



# 18 Winning Ways

By Nutritionist, Barbara Storper, M.S., R.D.

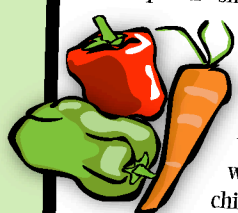
## TO GET KIDS OFF THE JUNK FOOD TRACK

**1 Spread the word: Good Eaters Make Great Learners!** Studies show that breakfast eaters do better in school, score higher on tests, and have less behavioral problems. Make breakfast the most important meal of the day. Anything nutritious is better than nothing for breakfast, so don't leave home without it, or make sure your child gets breakfast at school. And, anything goes! Reheated leftovers like pizza, Chinese food, a chicken leg or even rice and beans can be quick breakfast favorites.

**2 Make "Read It Before You Eat It!" your family's and classroom's snack time slogan.** So that you're not surprised by what's inside - teach kids to read the Ingredient and Nutrition Facts Labels to find out what's really in the food they're choosing. Make a matching game at school where kids get to match the food product with its ingredient label. Make it fun! Cool Whip or Shaving Cream—you decide!



**3 Make healthy foods fun, kid-friendly, and easy to grab...at home and in the school cafeteria.** Kids love the bright colors and crunch of raw veggies. Call veggies neat names to make them more fun such as carrot "coins", green pepper "pinwheels", and veggie "pick-up-sticks" and serve with dips of salad dressing, peanut butter, balsamic vinegar, or yogurt. Assign a special "snacks" shelf in the fridge or cupboard stocked with a variety of healthy snacks kids can choose from. Serve healthy foods when kids are hungriest—after school or before dinner. At school, turn a special day each week into "Healthy Snack Day" or lead a weekly "Fruit Walk" where the teacher and children eat their fruit as they take a walk!



**4 Live it, don't preach it!** If you never teach nutrition to your kids, but just serve as a great role model - thoroughly enjoying healthy foods, crunching on baby carrots throughout your day, placing on your desk a different new fruit each day for a snack, drinking water throughout the day, munching on a salad and exclaiming enthusiastically, "Yum!" - this would be that much more influential than a whole unit on nutrition!

**5 Don't leave home empty-handed!** Stock your bag, car, or desk with your own 'convenience food'— plastic bags of baby carrots, fruit, cheese sticks, popcorn, peanut butter and crackers, trail mix, pretzels and containers of applesauce, puddings, and yogurt to avoid the convenience store's overpriced sugary and fatty temptations.

**6 Make family or class time, healthy time!** Visit a farmers' market, apple orchard, pick-your-own berry patch, or community farm to show kids where real food comes from, then, let kids taste fresh fruits and vegetables picked right off the vine. Make a food map of your community where kids and parents can discover interesting food sites they can visit. And, enjoy being active together.

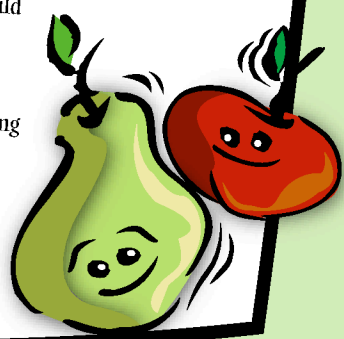


**7 Get up and Move!** Take walks, hikes, bike rides, play catch in the yard or dance around to swing tunes in your classroom between lessons to get oxygen to the brain - or even an after-dinner stroll around the block is a great step towards family fitness. Check out [www.putumayo.com](http://www.putumayo.com) for the best world music tunes!

**8 Involve kids in the preparation of healthy snacks and meals.** Create a mini kids' cooking show each week, or snack stations where kids go from station to station creating healthy snacks. (Check out our video kit, "Kids' Kitchen" for ideas). Grow a vegetable garden together or plant a seed, create a window box, grow sprouts. Kids love to eat what they've had a hand in creating or growing.



