



A few tips for putting together a perfectly wonderful work lunch:

Salads

Pack croutons and dressings separately. This will keep croutons from getting soggy and dressing from turning your greens into an unappetizing mess.

Sandwiches

To keep sandwich bread dry, line with lettuce leaves. Tomato slices or pickles should be between leaves or packed separately.

Microwaves

Food headed for the microwave should be in appropriate containers. And do your co-workers a favor and cover food with a paper towel so it doesn't splatter in the appliance.

Utensils

Keep plastic utensils in your desk drawers. Or better for the environment, bring flatware and tote it home dirty.

Ideas

Mediterranean Sampler

Hummus with pita chips and carrot sticks, plus some kalamata olives and a clump of red grapes.

Bowl of Comfort

Leftover chili with shredded cheddar and crackers. Make your version meat or bean only.

Adult Lunchable

Salami slices, cheese cubes and crackers. Apple slices. Oh, and a cookie.

Sweet and Crunchy

Spinach salad with feta crumbles, dried cranberries and pecans dressed with raspberry vinaigrette.

Comfort Food

A cold meatloaf sandwich on bread of your choice with yellow mustard.

Old School

Tuna salad sandwich with bread-and-butter pickles on bread of your choice. Pack the pickles separately so they don't get the bread soggy. Chips!

Caprese Baguette

Fresh sliced mozzarella, sliced tomatoes, fresh basil leaves and a drizzle of olive oil and balsamic vinegar on a 6-inch length of baguette. Cantaloupe and honeydew melon slices or chunks.

Elvis Special

Okay, not exactly, but peanut butter, sliced bananas and drizzle of honey on whole wheat. Feeling decadent? Add the potato chip crunch, or just eat them on the side.

Wakeup Call

Perk yourself up with a roast beef, havarti and horseradish-mayo on marble rye. Cool down the spicy sauce with cold, crunchy lettuce. Pickled veggies on the side.

Wrap it Up

Pack grilled chicken strips, lettuce, Caesar dressing and grated Parmesan separately, then make yourself a wrap. Terra vegetable chips bring crunch on the side.

Baby Cubans

Salami, roast pork, ham, Swiss cheese, dill pickle slices and yellow mustard on a length of Cuban or French bread. Cut the breads into 1 1/2-inch slices and you've got finger sandwiches. Heat black beans and rice in the office microwave.

Ladies Lunch

Chicken salad made with rotisserie chicken, mayonnaise, sliced almonds and cranberries. Forget the fork; scoop it up with sturdy crackers such as Triscuits. Bring a banana and a baggie of grape tomatoes.

Presto Pasta

Tortellini pasta salad dressed with balsamic vinaigrette mixed with a bit of prepared pesto sauce. Load up the salad with your favorite veggies, among them halved grape tomatoes and diced carrots. Grated Parmesan or small diced mozzarella cubes, too.

Get Your Fiber On

A bowl of cooked brown rice is a blank canvas for lots of toppings. Consider sauteed mushrooms; smashed black beans and avocado chunks; sauteed garlic spinach and chickpeas; diced tofu, soy sauce and crunchy veggies. Peeled and diced mango to go with.

DIY Sub

Make your own veggie sub of Jack cheese, julienned green peppers, sliced tomato and cucumber, shredded lettuce, pepperoncini (or pickled jalapenos), onions (if you must) and black olives with a splash of vinaigrette on a hoagie roll.

Lunch Counter Favorite

Egg salad is often an overlooked work lunch, but you can pack it in a container and pile it on a croissant or between slices of a thin bagel. Carrot sticks, too.

Deli Delight

Smoked salmon and cream cheese on a bagel. Hold the red onion for the sake of your podmates or the colleagues in the afternoon meeting, though a few capers would add a nice tang.

Cinco de Monthly

Guacamole mixed with shrimp salad and scooped with tortilla chips. Papaya and mango slices on the side.

Bistro Salad

Leftover slices of flank steak over Caesar salad with big garlic croutons and shaves of Parmesan. Pack the croutons, meat and dressing separately.

Appetizers for Lunch

Cold shrimp and grape tomatoes with a dill dipping sauce (1/4 cup each mayo and sour cream plus 2 teaspoons dried dill) and a corn muffin.

Restaurant Dinner Redux

You went out last night? Pack up your leftover chicken strips, lasagna or pad Thai. Perfect for the office microwave.

The Diet Plate

Hard-boiled egg, fresh cherries and celery, carrot and jicama sticks with dip made of 1/2 cup low-fat sour cream and 1 tablespoon dried herb blend.

Midday Stuffing

Heat a baked potato (bake an extra one the night before) in the microwave, then stuff with shredded cheese and cooked broccoli, and zap again until cheese is bubbly.

Jazzed-Up Turkey Sandwich

If you must, consider smoked turkey, hot pepper cheese and a slather of cranberry sauce on sourdough. Crunchy Romaine adds texture.

Deskside Chef's Salad

Lettuce in one container and then add cheese, ham and turkey plus halved hardboiled eggs, tomatoes and cucumbers when you're ready to eat. Bring along a container of Thousand Island dressing.