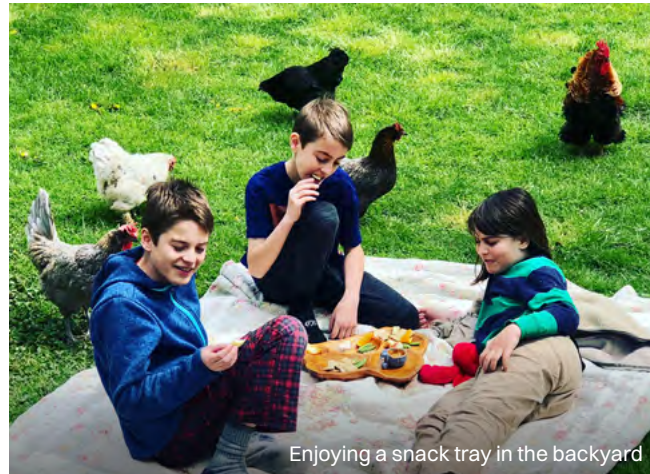


# Wholesome & Hearty Snacks for Spring

## KID-FRIENDLY SNACKS FOR THE SEASON

Courtney H. Diener-Stokes



Enjoying a snack tray in the backyard

FORTUNATELY, I LEARNED THE VALUE OF A wholesome snack tray when my three kids were very young. One day it dawned on me that instead of giving them filler foods to tide them over until their next meal, I could choose things to complement the meal. In the process, this approach took pressure

off me and the planning for the upcoming meal because the kiddos already had lots of their vegetables covered.

Even now that my kids are tweens and teens, when they arrive home from school ravenous, I still resort to my trusty snack tray filled with raw veggies served with ranch dip or hummus. While a variety of raw vegetables serves as the main anchor of the communal tray, some days I add cheddar cheese with whole grain crackers and apple slices. Another day we might have oat and raisin energy bites or maybe some peanut butter with celery sticks.

Parenting expert Chinyelu Kunz, founder of We Nurture Collective and a former preschool teacher for 25 years, knows a thing or two about the value of a wholesome snack tray as well as the best time to serve it. Kunz said an ideal time for morning snacks is between 9:45 and 10 a.m., when kids' energy begins to run low, while around 4 p.m. is best for an afternoon snack.

The snack food goals should be to serve kids just enough to tide them over until the next regular meal while serving foods that are simple and in their natural state. Kunz said if you aim for a nice balance of sweet foods (like fresh fruit) with savory foods (like hummus), you'll guarantee a happy snack time.

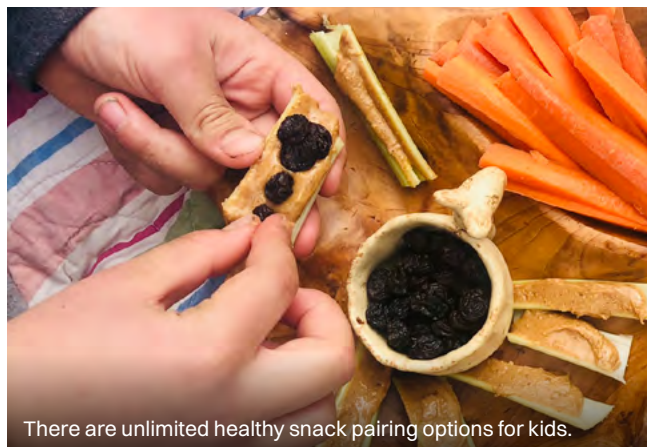
But beyond enjoying the food served, kids can also have fun preparing the snacks, plus they'll learn basic skills in the kitchen. Kunz said that tasks like chopping and scrubbing fruits and vegetables help develop hand-eye coordination and other skills.

"When children participate in food preparation, they gain confidence in doing real work. They see that the food they have just helped prepare will soon be on the table for everyone to enjoy, and that caring and helping in our daily work creates a sense of togetherness," she said. Other tasks, such as putting food out on a tray, setting the table and clearing the table can all be enjoyable for a child.

Read on for some wholesome and hearty snack ideas that your children are sure to enjoy!



Baking whole wheat milk and honey rolls



There are unlimited healthy snack pairing options for kids.

### Lemon Sea Salt Guacamole

*This kid-friendly guacamole is a wonderful dip alternative for raw vegetables. Made with just three ingredients, its simplicity makes the taste and texture appealing to children.*

Serves 2 to 3 children



- 2 ripe avocados
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 tsp. sea salt

Cut the avocados in half lengthwise, separate the halves and remove the avocado seeds. Using a knife, cut down to the inside of the skin and crisscross several cuts to make little squares. With a spoon, scrape the avocado chunks out and place them in a small bowl.

Mash avocado with a fork. Add lemon juice and salt. Stir to combine. Serve immediately.

Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to one day.

### Maple Nut Granola

*This granola, sweetened with maple syrup, is a family favorite that pairs perfectly with yogurt — preferably plain, without any added sugar.*

Makes about 8 cups

- 3 C. steel cut oats
- 1 2/3 C. oat flour
- 1 C. coconut oil
- 1 C. currants
- 1 C. shredded coconut (unsweetened)
- 1 C. chopped walnuts
- 1 C. chopped pecans
- 1/3 C. flax seeds
- 1 C. sunflower seeds, roasted and salted
- 1 C. maple syrup
- 4 tsp. pure vanilla
- 3 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. salt

Preheat oven to 350°.

