

The Healthy Lunchbox - How to Plan, Prepare & Pack Stress-Free Meals Kids will Love

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Pros

This book reads with a very positive tone and includes some good timesaving tips. It has a good concept – like including recipes and handy charts providing lists of mains, fruits, vegetables and desserts that you can mix and match to create a meal. It also is realistic about day-to-day issues of kids trading their lunches and not arguing over leftovers. The tips for picky eaters were also helpful.

Cons

Although this book has some good ideas about what to be included, the actual content is disappointing. The recipes are not lunch box friendly and certainly don't seem like something that could be prepared after dinner, homework and bath time for the next day's lunch. In addition, the recipes didn't seem particularly lunch-box friendly or kid friendly.

The recipes include an 'exchange system', again, a good idea, but nowhere is the exchange system defined and certainly cannot be figured out. For example: 0-12g of protein did not count as a 'lean meat' exchange, then 10-17g of protein was 1 "lean meat" and 21-22g of protein were 2 "lean meats" and 19-22 g were 3 'lean meat' exchanges. The same inconsistencies exist for the other exchanges, which are: starch, carbohydrate, and fat. Which begs the question what is the difference between a starch and a carbohydrate exchange and why are there no fruit, vegetable or dairy exchanges?

Many of the recipes include fructose and "corn oil spread, tub" with a focus on low fat substitutions, the rationale for using these ingredients are not explained and in our opinion are not based on the latest evidence in nutrition. The authors attempts to meet the needs of gluten free readers is a feeble attempt to cover a very important and serious medical issue that deserves a more thoughtful approach to do it justice. We were surprised at the number of recipes including nuts and peanuts considering most elementary schools are nut free and this is a more common allergy than gluten. The grain group is mentioned only briefly and is considered part of the snack/dessert group. The sweeping generalizations and questionable sources of the nutrition information make for shaky nutrition content and the book includes fallacies such as apples are "red" fruits, when in fact the carotenoid content of coloured fruits and vegetables is based on the colour of the flesh, not the skin.

The final word

Save your lunch money, this book is not worth the \$16.95. Although, a great concept and a much-needed book, this one does not come close to making the grade. We will continue to look for other books covering this important topic.