**9 Have it your kids' way...sort of!** Promote choice whenever you can, as long as they're healthy choices (e.g., say "Would you like an orange or an apple for snack?" instead of "What would you like for snack?"). For fun cafeteria meals, set up food bars such as a salad, taco, or potato bars. Kids have more fun making their own and it may even cut down on prep time for you.



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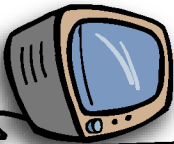
**10** **Serve healthy foods** for celebrations at home and in the classroom instead of always serving candy and sweets.

**11** **Get real with serving sizes!** Especially at fast food stops, restaurants, convenience stores and movie theaters. Avoid the temptation of "value meals" or "Big Gulp" sodas that may seem like a savings, but are just adding calories from sugar and fat. Show kids how much sugar is actually in a 42 ounce Supersize soda – 35 teaspoons! When eating out, share meals or save what you don't eat for next day's lunch.



**12** **Meal Time Is Family Time!** Encourage parents to have simple nutritious family meals several times a week and make them a peaceful, comfortable time for eating and talking, saving arguments, criticisms, TV watching, and phone calls for other times.

**13** **Turn Off The TV!** Today's average child watches three to four hours of TV a day! Studies show that the more TV a child watches, the more overweight s/he becomes - a deadly combo of inactivity, constant exposure to junk food ads, mindless TV snacking on those same junk foods, and a slower metabolic rate than even sitting still!



**14** **Have Fun Being Active!** Have kids make their own "(Always Wanted) To-Do List" with everything they'd like to do if they only had the time. Then, turn off the TV and go to it. Suggest activities to activate non-TV fun: sewing, cooking, sports, scrapbooking...turn spare time into creative quality time.



**15** **Try not to use food as a reward or punishment.** Giving sweets as a reward or consolation often confuses a child's understanding of food and love, and may encourage kids to seek out food when unhappy, bored, or lonely. Try to provide a listening ear, hugs, or healthy attention instead.

**16** **Help kids feel good about themselves** - whatever their size and shape, and encourage them to realize every body is different, and different is a great thing! Less than 2% of girls could have anywhere near the shape or weight of a fashion model without resorting to dangerous practices of dieting, excessive exercise or drug use. Point out the misleading messages kids get from the media and help them develop critical media literacy skills. Compliment kids for their efforts, values, achievements and character, rather than overemphasizing their looks. Check out our "Cosmo Parody Poster" at our website store – [www.foodplay.com/store/storehome.html](http://www.foodplay.com/store/storehome.html)

**17** **Demand Corporate Responsibility!** If food companies want us to take personal responsibility for the nation's obesity epidemic, let's make them take corporate responsibility for their special contribution! Work to limit junk food advertisements aimed at children; eliminate soda and junk food vending machines from school hallways; demand that companies refrain from sending out characters with red noses claiming to be a child's best friend into school yards, parks, movies, and TV programs luring our kids into the golden arches to feast on high fat, high sugar meals in order to "get happy"! Ask Congress for the labeling of fast food and chain restaurant offerings so that consumers truly will have the information they need to make responsible choices.

**18** **Trigger school-wide interest and excitement** in healthy habits by bringing creative and effective nutrition education programs to your schools, family events, and fundraisers. Every day there are more and more great resources to choose from! (We happen to agree with our fans that FOODPLAY and THIS IS YOUR LIFE's research-based programs are great ways to use the power of live theater to turn kids on to healthy eating and exercise habits!

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*Barbara Storper, MS, RD, is a national leader in the field of children's nutrition and Executive Director of FOODPLAY Productions, an Emmy Award-winning nutrition education organization which creates and presents touring school theater show assemblies, conference presentations, trainings, TV campaigns, video kits, and creative resources to "make good eating great fun!"*

**For more nutrition information  
and fun-filled resources,  
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1-800-FOODPLAY (1-800-366-3752)**

