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Here's Eating Lunch With You, Kid

By **MELISSA CLARK**

WHEN it comes to packing lunches for children, there are two main schools of thought.

There's the kids-eat-like-us faction, with parents refashioning leftovers from last night's grilled salmon and hoping for the best.

Then there's the kids-don't-eat-like-us contingent, with adults packing bland kid-pleasers they'd never make for themselves, like butter and jelly on white bread.

But there is, in fact, another option. And it manages to feed both parents and children with the same quick lunch-making session, without imposing fried eggplant with pesto on the kids, or ketchup sandwiches on the parents.

It's a relatively simple plan. Start with the kinds of things your children usually go for — things that you also like. And then, while you're smearing and slicing, put together a second version of the same sandwich, but zip it up with intense, funky, advanced ingredients for yourself.

As long as you stick to sandwich fillers that everyone can abide, the possibilities are endless. For my family, that means no American singles or bologna. But I could use fried [tofu](#), leftover chicken, steak or lamb and some interesting but not too stinky cheeses.

When I put this into practice recently, my daughter got sliced Cheddar, cucumber and orange marmalade. My sandwich had no marmalade, but instead was spread with Branston pickle, the English relish that might be the finest use of rutabaga I know of.

When I made turkey sandwiches with apple and maple-spiked mayonnaise, the grown-ups had theirs squirted with spicy sriracha sauce.

My daughter's chicken [salad](#) with sweet mango chutney got a fiery makeover with a dollop of chile-laden mango pickle. To hard-cooked eggs and butter (which I had already perked up with some slightly risky basil and raw garlic, which not every child would tolerate), I added fat, oily anchovy fillets.

And finally, inspired by the date-nut cream-[cheese](#) sandwiches of my own childhood, I baked whole-wheat date bread (without any nuts, which some schools don't permit) and smeared it with

cream cheese, studding the cheese with grapes for Dahlia and sliced black olives for myself.

With a stock of condiments, you can pretty much transform any sandwich from kid-simple to adult-complex. I can see rotating my jarred goodies into savory service: the grainy mustard, sliced cornichons, pickled jalapeños and Tabasco jelly all taking a turn at my lunch table, if not in Dahlia's lunchbox.