



How to Make a Brown-Bag Lunch You'll Actually Want to Eat

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WebMD Feature

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Brown-bagging isn't just for kids, and it can be simple.

"Bringing your lunch to work gives you full ownership over what goes into your meal and into your body," says Jackie Newgent, culinary nutritionist and author of *The With or Without Meat Cookbook*.

That's important if you're working on [weight](#) loss, have [food allergies](#), or have a condition like [high cholesterol](#), [high blood pressure](#), heart disease, or [diabetes](#) that makes you pay special attention to your [diet](#). It also saves you money, even if you don't do it every single day.

There are lots of options. Start using these pointers to liven up your midday meal.

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1. Don't forget the egg.

Eggs aren't just for breakfast. "No matter how you like them, eggs are a phenomenal source of amino acids and protein, as well as [antioxidants](#) and choline for brain health," says Keri Glassman, RD, co-author of *The New You (and Improved!) Diet*.

Try these egg-cellent recipes:

- Fill hard-boiled eggs with tuna salad for an easy and convenient protein-powered meal.
- Chill leftover scrambled or fried eggs from [breakfast](#) and use them to make a sandwich, Newgent suggests. Add fresh tarragon or basil for additional flavor.

2. Go flexitarian.

Take a break from lunch meat once or twice a week -- perhaps on Meatless Mondays -- and replace it with a plant-based [protein](#)-rich food, Newgent says. "The protein and fiber will fill you up," she says. "Also, make sure to use fresh, whole-grain breads for more fiber and [phytonutrients](#)."

Some swaps to try:

- Instead of piling on ham slices, spread hummus or edamame hummus, and then top with plenty of crunchy veggies. No mayo or mustard required.
- Instead of Italian deli meat, layer thinly sliced, smoked, ready-to-eat tofu for an Italian sub. Add fresh baby arugula or spinach, tomato or roasted red bell pepper, red onion, and fresh oregano.
- Instead of roast beef, use black beans or vegetarian refried beans, along with lettuce, tomato, onion, salsa, and a dollop of guacamole for a Mexican-inspired wrap.

3. Skip the bread.

A sandwich minus the bagel, roll, or tortilla wrap can still be delicious and satisfying. It's also a healthy way for you to cut down on your carb intake.

A favorite go-to treat that doesn't have bread: meat roll-ups. Try these two [recipes](#):

- Cucumber and turkey. Layer one slice of organic turkey on long slices of cucumber. Roll, and then dip in your favorite vinaigrette. (You can also try using a leaf of lettuce as the "bread" for your wrap.)
- Roast beef, pepper, and cheese. Top one slice of organic roast beef with one piece of roasted pepper and one piece of cheese. Drizzle with a light mixture of vinegar and oil. Add basil leaf and black pepper for extra flavor. Roll.

4. Spice up leftovers.

Let last night's dinner, which Newgent calls "vintage cuisine," make an encore appearance with a little bit of effort. Here are some ideas:

- Leftover stir-fry: Make an Asian-inspired salad. Dice up the chicken and broccoli, and toss with mixed leafy greens, thinly sliced red bell pepper, and [ginger](#) vinaigrette.
- Extra burgers: Transform them into Greek pita pockets. Cut burgers (poultry, meat, or vegetable) into bite-size pieces. Season with a pinch of cumin, then stuff into whole-grain pita halves, along with lettuce, tomato, onion, a bit of pickled cabbage (or pickles), and tzatziki sauce.

5. Think outside the (lunch) box.

There's no rule that says lunch must consist of "lunch food." Enjoy a wedge of vegetable frittata, or stir up a bowl of savory oatmeal (with asparagus and dill, or ham and rosemary). "The key for any good meal is making sure what's on your plate is nutritionally rich, balanced, and hopefully really tasty," Newgent says.

Source: http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/brown-bag-lunches?src=RSS_PUBLIC