



LUNCHBOX IDEAS



BANNED FOODS

The Ministry of Health's List of Banned/High-Risk Foods in ECE Centres (Choking Hazards):

These must not be provided to children under 5 in ECE settings:

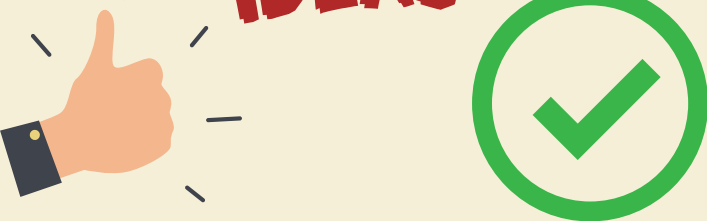
- Popcorn
- Nuts (whole or pieces, including trail mix)
- Hard rice crackers
- Raw, hard fruit or vegetables in chunks (like raw apple, carrot, celery – unless grated or softened)
- Sausages or cheerios (unless cut lengthwise and then sliced)
- Whole grapes or cherry tomatoes (must be cut into quarters)
- Hard lollies, toffee, and chewing gum
- Marshmallows (sticky and hard to swallow)
- Large chunks of meat or cheese
- Dried fruit like whole dried apricots (they're sticky and difficult to chew)



SAFE FOOD & LITTER LESS LUNCHES



LUNCHBOX IDEAS



Safer Alternatives:

- Soft sandwiches or wraps
- Grated or steamed fruit and veg
- Cheese slices (thin and manageable)
- Cut grapes or cherry tomatoes into quarters
- Mini muffins (savoury or healthy fruit versions)
- Boiled eggs, sliced
- Plain yoghurt in a reusable tub



WHAT IS A LITTER LESS LUNCHBOX?



A litterless lunch is a lunch with no rubbish – no plastic wrappers, foil packets, or throwaway packaging. Everything is packed in reusable containers or lunchboxes. It's kinder to the environment, reduces waste at the centre, and helps tamariki learn to care for the world around them. You Can Still Pack Biscuits, Crackers, Bars, Yoghurt etc! We're not saying you can't include these foods, we are just encouraging the removal of wrappers at home and pop them into a reusable container or compartment in your child's lunchbox. This also makes lunch easier for your child to manage and is more cost effective.

Top Tips for Easy, Cost-Effective Litterless Lunches:

- Instead of individual packet food, buy in bulk large bags of crackers or chippies and put a small handful into a container or compartment – it's cheaper and cuts down on waste.
- Remove packaging from muesli bars or sweet treats before packing.
- Use a lunchbox with sections or add small containers or silicone cups.
- Get your tamariki involved – they love helping pack their lunch!
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Thanks so much for supporting our move towards healthier, rubbish-free lunches. Together we can teach great habits and help protect our beautiful rural environment 🌱



♥ **A FINAL NOTE FROM THE COUNTRY GATE TEAM**
WE KNOW THAT PACKING A LUNCHBOX IS ONE MORE JOB IN YOUR ALREADY BUSY DAY, AND WE TRULY APPRECIATE THE TIME AND CARE YOU PUT INTO IT. THIS INFORMATION ISN'T ABOUT BEING STRICT OR PICKY — IT'S SIMPLY ABOUT KEEPING ALL OUR TAMARIKI SAFE WHILE THEY EAT.

WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME OF THE FOODS WE'VE LISTED (LIKE POPCORN OR WHOLE GRAPES) MIGHT BE THINGS YOUR CHILD EATS EASILY AT HOME. BUT OUR MEALTIMES ARE A BIT DIFFERENT — WE'RE WATCHING OVER SEVERAL CHILDREN AT ONCE, AND NEED TO BE EXTRA CAREFUL ABOUT CHOKING RISKS IN A GROUP SETTING.

IF YOU'D LIKE MORE IDEAS, EXAMPLES, OR PHOTOS TO HELP WITH LUNCHBOX PLANNING, JUST LET US KNOW — WE'RE MORE THAN HAPPY TO HELP HOWEVER WE CAN.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ 🌻