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METROMINT'S WELLNESS DIRECTOR HAS TIPS TO KEEP YOUR CHILD ON TRACK WITH HEALTHY SNACKS AND MEALS FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

SAN FRANCISCO, CA –It's "Back to School" time once again and one of the biggest challenges parents face is how to provide healthy alternatives for school lunches and snacks. The recent ban last month on sugary sodas in the schools, which bans sugary sodas and drinks in schools within four years, is great news for parents and for kids. Still there are hundreds of choices that your child will make this school year in the lunchroom, at the vending machine and even at their friends' homes.

According to a study published by the National Academy of Sciences in 2005, "Over the past three decades, the United States has witnessed an unparalleled increase in obesity among young people. The obesity rate has more than doubled for preschool children and adolescents and has more than tripled for children 6 to 11 years old. Fingers point towards various trends as contributing factors, such as the abundance of fast food and soft drinks, a reduction of physical education in schools, and the changing lifestyles of families."

Michele Thorne, Metromint's Wellness & Outreach Director, is a gourmet raw foods chef and the mother of a seven-year-old boy. Here are some suggestions from Michele how to arm your child with tools so that they select the kinds of foods you'd like them to eat even when you aren't there to guide them.

Q. What do you recommend for parents to pack into school lunches so that kids aren't tempted by unhealthy snacks?

MT: Temptations about choosing food are everywhere these days and at any age. Most of us are led by what we see first, then what we smell, and then what we taste. You can get a leg up on the lunchroom by packing healthy snacks and it can be simple and easy. First, talk with your child to get familiar with what they would like to have, as opposed to what is being offered at school. This can be very effective. Provide a healthy alternative that looks and tastes great, whether you make it yourself or buy it at your local health or natural food store.

Raw fruit that is seasonal is always good. Fresh raw carrot or celery sticks, natural, sea salted popcorn and a sweet treat that is made with natural sugars like maple syrup, brown rice syrup or evaporated cane sugar are all healthier than their commercial counterparts. And of course, put in a bottle of water. Choose one carefully that is pure and is a manageable size. Water is essential to our bodies and lack of it in our diets affects our body's ability to eliminate waste, which can be very toxic to the body. Also, drinking water helps with the proper functioning of the brain and muscles-both of which are essential for every growing child.

Q. Do you have any advice for parents to get their kids to eat healthier snacks at school and in general?

MT: As parents we know that making choices for any kid can be challenging. When kids are unsupervised and among peers, choices can be stressful for them and for you. Encouraging kids to make healthy choices by empowering them with information in the simplest language, and being patient to answer their questions, such as, “Why can’t I have that chocolate brownie?” can teach them valuable lessons and have a lasting impact. Do the research for the family shopping and meal preparation together. Having kids actively involved with food benefits the family and will motivate them further. Kids will often do what you do. Lead by example and show that you are bringing a salad or apple to work for lunch, and give them reasons to follow your lead.

Q. Any advice to teach kids how to make appropriate food selections without their parents’ supervision?

MT: As a general rule, kids tend to learn through repetition followed up with positive praise. Younger children usually will eat what you offer them. Make breakfast or dinner buffet style with healthy, delicious choices. Then let them fix their own plate, this allows them to “feel” and get “practice” being in control of their decisions. This will invariably transfer to the lunchroom. Of course, taking this approach may require a few tries because we are all creatures of habit. Being consistent and unwavering in your approach will ultimately bring the best results.

Q. Any advice for working parents or single moms and/or dads for dinnertime routines or meals for busy families?

MT: Working fulltime or being a single parent or both already presents challenges. However, after a long day, as insurmountable as it seems, making dinner does not have to be a production. Preparation is key. Making a healthy grain like brown rice, whole grain pasta, or par-boiling your potatoes the night before will save lots of time. Make sure you take care while cooking and refrigerate the food once it’s cooled to minimize any chance of bacteria or spoilage. Washing and prepping your veggies beforehand, and storing them in a re-sealable bag saves bundles of time. Also, if you can plan your menus for the week, you will know what you will be making each evening, and your mind will be clear and focused while preparing the food. One other great solution is to try making dinner together. For young helpers, washing vegetables can be fun. For older kids, measuring grains, water and seasonings and other ingredients can turn dinner into a wonderful math lesson. Make making dinner fun, turn up the music, dance a little and share the good things about the day. Let the love get in the food. You will surely taste it.

In general, choose the best of what is available to you wherever you shop. Support a local farmer or CSA (Community Supported Agriculture group), a farmer’s market or if you have time, plant a garden with your child. Buying and eating produce and foods that are free of pesticides, chemicals, hormones, artificial colorings, preservatives and other artificial ingredients can provide your children with great eating habits for a lifetime and help keep our planet thriving for generations to come.

Michele Thorne has an extensive event and speaking schedule throughout California and the rest of the country. She will be at the Fancy Food Show in New York, July 9-11th. For a complete list of recipes and for more tips from Metromint's Wellness Director or to learn more about Metromint, the all-natural mintwater company, visit www.metromint.com.

About Michele Thorne

Michele Thorne, Wellness & Outreach Director, Metromint - Michele Thorne is a gourmet raw food chef, natural lifestyle coach and wellness educator. She is also the mother of a seven-year old boy. Originally from New York City, Michele creates intriguing and delicious menus by using only raw ingredients. A regular lecturer about topics of interest to families: "How to Get Your Child to Eat Vegetables" and "Food and Your Emotions", Michele's personal journey into wellness and healthy living began when a close friend became ill. This sparked her immersion into a fifteen-year study of nutrition, herbs and natural remedies. Throughout her studies, she realized the power of maintaining the body's normal balance with healthy eating and living.

Metromint is committed to promoting a healthier lifestyle for children and adults and to stimulate participation in our communities to care for our planet. For more information about Metromint visit www.metromint.com.

About Metromint

Metromint is mintwater, pure and simple. Not only does it provide rapid refreshment and an instant cooling sensation, it also provides several natural benefits: mint calms the nerves, soothes and revives the body, stimulates the brain, and energizes the senses. The natural menthol in Metromint also freshens the breath, and can reduce inflammation in the nasal passages and can clear congestion related to colds and allergies.

Metromint is the brainchild of Rio Miura and Scott Lowe. Born in Japan, with a background in product and fashion design, Miura conceived the recipe for Metromint and designed the packaging. Lowe, a Stanford graduate with a degree in International Relations, is responsible for product development and oversees operations. Together they run Soma Beverage Company, LLC, a small group dedicated to making great-tasting beverages that combines the purest ingredients with innovative packaging and extraordinary taste.

Metromint has single-handedly created a new beverage category called mintwater, which combines the properties of functional and flavored water. Metromint is also quickly gaining popularity in the enhanced, and premium bottled water categories.

Metromint continues to win accolades from national media including *U.S. News & World Report*, *Real Simple*, *Fitness*, *Better Nutrition*, The Today Show, and the Food Network. Metromint Peppermint was introduced at the Fancy Food Show in January 2004 and won a "Best of 2004" new product award from Bevnet.com. Metromint's newest variety, Metromint Spearmint was recently introduced in March at the Natural Products Expo West and won a Best New Beverage Award and received a 4-Star rating from BevNet.

Metromint Peppermint is available in 500 ml. size for \$1.39-\$1.99 per bottle (retail) and in six-packs \$6.99-\$7.49 (Retail). Metromint Spearmint will be available in stores starting spring '06. Metromint has a loyal following among discriminating consumers and is available in stores nationwide including Whole Foods Market, Safeway Naturals, Wild Oats, and other natural food outlets. For more information, visit www.metromint.com.