These after-school snacks could teach a class in flavor

Now that school is back in session, you have the right to feed your kids healthy food and incorporate exercise into their daily routine.

This can be a challenge but the YMCA can help. The YMCA has several programs that focus on healthy living. Call Jacq Agustin at 541-5492 or see www.ymcahonoalu.org.

Here are some recipes for healthy after-school snacks that will get kids into the kitchen.

CHEDDAR JACK CHEESE CRISPS
1 cup whole wheat flour
1/2 teaspoon salt, or to taste
4 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
2 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated
1 ounce Monterey Jack cheese, grated
1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated
3-4 tablespoons cold water

In food processor, pulse flour, salt, butter and cheeses until mixture resembles coarse meal. Pulse in 3 to 4 tablespoons of water, one tablespoon at a time, until the dough forms into a ball, approximately 1 to 2 minutes.

Cover dough with plastic wrap and chill in refrigerator for 1 hour (can be stored up to 24 hours).

Place chilled dough on a clean surface and roll out a rectangle about 1/8-inch thick. Use a pizza cutter or small knife to cut dough into small squares, or use miniature cookie cutters in your kids' favorite shapes.

Place crisps on cookie sheets lined with parchmnet paper and chill for an hour before baking.

Bake in a 350-degree oven 15-20 minutes or until golden brown. Makes about 40 crisps.

Approximate nutritional information, per crisp (not including salt to taste):
70 calories, 3 g fat, 26 saturated fat, 10 mg cholesterol, 10 mg sodium, 1 g carbohydrate, 1 g protein, no fiber or sugar

BROCCOLI AND HAM MAC AND CHEESE
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 small onion, chopped
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
4 cups 2 percent milk
1-1/2 cups shredded yellow cheddar cheese, divided
1-1/2 cups shredded white cheddar cheese, divided
1/2 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1/4 teaspoon fresh coarse ground pepper, or to taste
1 pound elbow pasta, cooked al dente and drained
8 ounces ham, diced into 1/2-inch pieces
1 cup broccoli florets, blanched and chopped into small pieces (substitute with spinach)
3/4 cup panko flakes

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In large pot, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion and cook until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Whisk in flour to coat. In slow, steady stream, whisk in milk until smooth. Cook, whisking often, until mixture is thick and bubbly and coats the back of a wooden spoon, 6 to 8 minutes. Stir in 1 cup each of yellow and white cheeses. Season with salt and pepper.

Toss pasta with cheese mixture; fold ham and broccoli. Transfer to individual oven-safe dishes or a 9-by-13-inch baking dish; set aside.

In small bowl, toss remaining cheese with panko flakes. Top pasta with bread crumb mixture. Bake until top is golden, about 30 minutes. Serve hot or freeze. Makes 15-1 cup servings.

Approximate nutritional information, per serving (not including salt to taste):
300 calories, 12 g fat, 7 g saturated fat, 45 mg cholesterol, 450 mg sodium, 32 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 4 g sugar, 15 g protein