for 10 minutes before emptying it and placing piping hot food inside.

Change an ingredient, change a lunch!

Here are a few suggestions for those of you looking for lunch ideas!

For a variation on a classic sandwich:

- ▶ Try different kinds of bread (sliced, kaiser roll, bagel, croissant, pita, etc.).
- ▶ Turn sandwiches into hearty salads.
- ▶ Switch out deli meats for leftover trout, roast beef or grilled tofu prepared the night before.
- ▶ Layer the lettuce on a sandwich with thin slices of cucumber or radish, coleslaw, baby spinach, grated carrots, etc.

Vary desserts.

- ▶ For an alternative to yogurt ⇨ make rice pudding, with tapioca or milk.
- ▶ For an alternative to store-bought granola bars or cookies ⇨ store a variety of homemade cookies, muffins and bars in the freezer.
- ▶ To vary fresh fruit ⇨ opt for plain fruit salads or add lemon or lime zest to them. Opt for compotes, fruit crisps, etc.



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