In a large bowl, add all ingredients and mix together.

### Child-Friendly Tools

Chester County parenting expert Chinyelu Kunz recommends having child-friendly kitchen tools on hand if you want to involve your kids in food prep. If kids have their own safe tools that are easily accessible to them, they're more likely to participate in preparing snacks and meals.

Snack trays can serve as a wonderful introduction for kids to learn the fun of helping in the kitchen by washing, chopping, cutting, stirring and putting items on a tray. Kunz suggests starting with these three essentials:

- Child-safe vegetable and fruit chopper
- Child-sized cutting board
- Child-sized apron.



Press the mixture down on a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven. Turn granola over and press it down with a spatula. Return it to the oven to bake for another 20 to 25 minutes, until golden brown.

Let the granola cool completely before storing in a glass Mason jar or other airtight container for up to two weeks.

### Whole Wheat Milk & Honey Rolls

*When Kunz was a preschool teacher, these rolls were a favorite among her students for many years. Children love kneading the dough and making fun shapes. Serve warm and pair with butter, fruit-sweetened jam or avocado slices. Warning: the aroma when cooking is divine!*

Makes about 20 rolls (depending on size)

- 1 tsp. fresh yeast (or 1 pkg. dry yeast)
- 1/4 C. warm water

1 tsp. honey + ¼ C. reserved  
1 C. whole milk  
½ C. butter  
2½ C. whole wheat bread flour  
1½ C. whole wheat pastry flour  
1 tsp. salt  
2 tsp. cinnamon

In a small bowl, add yeast, warm water and one teaspoon of honey. Stir, cover with a tea towel and let sit for 25 to 30 minutes.

In a saucepan, warm the milk, taking care it doesn't bubble or boil. Add butter and stir until melted. Leave the pan uncovered to allow the mixture to cool.

In a large bowl, add the flours, salt and cinnamon. Stir to combine.

Make a well in the flour mixture and add the yeast mixture. Stir to combine. Add the milk and butter mixture, along with the reserved honey. Mix to thoroughly combine into a dough.

Prepare your work surface with flour. Knead the dough for about 10 minutes. Place in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap and let rise for 40 minutes to one hour, until about double in size.

Preheat oven to 350°.

Form the dough into small bun shapes. Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

Bake for 20 to 30 minutes.

Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to two days.

### Sweet Potato Chips

*This is a kid-favorite baked vegetable snack for after school, a moment for reconnection with your kids at the end of the day and a time to regroup before shifting into dinner prep and homework mode. With good snacks and happy kids, even parents can enjoy snack time!*

Serves about 4 kids



2 medium sweet potatoes  
Olive oil cooking spray  
Herbamare seasoning salt

Preheat oven to 250°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Cut sweet potatoes into thin rounds and place on a baking sheet, being sure not to overlap.

Spray the rounds with olive oil cooking spray and sprinkle with seasoning salt.

Place in the oven and bake for about 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and flip potatoes over. Bake for another 10 minutes, until both sides are slightly brown.

Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to two days.

### No Bake Peanut Butter and Raisin Oat Bites

*Gather the kids around to help form this honey-kissed mixture into tasty snack balls. Once finished, pop them in the freezer and let them harden for at least half an hour. Cooling them enhances the chewiness and flavor of the bites.*

Makes 12 to 15 bites, depending on size



1 C. instant or steel cut oats  
⅔ C. smooth, natural peanut butter (no sugar added)  
1 T. honey  
¼ C. raisins, packed  
¼ tsp. cinnamon  
¼ tsp. pure vanilla

In a medium bowl, add all ingredients and stir to combine. Form mixture into balls, and place them on a parchment-lined cookie sheet or tray.

Place in the freezer for half an hour, then serve immediately. More than one hour in the freezer makes them very hard. While I prefer to eat them this way, I thaw them for five to 10 minutes for young children.

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to one week.

### We Nurture Collective's Five Nutritious Snack Pairings for Children

*Find your favorite kid-proof tray and put together a tasty combination of after-school snacks — a new combo every day. Try these.*

**Snack Combination 1:** • Sliced apples • Nut butter • Raisin

**Snack Combination 2:** • Fresh berries • Pretzels • Cheese slices

**Snack Combination 3:** • Seeds • Sliced banana • Avocado toast

**Snack Combination 4:** • Yogurt (no or low sugar) • Maple granola

**Snack Combination 5:** • Hummus • Sliced vegetables • Cheese cubes

We Nurture Collective is a supportive community for parents that includes Stories for Children and a parenting podcast, an Instagram community, one-on-one parenting coaching, teacher mentoring



and parenting workshops. More at [WeNurtureCollective.com](http://WeNurtureCollective.com). ♦

*Courtney Diener-Stokes is an award-winning journalist, author, food writer, photographer and food stylist. Most recently she co-authored the Kimberton Whole Foods Cookbook and Farmhouse Manna: Nourishing Recipes and Rituals for Head, Heart, Hands & Soul. She lives in the Oley Valley countryside with her husband, three children, two Babydoll Southdown sheep, a flock of bantam chickens and a Bernedoodle named Daisy.*



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