

# Thinking outside the lunch box

Lunch “box” hardly describes any longer the containers used by students to tote food to school. With shapes such as racing cars, stars, purses, baseballs, soccer balls, and even a Superman lunch kit with an attached cape, the latest trends in lunch totes are “more of a fashion piece than a lunch box,” said Julie Ryan, director of marketing for Thermos.

Whether called a lunch box, kit, pail or tote, the variety of lunch boxes replace the need for brown paper bags to keep contents cool until lunch break.

On Target shelves among back to school supplies and in the sporting goods section, traditional lunch boxes as well as durable lunch totes are offered in an assortment of colors and patterns including Hello Kitty, Sponge Bob, Bratz, Dora the Explorer, NASCAR, camouflage, animals and Disney characters.

With choices of oblong, soft, hard, round, square, small, rectangular, polka dot, large or striped, parents may be standing in the store aisle quite a while before their kids choose a favorite lunch box ranging in price between \$7.99 and \$14.99, according to Target spokeswoman Ana Williams.

This year’s favorite characters, she reported, include Disney’s “Cars,” Transformers, High School Musical, and the Ultimate Lunch Kit which allows parents to store the sandwich separate from the snack.

Though Thermos helps to fill retail shelves with new designs and characters each year, the traditional favorites like Barbie, Scooby-Doo and Spiderman always sell well, reported Ms. Ryan.

A good lunch box, she said, offers a combination of high-quality insulation with a fun design. “Kids get the characters they love, while our insulation lets parents send lunches with healthier food and drink options ... like fresh fruit and veggies, or homemade soup.”

Do kids really care about lunch box appearances?

“Absolutely,” she said. “To kids, lunch boxes are much more than a way to carry their food. Lunch boxes are a great way for kids to express their personal style and interests.”