

## Eating For Success: Fast Lunch Ideas for Busy People

Remember the days when you actually had time to take a lunch break? When you used to leave the office for an hour, have something to eat, meet up with friends, walk in the park, play sport or wonder around the shops...? These days people eat lunch at their desks more often than not, if they eat at all. For many people, the demands of the day just don't let up long enough to afford them a break. Lunchtime rolls around, your stomach is rumbling and you know you should eat, but you've just got one more thing to finish. An hour goes by, your stomach is still gurgling, but you've just got one more deadline, phone call, impromptu meeting, email to reply to....and before you know it, you're reaching for a coffee or chocolate bar to get you through, and that'll have to do for lunch.

The reality is that your brain needs food to fuel it. It is not possible for anyone to be on top of their game when they're skipping meals, eating them way after the hunger pangs have kicked in, or cramming in non-nutritious foods on the run to keep the hunger at bay.

The food you eat forms the very building blocks of your body – food is fuel and the purpose of eating is to provide our bodies with the tools they need for energy, functioning, building and maintenance. So what's the solution? Well, unfortunately, it's not likely that your daily routine is going to change in a hurry, so let's look at some fast and nutritious lunch solutions that with a very small amount of preparation time, or even a quick trip to your local sandwich bar, can help to keep you firing on all cylinders all day long.

**Wraps** – Go for wholemeal rather than white, and make it yourself or duck out to the local sandwich bar. Try some mashed avocado (to give you your good essential fatty acids for the day), and add chicken or tuna and plenty of peppery rocket for flavour. If you make it at home, bring some of your favourite dressing and add it just before you eat – I love a homemade sweet chili sauce on this wrap.

**Salmon or Tuna and Salad** – This is fast and easy. There are some seriously tasty tins of tuna and salmon these days, grab your favourite flavour and toss it into a prepared salad. If you're too busy to make the salad, keep a stash of tinned tuna or salmon in your desk draw and buy a small salad from the supermarket or local take-away, it'll only take a minute to throw it all together.

**Leftovers** –The easiest way to ensure that you always have a tasty and nutritious lunch is to make a habit of cooking extra the night before. Whatever I make for dinner, I always make extra for leftovers. Brown rice is brilliant to make an extra portion of to have on-hand, whether I add it to salad and serve cold or heat it up with other leftovers, it's a five-minute miracle.

This is one of my favourite fast dinners that heats up brilliantly for a lunch of leftovers:

**Mushroom and Avocado Masterpiece** – You'll need...

- Some flat mushrooms, big enough to make a stack from.
- Olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 small red chillies, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp thyme leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 small avocado, mashed with a few drops of lemon juice (essential fatty acids)
- 2 tbsp low fat cottage cheese (protein)

Preheat a grill on medium heat. Mix the olive oil, garlic, chillies and thyme together in a small jug. Brush over both sides of each mushroom. Season mushrooms with salt and pepper and let them sit and marinate

while you get the rest together.

Combine the avocado and low fat cottage cheese in a small bowl with salt and pepper to taste and mix well.

Place mushrooms flat-side down onto a barbecue plate or chargrill and cook for 3 – 4 minutes on each side or until just tender.

For dinner, place the mushrooms onto serving plates, top with avocado mixture and serve immediately. Remember to save some for lunch the next day!

**Afternoon Snacks** – I always keep a jar of raw, unsalted nuts such as almonds on my desk, these are an ideal afternoon energy snack, you can throw in some dried fruits to create a mix that'll also satisfy some of your sweet cravings if you like. Rye or wholemeal crackers and mini tins of tuna or salmon also make fast, easy and nutritious snacks.

Any of these quick lunches can be prepared at home or easily bought from your local sandwich bar, and they're a great solution to eating on the run and not feeling your body the energy it needs to keep you going.