

Grand Rapids, Mich. – A new school year means the return to routine – and the challenge that goes along with that. Parents report that one task that tends to get long in the tooth quickly is keeping up with a menu of interesting school lunch ideas. Hectic schedules and daily chaos seem to zap creativity, leaving many to default to the same tired apple slices and celery sticks day after day.

If you face a similar scenario, the Meijer produce buyers have some suggestions for fun fruits and veggies that kids actually like that will help you extend the shelf life of your lunch plan.

Sugar Kiss melons: This California melon is the sweetest of the melon family and packs a punch of flavor, dissolving like sugar on your tongue. Say that magic word to your kids and watch how fast they eat it. It's a very versatile melon, too, because it pairs with a variety of other foods. Here's a quick and easy dish that your kids will love: Toss together cooked soba noodles, cooked and diced chicken, Sugar Kiss melon slices, red bell pepper slices, scallions, fresh cilantro and basil with rice vinegar and fresh lime juice. Make it the night before, pop a single serving into a Tupperware and slide it into the fridge.

Aloha pepper: This pretty, striped pepper is a unique variety that is a mix of an orange pepper and a red pepper. It pairs beautifully with citrus. Try mixing bite-sized chunks of pepper, mango, pineapple, papaya and cheese, or making mini kebabs with pepper, mango, cheese and turkey.

Angel Sweet grape tomatoes: Think your kids won't snack on tomatoes? Think again. These little guys are so sweet, they will amaze you. Angel Sweet tomatoes don't need to be sliced up. The kids can just pop them into their mouths. Pair them with bite-sized chunks of cheese, turkey or chicken, and almonds.

Mini organic greenhouse cucumbers: Unlike larger cucumbers, the skin on mini cucumbers isn't bitter. It's the perfect, portable veggie. Plus, they'll hold their crunch in your kids' lunchboxes, too. Mix them with seedless watermelon, and if your kids like it, feta cheese. It's a cool combination that provides kids with plenty of hydration. Hint: Look for the new "personal sized" watermelons. You'll have less waste than if you slice a big one.

Rainbow carrots: Baby orange carrots have been a staple in lunches for years. Are your kids getting a little tired of them? Surprise them with carrots that come in purple, white and yellow. Rainbow carrots are packed with antioxidants, and the novelty of colors makes them fun for kids. Pair sliced rainbow carrots with cheese or edamame for a crunchy, nutrient-filled lunch.

Sweet Tango apples: This juicy and delicious apple is the newest darling among apple lovers. It was developed at the University of Minnesota, which also brought us the popular Honey Crisp. Sliced apples tend to turn brown, so brush apples with a little lemon juice. These apples stay crisp and pair well with just about anything. Make your own, healthy "lunchable" with sliced apples, dried fruit, which is perfectly snackable, and sliced turkey spread with cream cheese and rolled up around a few leaves of spinach or lettuce and a slice of bell pepper.

I Control Kits: If you're sapped from packing those lunches day after day, let Meijer do the work for you. I Control Kits are pre-made, fresh lunches you can find in the produce area. They're filled with ready-to-eat options like diced cheese, turkey, veggies and dips, and sliced fruit. This is a great option if you're short on time.

A word about lunchboxes: The key to keeping your kids' lunches fresh is a good lunchbox. Here are a few suggestions: The [Fit & Fresh Multi-Flex Bento Box](#) has five compartments to keep your kids' food from running together, and comes with an ice pack that will keep everything cold. The [Arctic Zone Big Burger Expandable](#) lunch box is shaped like a burger and expands if you're packing for two. The [Rubbermaid LunchBlox Kit](#) has varying sizes of individual containers that snap together, and also snap to reusable ice packs.

About Meijer: Meijer is a Grand Rapids, Mich.-based retailer that operates more than 240 supercenters and grocery stores throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Wisconsin. A privately-owned and family-operated company since 1934, Meijer pioneered the "one-stop shopping" concept and has evolved through the years to include expanded fresh produce and meat departments, as well as pharmacies, comprehensive apparel departments, pet departments, garden centers, toys and electronics. For additional

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