



# Office lunches from around the world

Lunch time is essentially a meal time that truly formed a solid place in our schedules during the industrial era, when workers needed a break. Whether it was a small affair, or like Samuel Johnson stated in his English dictionary in 1755, “enough food that fits into one hand,” the term lunch itself has Anglo Saxon origins and today, we have conveniently shaped it into a half hour break to relax in-between work.



**Peru: Chinese-Peruvian chicken**

I rallied around with friends spread across the globe and requested (read pleaded/hounded) them to send me images of the food they ate at lunch in office, offering a unique glimpse into their food cultures and traditions.

They made this massive effort of embarrassing their colleagues and themselves, by taking pictures of the food they ate every day. Some of my friends are blessed with canteens, and while there is a harmony in some of



**Jordan: Tomatoes with pepper, hummus and brown beans and roasted eggplant sauce make up a normal lunch which everyone is eating, as opposed to rushed affairs at their desks.**

these images, meticulously planned by true foodies, many of them are clearly the work of a rushed, in-between meetings, quick bite! The end result is an ongoing list of almost 30 countries and I am pleased to share a few here.

**KOSOVO: Second youngest nation of Europe, a medley of cultural influences**

This little land locked country's cuisine is heavily influenced by neighbouring Albania, Serbia, Greece, etc. Honestly, most



**Indonesia: Nasi tim (steamed rice) with chicken and egg, served with chicken broth, is a Chinese-Indonesian dish**



**Indonesia: Nasi rames/warteg (rice with mix of one's own choice of dishes)**

of the images I have seen resemble a very homely platter and just screams of healthy, flavoursome food. Normal lunch time for

office goes is 12 PM, and according to my architect friend Arbenita, they mostly eat outside.

**INDONESIA: Islands, Komodo dragons, Bali, and spicy food**

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago and thus, home to a staggering variety of cuisines, transcending across to food cultures in offices. Most of us are familiar with the more popular nasi goreng or beef rendang, or just something with noodles. But the Indonesians were only introduced to wheat when the Portuguese and Dutch arrived about 400-500 years ago. Add to this, the Spanish, in the 16th century, brought the chilli pepper from the new world, and the relish sambal, was created in the hot steamy settings of some Javanese village.

Today, Indonesian cuisine is a melange of tastes from Indian origins, Chinese settlers from the 7th century, as well as the largest Muslim population of any country, making the food supremely diverse, unique, and halal. These pictures were sent to me by Angeline Basuki, an architect and the next batch at my Heritage Management Masters course. All the dishes represent local food that is easily available anywhere and costs about \$1.5!

**BRAZIL: The Amazon, beaches, football, and samba**

I had the amazing fortune of visiting Brazil, and other than the warmth people showed us, I was wowed by the cultural diversity — I hadn't realised that the Japanese formed a unique part of their culinary and cultural heritage! Generally, their food is all about meat and meat, and simply more meat, but they have loads of vegetables too. And then, you have a spectacular entry like Acai berries and the

many beans and greens. Add to this, the Italian and Japanese influences and you start to see that Brazilian cuisine has a mind-blowing diversity.

Elisa Cerqueira, was one of our event caterers, and she sent me images of these lunch boxes prepared for her clients.

**JORDAN: Petra, mansaf, ancient history, and the Dead Sea**

When I arrived in Jordan, eagerly looking forward to the food there, I was enthusiastically informed by the locals that no visitor ever leaves without gaining at least 2 kg. I think I successfully left with 5 kg extra, and am still carrying it around, but that food tastes nothing less than magic!

The mansaf was a Middle Eastern version of our biriyani which had been heavily recommended to me, but my senses were entirely keyed in on the



**Brazil: Black beans with Smoked Sausage and Bacon, White Rice and Braised Cabbage (Feijão preto com linguíça e bacon defumados, arroz branco e couve refogada).**

local cheeses, especially the Nabulsi, (originating from the Palestinian region of Nablus) which was also used in the to-die-for dessert Knafeh and the hung yoghurt, with herbs rolled into a ball of divinity.

This photo has been supplied to me by my dear friend Saed Essalameh, who is bemused at my love for food.

**PERU: Machu Pichu, llamas, and Lake Titicaca**

Lunch in Peru begins between midday and 1 PM, and it is common for shops and offices to be shut at midday, with employees returning to work as late as 3 PM. Many Peruvians head home for lunch and given their variety of food, I wonder how they stay away from trying out all the different cuisines they have access to.

Chinese immigrants came mainly from the province of Guangdong in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and they brought with them ingredients, and combined