

## How to Bring Budget Friendly Snacks for the Team

In youth sports, parents and caregivers are often tasked with [providing team snacks](#) for everyone at least once during the season. Deciding what to bring can be stressful—and it can be expensive, depending on what you choose!

Here, [TrueSport Expert](#) Kristen Ziesmer, a registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in sports dietetics, is sharing a few low-cost ways to make the team snack easy, healthy, and budget-friendly.

### Make sure water is available

Above all else, don't forget the water if that's part of your job, says Ziesmer. [Snacks aren't nearly as important as ensuring that the team is staying hydrated](#), especially during shorter practices when fueling can wait. A big jug with cups is better for your budget and the environment than buying single-serve water bottles, and if you're in charge of snacks all season, you may want to consider investing in a large water jug that can be refilled for each practice. You can often find these reusable jugs in secondhand stores if you're on a tight budget.

### Buy in bulk

Skip single serve packages of trail mix, chips, or crackers. Instead, use trays or bowls to set out an assortment of [pretzels, crackers, Cheerios, nuts, chocolate chips, and dried fruit](#) with serving spoons and small cups for athletes to scoop their snacks into, says Ziesmer. If you have a membership at a bulk/warehouse store like Costco, this is even less expensive to put together. Not only does this option let athletes serve themselves the snacks they prefer in the portions that they'd like, it also avoids unnecessary single-serve plastic and saves money in the process. Ziesmer notes that trail mix—the nuts and dried fruit—is going to be the priciest part of the snack, so if you're trying to cut costs, focus more on pretzels and crackers versus nuts.

### Keep it simple with bananas and oranges

We've gotten into the habit of assuming [that snacks need to be expensive or elaborate to be the 'best,'](#) says Ziesmer. “I see a lot of parents bringing things like veggie straws or organic gummies, but it doesn't need to be so complicated,” she says. Bananas and orange slices are both cost effective and optimal snacks for young athletes, says Ziesmer. Both are packed with carbohydrates as well as key vitamins, and when they're in season, they're particularly cheap.

Tip: Make sure you compare per-pound prices on bags of oranges versus buying them loose.

### Make your own sports drink

If you're providing salty, carbohydrate-based snacks and water, you don't need to provide sports drinks as well, but it can be a refreshing option in the summer when it's hot during practice. Making your own sports drink is simple, says Ziesmer. Choose a fruit juice that the athletes like—apple and grape are both popular options. Then, simply combine it with water in a 1:1 ratio and add a small pinch of sea salt per serving to add sodium, a critically important electrolyte for sweaty athletes.

Tip: If you don't want to use this recipe, you can also look for a powdered form of Gatorade, which can often be found in the juice/sports drink aisle in most grocery stores. It's much more cost-effective than buying individual bottles.

### **Try some creative options**

If you're hoping to wow the kids (and other parents) with your snack offerings, there are creative things you can do that don't cost a fortune. Ziesmer suggests getting an icing bag and filling it with peanut butter, which athletes can then squeeze onto bananas or crackers. Another easy at-home option is to make rice bars using sushi rice in a pan, layering on jam and peanut butter, or a bit of scrambled eggs and soy sauce for a more savory option that older athletes may enjoy. After it's cooled in the refrigerator, cut it into squares and wrap each in foil or plastic wrap.

### **Simple is best**

"When I'm on snack duty, I keep it simple, which keeps it inexpensive," says Ziesmer. "I make sure there's water, then bring a bottle of fruit juice that they can add to their water. And I bring pretzels as the snack because they're quick-digesting carbohydrates and they're salty, so athletes are getting the fuel and the electrolytes that they need. It's not exciting, but it doesn't have to be."

### **Takeaway**

Keeping youth athlete team snacks simple is the best way to keep them budget-friendly. Make sure athletes have access to as much water as they want, and then decide on a source of carbohydrates and sodium. Salty pretzels or a simple make-your-own trail mix can be great options, as can bananas and oranges if you want to provide an inexpensive fruit choice.



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