



The Lakes
A Montessori School

**HOME LUNCH
GUIDELINES
FOR THE 2026-2027
SCHOOL YEAR**

Lunch from Home Guidelines

THE LAKES enrolls children under the age of 5; for this reason, our lunch program must be monitored and approved by the **Virginia Department of Health**. We receive inspections from the Department of Health at least twice a year. The School Lunch Program is approved by the Health Department. However, to ensure we meet Health Department regulations, we must closely monitor lunches sent from home.

The following are guidelines that should be followed if lunch is sent from home, even as a supplement to school lunch.

DOs:

- Lunches brought from home must be **well-balanced and nutritious**. We require that lunches be limited to: fruits, vegetables, lean meats, cheeses, and healthy grains. An all-vegetable lunch that may appear healthy is actually considered unbalanced for our age group. We suggest using the school menu as a guide when preparing lunch from home.
- Families that participate in the School Lunch Program, but occasionally send supplements from home, must follow the same guidelines. Supplements should be limited to one or two additional items. Fruits, vegetables, or small sandwiches are encouraged.
- Lunches must be packed with appropriate cooling or heating mechanisms. School does not have adequate facilities to refrigerate or heat lunches; an **ice pack** **must** be included to keep cold foods cool, and foods that need to remain hot must be packed in a **thermos**.
- Please be sure your child's lunchbox is **labeled** clearly with your **child's name and date every day**.

DON'Ts:

- Do not send any glass thermoses or food storage items.
- Do not send food items that are considered choking hazards for children in the 2 to 3-year-old range. These include popcorn, sliced hotdogs, whole grapes (grapes sliced in half are fine), seeds, nuts and other small rounded items. If you are unsure about choking hazards, please check with the office.
- Do not send foods that contain or may contain nuts (all types of nuts). We are a nut-free school.
- At times, we have to limit certain foods due to life-threatening allergies in the classroom. Common allergens that fall in this category are peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, and shellfish. We ask that you avoid these items. You will be notified if they are prohibited in your child's classroom.
- Do not send food items with past expiration dates; they will not be served.
- Do not send water or milk from home. If you need to send alternative milk, such as soy milk, please see the office first. If drinks from home must be sent, they have to be in disposable containers and are limited to 100% fruit juice. Please do not send water bottles or "sippy" cups.
- Fast food items, candy, and "junk food" are prohibited.
- Please understand that to avoid cross-contamination, the Health Department requires that all uneaten food be discarded.

We appreciate your cooperation and understanding. Our Team is available for any questions or concerns. Thank you.

The Lakes Team