

More great school lunch ideas

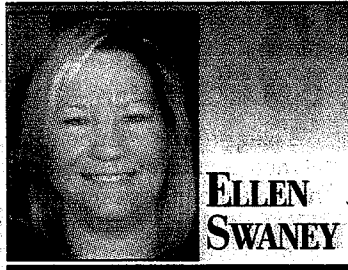
When I saw an email with the subject line: school lunches, I was happy that someone responded to my request for more ideas. Once I got through reading the whole email however, I couldn't wait to write about some of the great tips that Lesli Kotloski of Bethel Park shared.

Lesli is a noontime lunch and recess aid at William Penn Elementary School in Bethel Park, so she knows what kids eat. Lesli also, packs her husband a lunch every day with a note, and has done so for 10 years. Lesli says, "I'm always looking for ways to be inventive and creative."

First, Lesli wants all moms out there to know that, based on her observations, there are some items that all the kids like; fun-shaped snack crackers, squeeze yogurts and fruit cups.

"I see what they eat every day," says Lesli, "and these are their favorites." No surprise there. So how do you keep it interesting?

Lesli recommends wrapping sandwich ingredients in lettuce leaves. "Wraps are fun and the lettuce won't get soggy." That's a great idea. Luke loves lettuce wraps with leftover chicken. Older kids could even assemble their own



ELLEN SWANEY

wraps. I also like this idea because it cuts back on the carbohydrates, helping to minimize the glucose spike that causes the afternoon sleepies.

Luke informed me one day that he almost fell asleep while taking a test. He had had a good night's sleep the night before so I asked him what he had for lunch.

"Chicken nuggets and a bun," he replied. As you can see, I'm still a little packing impaired, but all these great ideas are starting to register.

Another tip from Lesli is to freeze bananas. She says, "Peel one and throw it in - the drink will stay cold." The banana will still be slightly frozen at lunch time. Send a little container of chocolate syrup to dip in for a super special treat.

Last, but not least, Lesli says, "Don't forget the smoothie!" What a nutritious and delicious way to make lunch interesting. Lesli says to make it the night before and refrigerate,

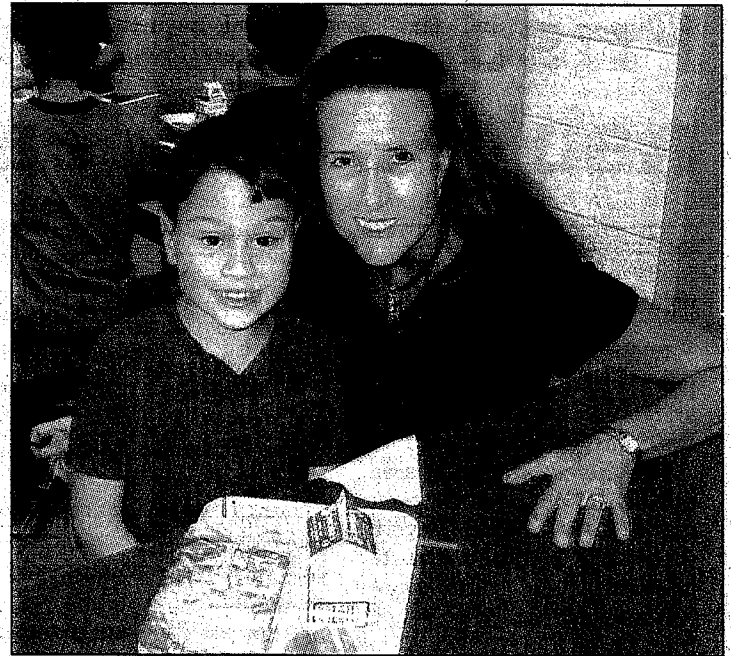
this way it will stay cold until lunch time. She does her own canning so if she doesn't have fresh fruit on hand, she uses canned fruit or even jam. Heck, even I could remember to keep some canned fruit and jam around. Another great thing about smoothies is that there are endless flavor possibilities. Here are some of Lesli's favorites: mango, peaches, blueberries, pineapple, strawberries, bananas, honey, cinnamon, and vanilla. Thanks for the great tips, Lesli!

Smoothies are easy to make. I've got fresh peaches on

hand, so I'm going to follow Lesli's basic recipe and make a smoothie for Luke's lunch tomorrow. I think chicken nuggets were on the menu again.

Lesli's Smoothies

- 1 c. fresh or canned Fruit (mango, peaches and pineapple or blueberries, strawberries and bananas are good combinations)
 - 2 Tbs. Blueberry yogurt (plain or vanilla work also)
 - 1 c. milk
- Blend in blender or food processor until smooth. Makes two 1-cup servings.



BY ELLEN SWANEY

Lesli Kotloski, a lunch aid at William Penn School in Bethel Park, with first grader Alex Summaria.

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