



Nourishing Mind and Body

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School is back in session and we need to help nourish children's bodies with healthful food so their minds are ready to learn. Read the suggested children's books by Eric Carle to your young school-agers, enjoy the beautiful illustrations and plan some exciting breakfast choices with your older cooks. Start their days off strong!

Break the Fast With Breakfast

Breakfast makes a difference. Researchers studied the performance of school-age children on various tasks. Children who had oatmeal, compared with a low-fiber cereal or no breakfast, did better on school tasks involving thinking and remembering.

Aim to create breakfast menus with at least three food groups. Have your child help decide on some menus. These will get you started.

- Oatmeal with fruit and milk. Try "overnight oatmeal" made in the refrigerator.
- Whole-grain cereal with sliced bananas and milk
- Peanut butter on whole-wheat toast, orange slices and milk
- Scrambled eggs with salsa, sliced peaches and low-fat milk
- Pancakes, fruit and milk

Here's a fun recipe to try. Children will enjoy pressing the hash browns into the muffin cups and whisking the eggs. You can personalize the recipe to your family's favorite ingredients.



Bacon and Avocado Hash Brown Egg Cups

- 2½ c. hash browns, thawed
- 3 Tbsp. canola oil (or your favorite oil)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 6 eggs
- ½ avocado, diced
- ½ c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 slices precooked bacon or turkey bacon, chopped (if desired)
- ½ bell pepper, diced

1. Preheat oven to 425 F. Spray a muffin tin with cooking spray and set aside. You will need 16 muffin cups.
2. Pour hash browns into a large bowl. Add oil 1 tablespoon at a time, stirring in between, until the hash browns are just coated, not oily. Season with salt and pepper as desired.
3. Line each muffin cup with seasoned hash browns, pressing down to fit the bottom and sides of each cup, creating a crust.
4. Place muffin tin in preheated oven and cook for about 20 minutes, or until hash browns are golden brown.
5. Lower oven temperature to 325 F. Whisk eggs in a mixing bowl. Fold in avocado, cheese, precooked bacon and pepper.
6. Scoop egg mixture into each hash brown crust and place back in oven. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until eggs are set. Eggs should reach an internal temperature of 145 F.
7. Let cool for a few minutes and serve.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 160 calories, 12 grams (g) fat, 8 g protein, 6 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 150 milligrams sodium.

Connect

Eric Carle has beautifully illustrated children's books. Dust off your own copy of "Pancakes, Pancakes" or check out the read-aloud version online. In this story, the child wants pancakes and has to collect the ingredients from his farm to make them.

- Find an old recipe from your family archives. What is the most interesting ingredient? How would your ancestor have gotten the ingredients for the recipe? How do you make pancakes now?
- When you make pancakes, try this fun tip. Pour a little batter to make two eyes and a mouth onto the hot pan, let it cook a few seconds and then pour more batter on top to make a pancake that will smile at you when you flip it!
- Compare pancakes, waffles and crepes. How are they the same and different? Who likes each one best? Why?
- School-agers and teens can design and make great breakfast sandwiches, overnight oatmeal, energy bites and smoothies for school mornings.
- As a family, plan a once-a-month brunch for more relaxed mornings. Try one brunch and then consider inviting company the next time.

Savor (the Savings)

Picking up fast food or doughnuts from the convenience of your vehicle can be quick and easy. However, these foods usually are higher in fat, calories and added sugars. Read the nutrition information provided by many restaurants. Often you can create a more healthful breakfast at home for a lower cost per serving.

If time is short, provide breakfast on the go, such as a homemade smoothie made with fruit, milk, yogurt or even spinach. Make and freeze muffins or breakfast burritos. Heat in the microwave for a ready-to-go warm breakfast.

Many schools offer breakfast programs that provide a balanced, nutritious breakfast. Check if your school offers a breakfast program. The latest requirements emphasize whole grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products. The meals also have limits on sodium, saturated and trans fats and calories.

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