

What's in your lunch bag?

Get the most from your lunch! Bring your lunch to work to save time, calories and money. Research shows that the more people eat out (including lunches not made at home), the more food, fat and calories they eat. With a little planning, you can quickly put together a great lunch.

Plan ahead and keep it simple:

Time can be tight in the morning. When you make dinner, make extra for lunches over the next few days, or to freeze in single servings.

- Make an extra piece of chicken, fish or grilled veggies for a sandwich or salad.
- Make enough salad for a lunch or two during the week.
- Top leftover rice, pasta or quinoa with vegetables, beans, tofu, or cheese.
- Keep your lunch hot in a thermos or cold in a refrigerator or with an icepack, until you're ready to eat.

Have the right ingredients on hand:

- Keep a variety of whole grain breads, pitas and wraps in your freezer, or rice or corn cakes in the cabinet.
- Add jarred roasted peppers, artichoke hearts, pickles or pepperoncini, for flavor and crunch with few calories.
- Use flavored vinegars, mustards and sauces; they are low in fat and high in flavor.
- Keep a few bean dips on hand like hummus, black bean dip and white bean dips.

- Buy a large box or bag of salad greens and add fruit, vegetables, nuts, meat, and/or cheese. Keep dressing in the refrigerator at work.

Think outside the usual lunch box menu:

- Veggie burgers, smoked or grilled turkey and chicken breast, canned or smoked salmon, or almond butter can give variety to your lunches.
- Use romaine lettuce leaves in place of wraps for sandwiches.
- Top low-fat cottage cheese or yogurt with vegetables, fruit and/or nuts.
- Look at www.stepaheadprogram.com for interesting recipes to add zip to your lunch box, like these:
 - Tuscan-style tuna salad
 - Broccoli apple salad
 - White bean dip (serve with cut veggies and whole grain crackers)
 - Crawford's cauliflower quichettes
 - Spicy black bean, corn and chicken salad
 - Southwestern turkey meatloaf sandwich
 - Oven-baked "fried" chicken
 - Firehouse corn and two bean chili
 - Heavenly deviled eggs

-- from www.webmd.com and *The Boston Globe*.

Recipe of the week: Curried Chicken Pitas

serves 4

from eatingwell.com

6 tablespoons nonfat plain yogurt
 1/4 cup low-fat mayonnaise
 1 tablespoon curry powder
 2 cups cooked, cubed chicken breast
 1 ripe but firm pear, diced
 1 stalk celery, finely diced
 1/2 cup dried cranberries
 1/4 cup sliced or slivered almonds, toasted
 4 4- to 5" whole-wheat pita breads, cut in half
 2 cups sprouts or shredded romaine lettuce

1. Combine yogurt, mayonnaise and curry powder in a large bowl. Add chicken, pear, celery, cranberries and almonds; toss to combine.
2. Fill each pita half with 1/2 cup chicken salad and 1/4 cup sprouts or lettuce.
3. Pack salad and pita halves separately in your lunch bag and assemble just before eating.

Nutrition information:

calories: 323 total fat: 7g saturated fat: 1g
 carbohydrates: 41g protein: 27g fiber: 6g
 sodium: 352 mg

Tip of the Week: If you are a runner and want to change the type of surface you run on (for example, from pavement to an unpaved trail or the grass alongside pavement) make the change gradually, just as you would make any other change to your program or routine. Abrupt changes can lead to problems. There is no evidence that running on a soft surface helps prevent injuries.

--- from "For runners, soft ground can be hard on the body" by Gina Kolata, www.nytimes.com