Autumn arrives, and it’s all about “Back-to-School” and “Back-to-Regular” routines for families with school-age children. As much as meeting new teachers, organizing car pools, finding the right yellow bus, and checking homework tasks, packing a daily lunch is essential for these families. Making decisions about what to put into that lunch box or lunch bag is no small order and has many dimensions. It also remains mom’s task. In this issue of the Allrecipes Measuring Cup Trend Report, we share insights about lunch bag and school night dinner time decisions from moms participating in the annual 2017 Allrecipes Back-to-School Survey. Read on to learn more and move to the head of your class.

Mom knows best—the familiar saying from years past still carries power today. When it comes to what goes into the lunch box or brown bag—or what’s purchased at the grocery store—moms rule as primary decision-makers. And it’s not just about easy-to-make PB&J sandwiches. Top trending concerns about which food items to pack for school lunches focus on low-sugar, clean eating, organic foods, and dietary concerns, all reflecting mom’s strong preference for healthful eating.

**INSIGHT #1 Lunch Box Lifestyles**

When selecting school lunch items, which concerns influence your choices?

- Low-Sugar: 38% (Millennial Moms), 25% (Moms Ages 35+)
- Clean Eating: 44% (Millennial Moms), 24% (Moms Ages 35+)
- Organic: 25% (Millennial Moms), 19% (Moms Ages 35+)
- Nut-Free: 12% (Millennial Moms), 9% (Moms Ages 35+)
- Gluten-Free: 7% (Millennial Moms), 8% (Moms Ages 35+)
- Vegetarian: 4% (Millennial Moms), 5% (Moms Ages 35+)
- Vegan: 3% (Millennial Moms), 4% (Moms Ages 35+)
Moms are practical when it comes to packing school lunches. They pay attention and prioritize what they’re packing for their kids based on nutritional values and health concerns. They’re also tuned in to keeping the (almost) daily task easy and cost effective, aware of providing a wholesome lunch without going over the family’s food budget.

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**Allrecipes’ Fastest Trending Kid-Friendly Lunch Box Recipes**

- **Extra Easy Hummus**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - 603 made it
  - 485 reviews

- **Peanut Butter and Apple Sandwich**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - 63 made it
  - 62 reviews

- **Tor-Tunas**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - 28 made it
  - 13 reviews

- **Lunch Box Pita Pockets**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - 23 made it
  - 10 reviews

- **School Lunch Bagel Sandwich**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - 29 made it
  - 22 reviews

- **Emmi’s Banana Wraps**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - 38 made it
  - 17 reviews

- **Alphabet Soup**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - 48 made it
  - 34 reviews

- **Gluten-Free Chicken Nuggets**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - 25 made it
  - 9 reviews
**INSIGHT #3  Sandwiches are Forever**

Two pieces of bread surrounding a tasty filling can’t be beat! Easy to eat and portable, sandwiches have been popular lunch fare in the U.S. since the 1920s when the commercial bread slicing machine was invented. As a lunch box item, one-third of moms say they always pack sandwiches because of their child-friendly, hands-only munching appeal. Other lunch box basics include fresh fruit and bottled water.

