

Cheese Bento Box

By Anne Banas, [SmarterTravel](#)



Why It's Great for Travel: Portable "bento boxes" are good for travel because they allow items to remain separate, even when jostled around inside a carry-on bag. This box comes packed with protein and a mix of flavor combinations and textures. Perhaps the best part is that you won't need utensils to enjoy it. I've included hard cheeses, which won't get overly soft or oily at room temperature, grapes for a touch of sweetness without any leaking juices, and homemade crackers for a little savory accompaniment. For added crunch, I've created a sweet-and-spicy snack mix with sesame sticks and mini pretzels substituted for nuts, since other passengers might have nut allergies or sensitivities.

(Box pictured is sold by [Laptop Lunches](#).)

Yield: 4 bento boxes

Sweet-and-Spicy Snack Mix (see below)

Parmesan-Thyme Crackers (see below)

2 cups seedless grapes

1 cup cheese, cut into cubes*

*Use a mix of aged versions of harder cheeses like cheddar, Gouda, Swiss, or even Mimolette, a bright-orange French cheese similar to Edam.

Sweet-and-Spicy Snack Mix

Yield: About 2 cups

½ cup pretzel nuggets, preferably multigrain

½ cup sesame sticks

½ cup shredded cereal squares, such as [Barbara's Shredded Spoonfuls](#)

2 tablespoons sunflower seeds, roasted and unsalted

½ tablespoon butter

2 tablespoons light-brown sugar, lightly packed

1 tablespoon honey

¼ teaspoon cinnamon

⅓ teaspoon allspice
⅓ teaspoon cayenne pepper
⅓ teaspoon salt

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. In a large bowl, mix pretzel nuggets, sesame sticks, cereal, and sunflower seeds.
4. In a small saucepan, melt butter, brown sugar, and honey; stir in spices.
5. Pour honey mixture over snack mix and stir to coat.
6. Spread mixture onto baking sheet and sprinkle with salt.
7. Bake in oven for about 10 minutes to set, stirring the mixture after 5 minutes and rotating the pan.
8. Allow to cool, then break into pieces.

Parmesan-Thyme Crackers

Yield: About 30 crackers

1 cup all-purpose flour
4 tablespoons butter, softened
¾ cup fresh Parmesan cheese, finely grated
1 teaspoon thyme, finely chopped
¼ cup milk

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. Pulse flour and butter in a food processor until it has the consistency of cornmeal.
4. Mix in Parmesan and thyme, then slowly add milk, pulsing until dough comes together. (Dough won't form a ball, but will stick together when pressed with your fingers.)
5. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface, then roll out with a rolling pin until about ⅛-inch thick.
6. Prick dough evenly with a fork, making sure to pierce all the way through so crackers won't puff up.
7. Cut into shapes using round or square 2-inch cutters, or make cuts with a sharp knife.
8. Bake for 10 minutes, then rotate pan. Continue baking for another 10 minutes or until golden brown.