

# Mum hacks:

## Healthy (and fun!) party food

You CAN throw a kids' party without the junk food overload, says *Kate Farr*.

We all love a good party, but the typical kids' bash is generally wall-to-wall sugary sweets, fizzy drinks and salty snacks, and while the occasional blow-out is OK, totally hyped-up kids at home time are no fun for anyone. So how do you ensure that a good time is had by all without loading them up on junk? A bit of judicious substitution, and you're good to pass that parcel...

### Fight the fizz

Just as parents enjoy a glass of bubbly when celebrating a special occasion, there's undoubtedly something extra-festive about sparkling drinks. But with many off-the-shelf sodas packing huge punches of sugar, caffeine and artificial additives such as tartrazine (a popular food colouring that many children display sensitivities to), it's understandable that parents may prefer to cut out carbonated drinks altogether.

For a festive fizz without the chemicals,

try sparkling mineral water, flavoured with a slice of lemon or lime. Alternatively, for a super-refreshing drink, infuse jugs of regular water with strawberries, torn mint leaves and cucumber – this also has the added bonus of looking pretty, too! Switch pre-made juice boxes for homemade smoothies – blending berries with ice cubes creates a cool "cocktail" that kids will love. Cheers!

### Snack attack

As unhealthy as we know them to be, there's something incredibly moreish about crisps and other salty snacks, and most kids would definitely agree. So, why not swap traditional potato crisps for healthier vegetable or even apple chips? If you're serving dips, then cut crudité's and offer baked pitta chips, homemade breadsticks or oat cakes instead of lurid orange tortilla chips. Age and allergies permitting, substitute salted nuts for healthier almonds – pop these in the oven on a baking paper-lined tray or toast gently in a hot pan for delicious

oil-free roasted nuts.

Biscuits are another downfall so choose homemade where possible and get the birthday boy or girl in on the preparation by getting them to help bake some yummy treats for their friends. Plain butter or oat biscuits are quick, simple and can be loaded up with chopped fruit and nuts for an extra nutritional kick. Decorate with a little drizzle of melted chocolate on top and everyone will be back for more.

### Pat-a-cake

Now you're on a roll, even your cake can be subject to a healthy hack or two. If you're making the masterpiece at home, then reduce your sugar content and decorate with fresh fruit for natural sweetness. Better yet, ditch the baked goods altogether and create your own dessert from fresh watermelon. Simply cut off the ends of your melon, leaving the mid-section, then remove the rind and pat dry with paper towels. Your "cake" is then ready to decorate – fresh whipped cream, shaved chocolate and blueberries look lovely and is a guaranteed hit!

If you prefer a traditional cake and aren't such a dab hand in the kitchen, then drop one of Hong Kong's many cake decorators a line; not only will your kid get the *Frozen/Minions/Thomas* cake of ~~your~~ their dreams, but they'll almost certainly have dealt with requests for healthier options before and be able to provide suggestions. Egg-free, nut-free, gluten-free and vegan cakes are all common requests that most professional bakers can accommodate.

So there we have it – healthy hacks for the perfect birthday bash. Here's to another year! 🎉

