



# BENTO BOX CHARACTERS

IDEAL AGE: 3+

*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.

## MATERIALS

- Lunch box, reusable tupperware, or disposable food container
- Toothpicks, plastic knives, and/or cookie cutters
- Food coloring (optional)
- Blender (optional)
- Coffee filter (optional)

## 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!



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