**How often do you pack a sandwich in your child’s lunch?**

- Never: 2%
- Rarely: 8%
- Sometimes: 37%
- Almost Always: 53%

**How often do you place the following item in your child’s lunch?**

- Fresh Fruit: 47% Never, 5% Rarely, 46% Sometimes, 3% Almost Always
- Bottled Water: 44% Never, 7% Rarely, 37% Sometimes, 2% Almost Always
- Sandwich: 37% Never, 2% Rarely, 7% Sometimes, 12% Almost Always
- Fruit Juice: 48% Never, 7% Rarely, 37% Sometimes, 17% Almost Always
- Apple/Fruit Sauce: 58% Never, 9% Rarely, 12% Sometimes, 9% Almost Always
- Yogurt: 60% Never, 11% Rarely, 9% Sometimes, 20% Almost Always
- Fruit Snacks: 55% Never, 7% Rarely, 19% Sometimes, 20% Almost Always
- Raw Vegetables: 48% Never, 14% Rarely, 19% Sometimes, 19% Almost Always
- Cheese: 64% Never, 12% Rarely, 7% Sometimes, 17% Almost Always
- Chips: 52% Never, 8% Rarely, 8% Sometimes, 25% Almost Always
- Snack Bars: 62% Never, 17% Rarely, 13% Sometimes, 7% Almost Always
- Crackers: 69% Never, 17% Rarely, 11% Sometimes, 4% Almost Always
- Milk (cow): 45% Never, 4% Rarely, 10% Sometimes, 28% Almost Always
**INSIGHT #4  Lunch Box Diversity**

Variety is the spice of life, even at the elementary school lunch box level. Two-thirds of moms surveyed say they sometimes pack foods other than sandwiches, and for these moms, it’s all about variety. Picky eaters, dietary concerns, cost, and the convenience of packing lunch the night before also influence what goes into lunch bags. Alternative lunch box foods range from classic All-American favorites (e.g. fried chicken, chicken strips) to new, unconventional items such as cold noodles, bagels and cream cheese, and tacos.

**Which foods are you likely to pack instead of sandwiches?**

![Bar chart showing the most popular lunch box alternatives among Millennial Moms and Moms Ages 35+.

**What are the reasons you don’t pack sandwiches?**

- I like to offer more variety: 67%
- Child prefers other lunch box options: 43%
- Child doesn’t like sandwiches: 14%
- We are trying to avoid gluten: 5%
- Child doesn’t have time to eat it: 2%
INSIGHT #5  Ethnic Favorites

Go to School

While fried chicken and chicken strips will always be irresistible to kids, the mainstream enthusiasm of adults for many ethnic dishes makes it no surprise kids are also enjoying them. Portable, packable, and tasty hot or cold, foods with Hispanic origins are most popular in the ethnic category. Compared with 2015 survey data, they’re turning up twice as often today in kids’ lunches than just two years ago.

How often do you place the following food items in your child’s lunch box?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Millennial Moms</th>
<th>Moms Ages 35+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taco</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burrito</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quesadilla</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INSIGHT #6  Kids and Coupons

Rule as New-Food Influencers

How do “new” and “try-for-the first-time” foods find their way into school lunch boxes and brown bags? Almost all moms overall (98%) report it’s their children who drive decisions about which new food items to pack for lunch. Runners-up, but just as influential in mom’s world, are coupons and discount offers, and recommendations by pediatricians.

What influences you to try new products?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Millennial Moms</th>
<th>Moms Ages 35+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun Packaging</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended by brand</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended by pediatrician</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/ coupon</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child asks for it</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INSIGHT #7  Got Extra Snacks in that Sack?

The answer to this question is a resounding “Yes!”
Nibbles for kids to enjoy during the school day are increasingly finding their way into lunch boxes. Moms questioned in the Allrecipes 2017 Back-to-School Survey report also packing snacks for their student eaters to nosh on at break time.
The top types of snacks range from breakfast and midmorning bites to afternoon snacks. Cookies rank as perennially popular, while newcomer snacks range from nuts, popcorn, and dried fruit to hummus and salsa. A few extra adventurous moms are packing seaweed snacks.

Are you packing foods for school for more than lunch?

- Millennial Moms
- Moms Ages 35+

- **Breakfast**
  - Moms Ages 35+: 6%
  - Millennial Moms: 7%

- **Mid-morning Snack**
  - Moms Ages 35+: 37%
  - Millennial Moms: 48%

- **Lunch**
  - Moms Ages 35+: 95%
  - Millennial Moms: 98%

- **Afternoon Snack**
  - Moms Ages 35+: 24%
  - Millennial Moms: 27%

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### Allrecipes’ Fastest Trending Snack Recipes

- **Playgroup Granola Bars**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - Views: 2K
  - Reviews: 1,369

- **Kettle Corn**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - Views: 1K
  - Reviews: 1,110

