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Party Favors: Go Beyond the Candy for Birthday Goodie Bag Foods

Posted Jan 13th 2010 1:00PM by [Jeanne Sager](#)

Filed under: [Entertaining](#), [Food + Libations](#)

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Great birthday party ideas that parents will thank you for. Credit: Getty Images

There's nothing like a post-birthday party goodie bag chockful of party favors and sweets to make the kids squeal and the parents scream.

But here's a better party idea: Candy-filled goodie bags may be easy to make, but in light of the [childhood obesity](#) crisis and the rising numbers of kids with [food allergies](#), that bag o' treats could make you the parent everyone's whispering about Monday morning in the school drop-off line. And *not* in a good way.

But that doesn't mean you have to kick the cuisine treats to the curb. Fill the birthday swag bag with some of these birthday party ideas instead:

A cooking craft: Wondering how to keep your son's entire first-grade class

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occupied for three hours? Let them loose in your kitchen to decorate pre-prepared food. Cupcakes and cookies are common, but you can cut down the sugar with [homemade pretzels](#) which they can shape into their favorite critters. As the party's nearing an end, pack up their creations in baggies to send home with the kids. Best of all, a cooking craft kills two birds with one pretzel -- er, stone: Kids are occupied during the party, and they take a healthy treat home for later.

Movie night: Popcorn is [a healthy whole grain](#), and one kids can't get enough of. It's also easy to pack; pop your own and wrap it in a bag with a gift certificate to the local theater or a copy of your child's favorite DVD from the \$5 rack at the store. Unlike a bag of random sweets, this is a truly entertaining party idea.

Cupcakes in a jar: They're still sugary, but dentists have suggested kids loading up on sweets all at once rather than dragging them out over a long period of time (as they often do with the miniatures stuffed into a goodie bag) is actually better for their teeth. Plus, these cupcakes come in a recyclable mason jar, so there's no need to buy baggies. And did we mention how much fun these are to eat as a family? The kids won't be the only ones loving this take-home treat.

Athlete action: A water bottle filled with half juice/half water (or a [pre-made version](#)) to sip on the way home may just end up in their lunchbox for weeks to come. With estimates that kids [drink only half the water they should](#), and kids' habit of losing their bottles just about anywhere, you might want to go for the personalized pick. Grab some inexpensive BPA-free bottles and write each guest's name on them in bright permanent marker -- or here's a party idea: Let the birthday kid decorate the bottles with stickers.

Pre-made mix: Send them home to make a mess of their own kitchen with all the ingredients for [a healthy snack](#) featuring your child's favorite characters. Don't forget to print out the directions -- this is a gift that may kick start another family's culinary adventures.

What's your favorite non-candy party favor and gift bag treat?

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