Back to school? 5 Tips to outsmart lunch menus!

Children learn many things in the school, don't they? Math equations, pronouns, sports and games, but the last thing you want them to soak up is a taste for nutritionally vacant and maybe even harmful foods. Cafeteria foods are notoriously unhealthy and gross. (I remember visiting with the head cook at my son's school and found that nearly every item in the pantry contained MSG.)

Yes, they must go to school, but that doesn't mean that they can't learn invaluable lessons from you and their lunch box, too

Here are 5 **easy** and **fun** snacks to snuggle in their lunch box:

- **Surprise Pot!** A bell pepper opened to look like a jack-o-lantern stuffed with different surprises for each child. Try carrot or celery sticks, cherry tomatoes, cheeses cut into fun shapes, raisins, grapes or dried cherries and top the pepper again with its little cap.
- **Pirate Loot!** Skewered slices of apples, pears, peaches, etc., on little plastic swords. (Remember to dip the fruit in lemon juice so that it retains its color!)
- **Cheese Poppers!** Old fashioned popcorn, drenched with butter and coated with Romano cheese, oregano, basil, garlic, salt and pepper. (Hot sauce is a nice touch if your child(ren) enjoy spicier foods.)
- **Cinnamon Milk!** Send them with a thermos of warmed raw, unpasteurized, non-homogenized whole fat milk with a sprinkle of cinnamon and a splash of vanilla extract.
- **Pick-Up-Sticks!** Cut stick-size pieces of carrots, celery, cucumbers and peppers and toss along with fresh

green beans. Make an easy dip of sour cream and chives for them to dip. (If you'd like a sweeter option, try stick-size slices of apples, pears and nectarines with a homemade dip of yogurt and raw honey.)

Check out these and other fun ideas in my audio CD, "Secret Spoonfuls. Confessions of a Sneaky Mom"!