

# THE SCHOOL LUNCH BOX

By FLORENCE KNOX, '26

## A Few Helps For the Busy Mother Who Must Prepare Lunch For the School Child

WHEN the child becomes school age and first changes from a life of comparative freedom and much out-door life to one of less activity, there are problems of nutrition that arise and that are very important. Children of elementary school age carry little reserve material in their bodies and their food must supply liberal amounts of fuel and body building material if they are to have normal growth. They should be taught to care for themselves and to choose their food intelligently. Food education is often carried on in the school. Whether it be carried on in the school or not, it should be in the home. At present there are many helps that may aid parents in interesting and instructing their children in regard to food. In addition, much can be accomplished in training them by the example of good eating habits of the parents. Youth is the time to cultivate a liking for all foods as a means to physical and mental efficiency. Children are very quick to notice what those with whom they associate do. Food aversions of older people are seen and the child, whose sensibilities are very keen, decides he doesn't care for that food either. Teaching children so that their attitude toward their food is rational is very worthwhile both for the sake of the children and of the one who prepares food for them. This is indeed true when the mother must prepare the noon meals for the school child. If their meals, and especially the school meals are given thought and are carefully planned, good habits in eating are apt to be formed, never to be broken. Special thought should be given to the selection of food so that it may be suitable in kind and amount and appetizing when the box is opened.

The luncheon box most commonly used is of pasteboard or tin. Both have advantages and disadvantages, but since food dried out readily when in a pasteboard box a tin one is considered more satisfactory. It should be kept clean and free from odors, should be emptied of its contents every day, washed, scalded, and allowed to remain open all night.

A luncheon box can be made a real

pleasure to the school child by varying the food on successive days. The number of various foods in each luncheon should be small, but the foods should be different on each day of the week. As in any meal, the food of a lunch box should be well balanced. It is puzzling at times to know what to include that will be appealing and to vary each day a meal for which there is generally so little time for preparation. It is with this in mind that the following suggestions are given:

Sandwiches are easily carried and are well liked, so bread is the basis of almost all box lunches. The bread should be rather fresh, lightly buttered and filled with an appetizing filling. Creaming the butter before spreading it makes the buttering much easier. The fillings may be varied. They may be divided into seasoned and sweet. Seasoned fillings may include eggs, meat, cheese, and vegetables. Meat may be cut in sliced or chopped and mixed with salad dressing. Sliced tomatoes with lettuce and Mayonnaise, nuts mixed with salad dressing, sardines or cold meat with lemon juice make tasty fillings. Sweet filling would include fruits (preserved or dried), nuts, bananas, apples, etc. The dried fruits such as dates, figs, and prunes cooked and combined with bread and butter make a delightful filling. Nuts may be added. Chopped raisins and nuts or cooked dates and nuts are generally well liked. There are many combinations that may be used in sandwiches that are very appetizing.

A sweet of some kind should be included, such as plain cookies, cup cakes, sponge cake, baked custard, simple puddings or a few dates rolled in sugar. Cake is very often used more than anything else. Not all cakes are suitable. For children only those containing little fat should be used. Custards and simple puddings can be carried in a jelly glass. Most fresh fruits can be easily packed and may often be the dessert of the luncheon.

Some beverage adds much to a meal and aids in digestion. It should not, however, be taken when food is

in the mouth for it tends to decrease mastication. Water will serve but milk or fruit juices will add to the food value if they can be carried.

Following are some suggested combinations that might be used for lunches:

1. Date bread sandwiches spread with butter or cream cheese, peanut cookies, orange.
2. Graham bread with chopped meat filling, cinnamon buns, stewed apricots (in jelly glass.)
3. Sandwiches with crisp lettuce and Mayonnaise, cup custard, cookie.
4. Biscuit sandwich with chopped chicken, banana, two or three pieces of fudge.
5. Brown bread and butter sandwich, custard cup of baked beans, whole tomato, salt, raisin cookie.

There are numerous other combinations and lunches that can be planned by the mother who can take into consideration the time she can spend and the materials she has in the house that can be used.

The unexpected or rather extraordinary thing always pleases children and a new cookie, muffin, or a paper of candies included in the lunch will delight them. Cookies made with fancy cutters, shaped with an ordinary knife, or placed together with an in-between stuffing of ground raisins, nut butter, jam, or ground figs add interest to the lunch.

Packing the lunch is one way in which it can be made inviting. Neatness is an essential. All foods should be wrapped separately in paraffin paper and placed neatly in the box. Arrange the food so that it will not crush and so that all will not have to be removed before beginning to eat.

Planning school lunches is an ever present problem in some communities and must be met by each mother in a manner that will fit into her daily work. It must always be remembered that children need food and the right kind for growth and energy and that the noon luncheon furnishes a part of it.