BENTO BOX CHARACTERS

Learn about Japanese food and culture as you create a balanced meal or snack resembling your favorite characters!

LEARN TOGETHER

Lunch and snack times don’t have to be a break from learning. Talking with your child at meal time is a great opportunity to bond, help develop language and math skills, and even learn about a new culture.

MAKE TOGETHER

From the Japanese word for “convenience,” bento is a single-portion lunch box meal separated by compartments. Japanese bento boxes can include rice, fish, noodles, fruits, and/or vegetables.

Sculpting and arranging the food into popular cartoon and anime characters is a common approach to preparing children’s lunch and snack. Try creating your own character bento at home!

1. Gather ingredients that you would like for your lunch or snack. Try to have at least 3 or 4 different kinds of foods!
2. Use toothpicks, plastic knives, or cookie cutters to shape your veggies, fruits, cheeses, or meats into fun shapes.
3. If you have rice, sculpt and mold it into different characters and shapes. Pasta can also work well for this!
4. You can even dye your rice into different colors using food coloring or use natural ingredients to make colors like...
   - GREEN: Grind spinach in a blender with a little bit of water and mix it into rice or strain mixture with a coffee filter and add the juice to your rice.
   - ORANGE: Grind raw carrots in a blender with a little bit of water and mix it into rice or strain mixture with a coffee filter and add the juice to your rice.
   - PURPLE: Grind boiled red cabbage in a blender and mix into rice or strain mixture with a coffee filter and add the juice to your rice.
   - YELLOW: Mix the yolk from a hard boiled egg or a little turmeric into rice.
5. You can use toasted seaweed sheets called nori or beans for the eyes, nose, or mouth of your characters.
6. Arrange your selection of foods in your lunch box or dish to form a character or scene from your favorite story.
7. Take pictures of your creations so you can recreate them and share online.
8. Don’t forget to clean up together. Students in Japan clean up the whole classroom after lunch, so pass the broom and let’s sweep together!

For more fun activities, please go to cmom.org/resources