Vegetarian Packed Lunch Ideas
use your imagination!

A packed lunch does not have to be boring - with a little imagination you could have a different sandwich for every day of the year. For the perfect balance, make sure you include foods from the 3 major food groups plus a drink:

1. A starchy food such as bread, pasta, rice or potatoes
2. A protein food such as beans, peas, or soya products
3. Some vegetables such as cherry tomatoes, carrot sticks or sweetcorn. A piece of fruit such as a banana, a box of raisins or a pot of fruit salad
4. A drink, such as fruit juice, milk or water

Dairy foods are a good source of calcium so try to have three portions a day. For example low fat yoghurt, fromage frais or semi-skimmed milk. Low fat dairy foods are the best choice for children over 2 years old.
Sandwiches can be made much more interesting by varying the type of bread you use, and bread can be served as it comes or toasted.

You could try:
- Wholemeal, granary, white or high fibre white bread
- Tortilla wraps or chapattis
- Crisp bread or crackers
- Rolls, panini, or bagels
- Pitta bread.

Vegetarian ideas

For those days when you are short of time, there are many ready-made vegetarian products in the shops that can be kept in the store cupboard and make great sandwiches in an instant, such as:
- Bean paté
- Tahini (sesame seed paste)
- Nut butters such as peanut, almond, hazel or cashew
- Hummus
- Braised tofu in a tin
- Vegan cheese i.e. Fromso®
- Fake meat slices
- Falafals – (made from chickpeas)
1. Spicy Bean Paté

400g tin Cannellini or kidney beans, drained
1 clove - crushed garlic
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 tablespoons natural yoghurt
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
Salt and cayenne pepper/chilli flakes

**Method**

Blend beans in food processor until smooth. In a bowl, place the garlic, lemon juice, yoghurt, oil and parsley. Mix well. Add beans and season. Chill for 1 hour. Serve with black olives, tomato wedges, in a sandwich or on toast.

2. Hummus

1 tin drained chickpeas
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 clove crushed garlic
3-4 x 15ml spoons water

**Method**

Open the chickpeas and use the sieve to drain away the liquid. Tip the chickpeas into the blender. Use the juice squeezer to remove the juice from the lemon and pour it into the blender. Add the garlic to the blender. Place the lid on the blender and switch on for 15-20 seconds. Turn the blender off. Use a spatula to move the chickpeas away from the edge of the blender. Add 1x15ml spoon of water. Place the lid on the blender and switch on for 15-20 seconds. Repeat this until a smooth paste is produced.
3. Lentil spread
100g uncooked red lentils
½ a large onion, finely chopped, pre-cooked in a little oil
1 dessertspoon of garlic paste
2 dessertspoons of tomato purée
2 sticks of Celery
Black pepper

Method
Boil lentils for 10 minutes. Mix together lentils, onion, garlic and tomato purée. Add black pepper to taste. Spread onto a wrap, finely chop celery and sprinkle on, then roll.

4. Butter Bean dip
1 400g tin of butter beans
6 dessertspoons of low fat fromage frais
1 dessertspoon of lemon juice
1 dessertspoon of garlic paste
2 tablespoons of fresh parsley

Method
Open and drain tin. Rinse contents. Put beans, fromage frais, lemon juice and garlic into a large bowl. Coarsely mash beans with a potato masher. Chop parsley and add to mixture.

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For a balanced diet...

**Fruit and vegetables**
Always include fruit and vegetables in a packed lunch.

Try:
- Carrot sticks with a dip
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Celery sticks
- Salad leaves or cucumber in sandwiches for a fresh taste
- Fresh fruit
- Fruit Salad
- Dried fruit e.g. raisins, apricots, figs
- Fruit juice

**Alternatives to meat and fish including beans and peas**
Always include a protein-rich food in your meal. For example:
- Lentils and chickpeas
- Wheat protein, e.g. quinoa
- Home-made or bought bean paté or hummus
- Nuts and seeds
- Pulses, for example, kidney beans, baked beans or butter beans

**Food Safety**
Use a cool bag to keep dairy foods and meat substitutes cold and safe and it will keep the lunch box cold all morning. Dishes containing rice must be kept in the fridge. Keep for a reasonable time.
Bread, cereals and potatoes
Always include a starchy food in a packed lunch.
Try:
Different types of bread e.g. wholemeal
Granary rolls
Pitta bread
High fibre white bread
Tortilla wraps
Crispbread
Bagels

Milk and dairy foods
For example:
Cheese spread in a sandwich
Chunks of hard cheese
Flavoured yoghurt
Plain yoghurt with added fresh fruit
Plain or flavoured milk

Safety Tips!
For added chilling, freeze a carton of fruit juice the night before.
Meat should be refrigerated within 90 minutes of cooking and stored
maximum of three days.

Low fat dairy foods are recommended for children over 2 years.
1. Couscous and chickpea salad

1 cup couscous
1 1/4 cups boiling water/vegetable stock cube
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice
Crushed garlic
1 teaspoon ground cumin, 1 teaspoon ground coriander, 1/2 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1 grated carrot
1/2 red pepper – finely chopped
1/4 red onion – finely sliced/diced
1 cup drained chickpeas
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Method
Pour boiling water over couscous, cover with cloth and leave for 5 minutes. In bowl, mix oil, vinegar, juice and spices – mix well. Fluff couscous with a fork, stir in carrot, pepper, onion, chickpeas and parsley. Pour over dressing and mix.
2. Pasta salad

Small tin of Kidney Beans
Small tin of sweetcorn
1 green pepper
75g of uncooked pasta
For the Dressing:
3 dessertspoons olive oil
1/2 teaspoon mustard
1 dessertspoon of balsamic vinegar

Method

For the Dressing:
Put ingredients in a pot with tight fitting lid. Seal and shake.

Cook pasta for approx 10 minutes. Open and drain tins. Rinse contents. Finely chop the pepper. Put all ingredients in a large bowl. Add dressing. Mix using your hands.

3. Potato salad

1 large potato (150g after peeled weight)
1 medium tin of broad beans (200g)
3 small tomatoes
Small tin of sweetcorn
1 dessertspoon of olive oil
1 dessertspoon of lime/lemon juice

Method

Peel and chop the potato into small cubes (approx 20cm).
Boil for 15 mins or microwave in a small amount of water for 4 minutes. Open and drain tins. Rinse contents. Chop tomatoes to same size as potatoes. Put all ingredients in large bowl. Mix using your hands.