

Kid's Gluten-Free, Casein-Free Snack Ideas from Carol Fenster: April is Autism Awareness Month

Kids on a gluten-free/casein-free diet can have healthy, after-school snacks with these ideas from Carol Fenster, Ph.D., a gluten-free cooking expert.

Denver, CO ([PRWeb](#)) April 4, 2008 -- Millions of parents hear this popular after-school refrain on a daily basis--"Mom, I'm hungry!" But when those children eat gluten-free, casein-free food, those snacks can present challenges.

Gluten-free, casein-free diets are increasingly prescribed for several conditions. "Children on the autism spectrum are sometimes placed on such diets as part of their overall treatment," says Carol Fenster, Ph.D. (www.glutenfree101.com) a cooking consultant who helps others avoid gluten, a protein in wheat, and casein, a protein in milk. She has lived gluten-free for 20 years.

The diagnosis of autism--a complex brain disorder--has increased tenfold in the last decade, rising to 1 in every 150-166 children and affecting four times as many boys as girls.

"Instead of cookies, candy, ice cream, or the usual gluten-laced crackers," says Fenster, "visit your natural food store for alternatives. Provide raw baby carrots or celery sticks dipped in bean hummus, pesto, or salad dressing. If your kids prefer chips, use gluten-free brands and provide Mexican salsa for dipping rather than the dairy-laden sour cream-based dips."

Fruit choices include sliced apples with peanut butter (or soy butter or sunflower butter for the nut-sensitive). Dip orange slices in soy yogurt. Roll peeled, whole bananas in honey or chocolate syrup, then roll in shredded coconut or shelled sunflower seeds before freezing. Slice the bananas into bite size pieces before serving. Freeze green seedless grapes or fresh blueberries for another nutritious taste treat.

"Whole nuts make great snacks," says Fenster, "but if they're off-limits for allergy reasons try baking shelled, lightly-salted pumpkin seeds in a 325 degree oven until gently browned." They're actually squash seeds, yet they taste like real nuts and are very nutritious. Air-popped popcorn is another sure winner.

For cereal treats, mix gluten-free cereals with nuts and dried fruit and serve as a trail mix. Or, make your own granola from the gluten-free oats now available at natural food stores and convert to a trail mix by adding dried fruits, pumpkin seeds, and perhaps a handful of your favorite candy pieces.

For convenient home baking of breads, muffins, and cookies look for mixes at your natural food store. Many stores offer ready-to-eat breads, muffins, and other baked goods in their deli or freezer section. For scratch bakers, recipes may be found at www.savorypalate.com, www.gfcfdiet.com, and www.myrecipes.com.

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