

Healthy treats for birthdays and classroom parties

* **Popcorn cups:** Have your child help decorate plain 12-oz. paper cups with stickers, glitter glue or even his photo, and then fill with homemade popcorn. Alternatively, decorate small paper bags or purchase movie theater-style popcorn boxes or bags.

* **Yogurt parfaits:** In clear plastic cups, alternate layers of your child's favorite yogurt and fresh fruit such as blueberries, strawberries or mangos. Top with a cupcake topper. (And don't forget spoons!).

* **Mini muffins:** Carrot, blueberry and banana are all great choices. Use all or part whole-wheat flour or add ground flaxseeds for a nutritional boost.

* **Banana bread:** Cut in slices like cake, sprinkle with powdered sugar and serve with fruit salad.

* **Pear bread:** Perfect for a fall party; slice up some fresh pears and add a few to each plate. I made it with white whole wheat flour and vegetable oil. With 2 cups of sugar, it tastes more like cake than bread. I'd reduce the amount of sugar next time and add more pears.

* **Chocolate zucchini bread:** Don't try to hide the fact that there's zucchini in here! Instead, let your child (carefully!) help grate it, then bring in a whole zucchini for the class to see, touch and smell. I was naughty and added chocolate chips to this recipe; it's for a party, after all.

* **Fresh fruit served in cupcake wrappers, waffle cones or waffle bowls.**

* **Guacamole:** Mash avocado, squeeze on fresh lime juice, then mix in chopped tomatoes, diced red onions and a smattering of sea salt. Serve with multigrain chips and veggie sticks (celery, carrots and red peppers).

* **Berries with fresh whipped cream:** Take individual clear plastic glasses and fill half way with any mixture of strawberries, blueberries and blackberries. Top with a dollop of freshly whipped cream.

- * **Fruit kabobs with vanilla yogurt dip:** Pick your child's favorite fruits—strawberries, blueberries, pineapple, kiwi, grapes, and melon, for example—and assemble colorful fruit kabobs. Serve with vanilla yogurt dipping sauce.

- * **Magic fruit wands:** Similar to fruit kabobs but made to look like a magic wand, with a whimsical star fruit at the top.

- * **Homemade fruit roll-ups:** No corn syrup or artificial food coloring; just pure fruit, the way it should be. While the prep is quick, it will take hours for these to set—so leave plenty of time. And do a test batch ahead of time just in case.

- * **Cinnamon tortillas with fruit salsa:** Take wheat flour tortillas and brush with melted butter. Sprinkle the tortillas with cinnamon sugar; cut each tortilla into 8 wedges and bake on an ungreased cookie sheet at 350 degrees for 10 minutes or until crisp. For the fruit salsa, pick any combination of your kid's favorite fruits—apples, strawberries, kiwis, pineapple and blackberries all work well—dice and mix with a little sugar and lime juice. Serve salsa in mini plastic cups or bowls with the tortilla chips on the side on paper plates for dipping.

- * **Frozen yogurt tubes** served with fresh fruit

- * **Strawberries and Cream Elves:** Strawberries filled with a dab of cream cheese mixed with fruit spread and chocolate chip eyes. Too cute for words!

- * **Yogurt parfait bar:** Serve vanilla or strawberry yogurt in cups. Set out toppings such as fresh berries, bananas, granola and shredded unsweetened coconut.

- * **Dark-chocolate dipped strawberries**

- * **Pizza Pretzel Bites:** Yes, it's pizza—but at least it packs some nutrition, especially if paired with a tomato marinara dipping sauce.

Ideas for non-food celebrations

Not every party has to involve food! Consider talking to your child's teacher about other ways to celebrate student birthdays, such as:

* Bring in his favorite game or book or a special art project to share with his class.

* Put together a “goody bag” of non-edible treats such as glow sticks, balloons, stickers, tattoos, etc.

*Make him or her line leader or star student or getting some sort of special privilege for the day.