

BACK TO SCHOOL 2022

By Esti Asher,
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6 NUTRITIOUS SCHOOL LUNCH COMPONENTS

Whether it snuck up on you or didn’t come soon enough, “back to school” is synonymous with back-to-school lunch-and-snack packing. Below are six suggestions of school lunch components to make your child feel like the coolest kid in school while eating foods that are really good for him.



Shaped sandwiches

One of the most basic and popular lunch options, sandwiches are customizable and kid friendly. Think outside the box of triangles and rectangles this school year. Make your sandwich of choice and use cookie cutters to create a fun and cute shaped lunch for your child.



Trail mix

Trail mix is essentially a snack mixture that can be individualized based on the eater’s preferences. It’s shelf-stable and delicious with a mixture of flavors and textures, such as dried fruit, whole grain cereal, and nuts and/or seeds. I recommend aiming to include at least one component that contains protein.



Dips

Kids of all ages often appreciate and enjoy dips, and these are a great way to incorporate a healthy snack component into your child’s day. Some ideas include chummus, nut/seed butter (check allergy restrictions in your child’s class), and even a yogurt-based dressing. Pair with cut-up fruit, vegetables, whole grain crackers, rice cakes, or even pretzels for a balanced yet fun snack.



Popcorn

One of the most versatile and underrated snacks, popcorn is a delicious and budget-friendly whole grain—especially if you make it yourself! You (or your kids) can spice and season popcorn according to your mood or taste, and it will be much more nourishing and satisfying than its more-popular cousins, pretzels and chips. However, be careful to only offer popcorn to children old enough to eat it safely as it can be a choking hazard.



Avocado toast

Trendy yet wholesome, nourishing, and satisfying, avocado toast can be a cool-for-school option. If toasting bread in school is not practical for your child or teen, get creative and use melba toast, rice cakes, sourdough bread, or corn thins instead of toast. Simply top your base with mashed avocado and sprinkle with salt or an “everything but the bagel” type of seasoning.



Sushi salad

Similar to the ever-popular poke bowls, sushi salad includes sushi rice; vegetables, such as cucumber, carrot, avocado, and bell peppers; and a protein, such as kani, flaked salmon, and/or nori. Top it off with assorted condiments, such as spicy mayo, soy sauce, or sweet sauce. Older kids are sure to enjoy the delicious and satisfying flavors and may even start a trend in their class!

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Diets higher in calcium and potassium may help prevent kidney stones

Kidney stones are not only known for causing severe pain; they may also be related to risk for kidney disease, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular disease. Also, having had a kidney stone once, means a higher chance of recurrence. A recent study facilitated by the Mayo Clinic identified the main factors that may reduce the risk of kidney stones: including higher amounts of calcium and potassium in one’s diet.

The study involved a questionnaire to over 700 Mayo Clinic patients and found several factors to be associated with the risk of a first-time kidney stone. Dietary factors included lower dietary calcium and potassium intake, lower intake of fluids, and caffeine and phytate intake. The researchers further studied patients who had recurrent kidney stones and found that lower levels of dietary calcium and potassium were specifically related to recurrence. Fruits and vegetables high in potassium include bananas, grapefruits, honeydew, cantaloupes, apricots, potatoes, mushrooms, zucchini, cucumbers, and peas. Sources of calcium include dairy, soy, and green leafy vegetables.

