Is lunch actually important? Yes!
Two-thirds of us skip lunch or eat while working.

Lunch helps control appetite later in the day, so you can make smarter snack and dinner decisions. It provides a great opportunity to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. A healthy lunch can also lead to a more productive afternoon. Try spending at least 20 minutes eating your lunch; it can lead to fewer calories consumed now and later. Reclaim your lunch break!

Pack a Perfect Lunch

- Balance protein, carbohydrate, lots of fiber and some fat.
- Plan and pack several days in advance. More than three days can be unmanageable.
- Stock your kitchen with what you need; pick a prep day.
- Make foods that can be used a variety of ways throughout a week. For example, beans 5-ways: start the week with marinated bean, artichoke heart and cherry tomato side salad, then beans blended into a pesto hummus or oven spiced roast beans for high protein, high fiber croutons. Toward the end of the week, add sustenance to a leftover veggies soup or use the bean hummus and an egg to bind roasted beans, chopped veggies, nuts or seeds into bean burgers.

Pick a Perfect Lunch Carrier

Brown bags and vintage lunchboxes work, but they don’t necessarily keep the crisp in your lettuce and the soggy out of your bread. Here’s a quick lesson on cool features in the new generation meal carriers.

- Separate compartments for food you don’t want to mix until you are ready to eat it.
- Stainless steel food containers are easy to clean and light weight.
- Stackable compartments allow for customized lunches from one day to the next. And you can prep ahead!
- Some containers have carbon filters and vents to extend the life of fresh produce.
- Like layered mason jar salads? You’ll love some of the super wide-mouthed jars that make eating out of the jar easy and convenient.
- Insulated containers maintain a safe temperature for a couple hours, perfect for a long commute.
- A colorful silicone bag will be more enduring and easier to clean than its paper brown bag cousin. Leak-proof, you can put anything into the various sizes and clean them in the dishwasher when you’re done.

Temperature Safety Checklist

Performance is everything on the job. And your body is a high-performance machine requiring high quality fuel. But even the best fuel can sabotage your performance if the temperature of your food spends too much time in the Danger Zone—between 40- and 140-degrees Fahrenheit.

Safety Check List

- Quickly refrigerate and cool leftovers using shallow, uncovered containers.
- Keep food refrigerated until ready to eat.
- Freeze water in plastic bottles or juice boxes and use as ice packs.
- If microwaving, be sure to heat the food thoroughly by stirring the food once or twice in the heating process.
- Discard uneaten lunch food and paper bags to prevent cross contamination.

Recipe of the Month: Simple Smorrebrod

A Danish favorite, smorrebrod is simply an open-faced sandwich. You’ll want to double this recipe for seconds at another time, or at least make a whole batch of beets for the week.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 ½ teaspoons chopped tarragon, packed
- 1/8 teaspoon fresh squeezed lemon juice
- A pinch of salt and fresh ground black pepper
- 1 medium red or yellow beet, greens removed
- 1 slice sturdy rye bread, thinly sliced, Danish-style
- A few slices of shallots

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a small mixing bowl, stir together the mayonnaise, tarragon, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Refrigerate until ready to use.
2. Boil red or yellow beets until they are fork tender. Drain and cool.
3. Remove skin and trim the steam and root ends. Cut into ¼” slices.
4. Spread the herbed mayonnaise over the bread. Layer the beets. Top with shallots and a few leaves of tarragon.