- **No Bake Cookies**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - Views: 1K
  - Reviews: 1,543

- **Baked Tortilla Chips**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - Views: 517
  - Reviews: 337

- **Granola Bars**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - Views: 211
  - Reviews: 57

- **Ants on a Log**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - Views: 149
  - Reviews: 86

- **Baked Oatmeal Breakfast Bars**
  - Rating: ★★★☆☆
  - Views: 123
  - Reviews: 17

- **Healthy Peanut Butter Fruit Dip**
  - Rating: ★★★★★
  - Views: 40
  - Reviews: 15
INSIGHT #8  Practical Dinnertime Decisions

Mom isn’t only packing school lunches. She’s also most often the key person in charge of preparing her family’s dinner and shopping for groceries. When mom wants to try a new dinner idea, what is most likely to influence her? Practicality wins for almost three-quarters of home cooks. It’s all about what’s on hand in her fridge or pantry. Next up for influencing her decisions: Indulging dad and the kids to prepare their requested dinner ideas. Peer and brand recommendations also sway mom’s dinner decisions, as do delicious online images.

When preparing meals for your family, how do you typically go about deciding what to eat?

When preparing meals for your family, how do you typically go about deciding what to eat?

Overall

- Look in the fridge: 72%
- Look in the pantry: 71%
- Ask family: 65%
- What is on sale?: 42%
- Check online recipes: 38%
- Check social media: 25%
- What is in season?: 22%
- Look in the garden: 11%

Allrecipes’ Fastest Trending Family-Friendly Recipes

- Caesar Salad Supreme
  - 4.5 stars
  - 2K made it
  - 1,241 reviews

- Two-Ingredient Pizza Dough
  - 4.5 stars
  - 172 made it
  - 39 reviews

- Chicken Fajita Pasta Bake
  - 4.5 stars
  - 54 made it
  - 11 reviews

- Quick Meatball Stroganoff
  - 4.5 stars
  - 24 made it
  - 3 reviews

- Chicken Rotini Stovetop Casserole
  - 4 stars
  - 502 made it
  - 138 reviews

- Zavioli with Spinach and Ricotta
  - 4 stars
  - 50 made it
  - 10 reviews

- Roasted Cherry Tomatoes with Angel Hair
  - 4 stars
  - 368 made it
  - 47 reviews

- Sheet Pan Chicken Fajitas
  - 4 stars
  - 143 made it
  - 28 reviews
Methodology

Data cited in this Measuring Cup Report is collected from an external independent panel fielded in June 2017, consisting of 1,025 U.S.-based women identified as having children under age 18 living at home. All participating respondents view food content online, cook at home multiple nights per week, and are the primary grocery shopper for their household.

About Allrecipes

Allrecipes, the world’s largest food-focused social network, receives more than 1.5 billion visits annually from home cooks who inspire and inform cooking through shared recipes, photos, reviews, collections, profiles, and videos. Since its launch in 1997, the Seattle-based social site has served as a dynamic, indispensable resource for cooks of all skill levels seeking trusted recipes, entertaining ideas, everyday and holiday meal solutions, and cooking instruction. Allrecipes is a global, multi-platform brand with 19 sites serving 23 countries in 12 languages, three mobile apps, and a newly released Amazon Alexa Skill. Allrecipes magazine, recognized by MIN as the 2013 Magazine Launch of the year, boasts a readership of 7.6 million cooks.

About Meredith Corporation

Meredith Corporation (NYSE:MDP; www.meredith.com) is the leading media and marketing company serving American women. Meredith features multiple well-known national brands—including Allrecipes, Better Homes and Gardens, Martha Stewart Living, Parents, Family Circle, My Weddings, Shape, American Baby and Every Day with Rachael Ray—along with local television brands in fast-growing markets. Meredith is the industry leader in creating content in key consumer interest areas such as home, family, food, health and wellness, and self-development. Meredith uses multiple distribution platforms—including print, television, digital, mobile, tablets, and video—to give consumers content they desire and to deliver the messages of its advertising and marketing partners.