

LunchBox EnvyTM

An adventure in healthy eating
for kids and families

Electronic Book Version

Locally DeliciousTM, Inc.

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Foreword

As a single parent raising children in the 21st century, I've found that many things in our home are different than they were when I was a kid. My Grandma Dot, who is now 92 and still cooking, ran a traditional homesteader's kitchen for most of her life: one filled with vegetables from the garden, locally raised meat, whole milk and cheese, and meals made with nothing more than whole ingredients, family recipes, and real cooking. When I was a child my mother also gardened, cooked from scratch with favorite family recipes, and put real care into our meals. We rarely ate out, never ate frozen or pre-cooked meals, and always had homemade lunches for school, each and every day.

I remember Grandma telling me about growing up in rural Wyoming, about her one-room schoolhouse with grades 1-8 all in one classroom, about walking several miles to school, and about her lunches. Most often they consisted of homemade bread slathered with freshly churned organic butter (that was the only kind back then), and perhaps an apple or a raw potato, some carrots, and fresh well-water. For most of my school life, my lunches consisted of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, fruit, a juice or milk drink, sometimes soup, often a snack like crackers, or homemade fruit leather. It was not uncommon also to get a sweet note of encouragement from Mom, written on a napkin and hidden discreetly in my lunch.

Over time, however, my mom went back to college, and as I got older, she gardened less. Chips and store-bought fruit snacks replaced homemade ones. The number and variety of products on grocery store shelves increased; bleached-flour breads rapidly replaced whole wheat varieties; corn-based products, from chips to drinks, flooded our lives; and highly processed foods became the norm. By the time I began making my boys' lunches, it was not uncommon for parents to send day-old fast-food meals to school with their kids. I, however, was making the same sandwiches and packing the same snacks and drinks as my mom had done, and carrying on my Grandma Dot's tradition of caring for the family through food . . . or so I thought. Boy, was I wrong.

My kitchen, just like my local grocery store, was a Frankenstein's laboratory of fake foods, chemicals and non-nutritious food products, when compared with my mother's or grandmother's kitchens. My sandwiches were made of bleached white bread with no nutritional value and meats and cheeses

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that were loaded with carcinogens and other unhealthy toxins. My snacks were made primarily from industrially grown corn, in the form of corn syrup, and dyes of every color. And my school lunches were quickly filling my boys' young and growing bodies with those toxins and carcinogens while missing important basic nutrients.

But I was lucky. And my boys were lucky. We got caught up in a stampede of savvy, determined women, a group we lovingly call the "Heirloom Tomatoes" or just the "Tomatoes." These eight women, wise in years and experience, have written and published one book about local food. The book you're about to read, *LunchBox Envy*, is their second book. It focuses on ways to make better, healthier food choices for children to take to school in their lunch boxes. Those Tomatoes have taught us a new way, which is really an old way, to eat, a way that doesn't depend on chemicals and laboratories, but instead trusts in the natural nutrients in plants and animals, a way of eating that looks to farmers for food instead of to corporations.

And now you are lucky, too. And your kids are lucky. Because you hold in your hands the Tomatoes' most helpful advice and most useful suggestions for taking back control of your kitchen, and for showing your love for your children through the food you put into their bodies.

In short, this book is the tool that many parents like me need, parents who care about the health of our children and our planet, and who want to nourish both through the lunches we make each and every day. Now, thanks to *LunchBox Envy*, we can do just that.

Corey Lee Lewis, Ph.D., Professor, Humboldt State University

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Introduction

The U.S. is experiencing a childhood obesity epidemic directly related to poor nutrition and lack of sufficient exercise. Statistics show that one in three children born today will have diabetes by the time they are 21. Two out of three adults are currently overweight or obese. It's important to us, as parents, grandparents and concerned citizens, to contribute to a solution.

Many children eat lunches provided by schools, and many of these lunch programs are contributing to the problem, not to the solution. There is a growing movement to improve school lunches, but healthy lunch programs are not yet in place across the country. Information on nutrition and healthy food in this book can help people talk with schools about providing healthier options.

We have chosen to work toward a solution to the childhood obesity problem by focusing on lunches that kids take to school. The resulting book, *LunchBox Envy*, is a how-to guide and cookbook combined. It provides tools for balancing nutrition, planning meals, finding and affording healthy food, cooking efficiently, and building a more sustainable food system. Simple do-it-yourself projects are included to empower children with the knowledge that they can control part of their own food production and processing.

The book addresses families at all income levels with school-aged children. Its focus is how to make a healthy lunch, but its lessons apply to all meals and snacks.

Cooking at home opens a world of possibilities for more affordable, healthier and better tasting food. But many families have not had an education in cooking. *LunchBox Envy* provides basic tools in the "Getting Started Cooking" chapter. The recipes are easy to make, healthy and geared to the tastes of children.

Producing this book was much harder than we anticipated. The more we researched problems around eating healthy food on a budget, the bigger the problem seemed to be, but we found many ways that work to share with readers. This has been a transformational journey for all of us. Our goal is to enable families across the country to take that journey, too. We truly believe that families can change the course of their lives by:

- adapting their eating habits
- understanding what healthy food is and how to build healthy meals
- learning how to plan, shop; and cook as a family, even in "food deserts."

The Heirloom Tomatoes
Authors of *LunchBox Envy*