



## FIRST THINGS FIRST

*The right system for bright futures*

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**Submitting Agency:** First Things First, White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council  
**Contact Person:** Rochelle Lacapa, MPH, Regional Coordinator  
**Contact Number:** (928) 532-5041

### ***Six Inexpensive Lunch Ideas for Kids***

By Charlina Stewart

When tough economic times force families to slash their food budgets, coming up with inexpensive lunch ideas that will satisfy children isn't always easy.

Lunch ideas for kids don't need to be expensive to satisfy their taste buds. Listed below are six budget-friendly meal options children will love.

#### **Peanut butter Sandwich on Whole Wheat Bread (Generic) and a Banana**

A peanut butter sandwich on fiber-rich whole-wheat bread is an old-time favorite. Peanut butter is full of the protein needed to encourage healthy muscle growth in children. When searching for the perfect side item to compliment a delicious peanut butter sandwich, look no further than a potassium-rich banana. Although the cost of bananas continues to rise, they're still more affordable than other fresh fruit selections on the market.

#### **Baked Potato with Shredded Cheese and Chives**

Baked potatoes with shredded cheese and chives will give kids plenty of energy to get through their day. Potatoes can be a lifesaver for families facing tough economic times because they're inexpensive, versatile, and packed with nutrients. To cut the prep time on this budget-friendly meal option, use the microwave to cook the potatoes. If the baked potatoes are being prepared for young children, remove the skins to make them easier to eat.

#### **Grilled Cheese Sandwich and Sliced Peaches (canned)**

Kids can't resist the taste of grilled cheese sandwiches when they're cooked to perfection. Cheese is a rich source of calcium and it encourages healthy teeth and bones in children. Canned peaches are budget friendly and they're a tasty compliment to grilled cheese sandwiches. Canned peaches tend to be a bit slippery and can easily slide down a child's throat—so dice them into little pieces before serving them to small children.

#### **Chicken or Beef Pot Pie**

Individual pot pie servings can be found in the freezer section of the grocery store for less than a dollar. To boost the nutritional value of frozen pot pie, simply add a few steamed peas, carrots, or other veggies as a side item.

### **Oatmeal with Applesauce and Cinnamon**

Although oatmeal is traditionally served for breakfast, it's an inexpensive food choice that can be enjoyed anytime of the day. Oatmeal is filling and it's nutritious. Instead of using sugar to sweeten the oatmeal, mix in a little fiber-rich applesauce and a dash of cinnamon for an extra boost of spice.

### **Omelet with Diced Tomatoes and Cheese**

Eggs can be used to make tons of delicious inexpensive meals for kids, including omelets. Kids love to have their protein-rich omelets topped with cheese and diced tomatoes. The cost of tomatoes can be slashed by purchasing them from a local farmers market.

Even when household finances are pinched, children can enjoy satisfying lunches that won't break the bank.

Should you have any questions or would like more information about First Things First, please feel free to contact Rochelle Lacapa at (928) 532-5041 or via email at [rlacapa@azftf.gov](mailto:rlacapa@azftf.gov).