

Lunchbox – where the idea came from

School lunches – I wanted my kids to eat properly at school. But how can you provide them with food that is tastier than chips and sweets? The ham sandwich is a great stand by for the school lunch but most kids don't eat ham on white bread, and if they do it's fairly unhealthy when eaten often.

Concentration is affected when blood sugar levels run low and white bread is a very easily digested carb, it floods the blood with sugars quickly - only for a blood sugar level drop to hit them late in the afternoon. These kids don't learn as well as they might. And most brown bread sold in supermarkets is simply white bread with food dye.

How many times have you looked in your kids' schoolbags only to realize that there are four-month-old squished sandwiches and black bananas hiding in there?

I decided that on four days a week, I would give my kids a tasty lunch that would compete with the chips at the school canteen. While that is fairly easy to do if you're a good planner and have loads of time, which I was once upon a time, bashing something tasty out in less than 15 minutes when you're still half asleep can be a challenge, especially if you're low on ingredients.

I use lots wraps esp with seeds, crunchy veg, tasty dressngs, basil, rocket, crunchy lettuce, marinaded chicken (their favourite) and left overs from the previous day's meal when I can.

It helps of you have a hotpot – a thermos flask to keep food warm – like this;



These days I'm more often too disorganized to have planned anything to I find more and more that I'm dreaming up stuff based on what I have left in the cupboard. I keep stuff on standby for these mornings, wholewheat pasta (slow release carbs), tortellini, sundried tomato paste (very strong flavour) garlic paste, basil paste and chilli paste – all packed with flavour. Stir fries with soy and honey and lemon - it actually works with shredded cabbage -I've even managed to do sausage and 'mash' with onions – it's not really mash. you microwave a few spuds in water for 10 mins and then crush them in their skins, fry the saussies and onions while the spuds are on.

It occurred to me that if I had a database of all the quick lunches I prepared and could search by ingredient it would save me having to wrack my tired brain and I could, on occasion, hand it to my wife and say , ‘just look in there”,

All you have left is a carton of vegetable soup and a tin of coconut milk? No problem.

That combo gives a fantastic exotic soup, esp if you spice it up a little – lime and a little chilli paste.

Anyway, I think there are lots of other scenarios, single parents, students and anyone who can’t cook.