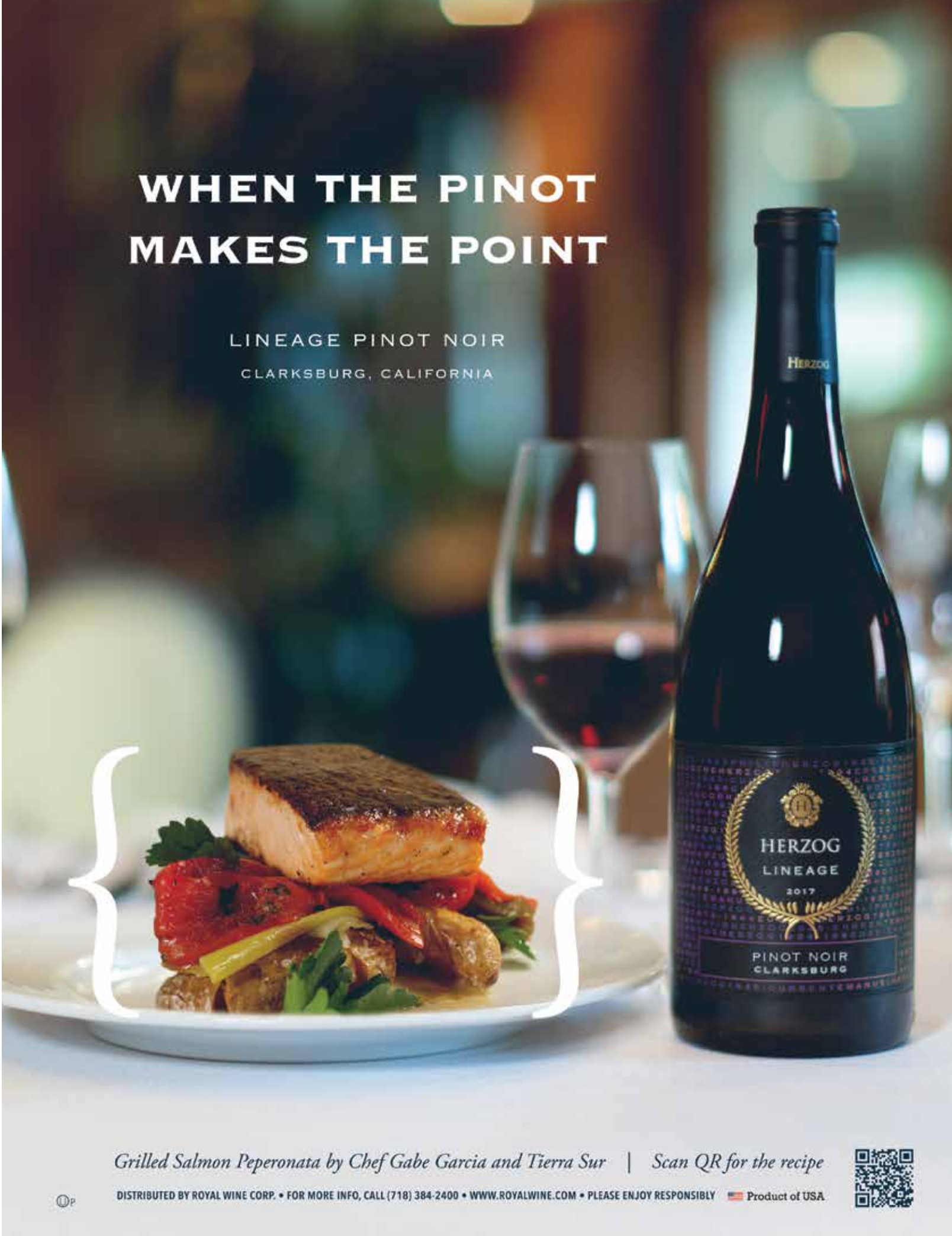
Green tea extract shown to promote gut health and lower blood sugar levels

It seems like the benefits of green tea are endless. Study after study, green tea saves the day and proves to be a beneficial component of a general healthy diet. Potential health benefits of green tea include increased cardiovascular health, brain health and longevity, and a decreased risk of diseases such as cancer. Now, research from Ohio State University has added decreased gut inflammation and lowering blood sugar levels to the list.

The study included 40 participants: 19 healthy adults and 21 with metabolic syndrome. Participants consumed green tea extract (equal to 5 cups of green tea) in the form of a gummy for 28 days. All participants spent another 28 days taking a placebo. Furthermore, participants were advised to decrease intake of polyphenols (antioxidants found in fruits, vegetables, spices, and teas) during the time of the study in order to determine the results of the green tea extract alone. Blood glucose levels were much lower after taking the green tea extract in comparison to the levels after taking the placebo. Decreased gut inflammation was also observed. ♡

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