

Lunch on the go

Few of us relish the idea of packing lunch to take to work—it is just another dreary part of the yet-another-chore-to-do-in-the-morning list. If you want some know-how on bypassing some of the stress of the morning rush hour, and still arrive at your midday destination with a fresh and appealing homemade lunch, read on.

GET YOUR GEAR READY

Try to get yourself good, solid food carriers that fit in your bag. Or get a separate bag altogether for your lunch. These can include (but not limited to) a small thermos, mason jars, plastic boxes in various sizes or a large, sectioned food box. Also, stock up on plastic bags, wooden, plastic or steel cocktail sticks and aluminium foil. Also, try to invest in an insulating lunch carrier that can maintain the right temperature.



WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Do you happen to be the type who cannot imagine lunch without the Bengali staples—rice and curry? You are no longer limited to the ancient stacked metal tiffin carriers, but do check if your modern one can keep the food warm without leaking.

Overall, dry food has an upper hand for the busy lunch hours, especially if you

happen to be away from your desk on work.

Also, get into the habit of having soups and salads occasionally. You can either take in a thermos, or have it from a jar. Jars in particular save a lot of time while being a portable solution.

ORGANISE OVER THE WEEKENDS

It might be a lot of drag at the time, but

preparing some components for a week's-worth of lunches on a Saturday afternoon will be extremely appreciated come Tuesday morning. Buy fresh bread on Friday, slice if need-be, and freeze it; poach a chicken breast and chop it; roast a small piece of fish fillet; make an oven-baked vegetable frittata and cut it into squares; parboil small amounts of lentils and beans, or hard-boil a few eggs. Don't overdo it though; unlike diamonds, cooked food doesn't last forever—not even five days.

FROM LAST NIGHT'S DINNER TO NEXT DAY'S LUNCH

If you know what you're going to make for dinner on successive nights, think about what, if anything, you can make extra of, to take for lunch later in the week. Make a mini version of the dish you're having on Tuesday and reheat it in the microwave on Wednesday

at work, freeze an individual container of Friday night's special chicken or mutton curry and defrost it in your office fridge on Sunday morning. What you expend on planning and organising on the weekend, you make up threefold in time on weekday mornings. Have a go and see if you're not converted.

DIVIDE TO CONQUER!

Forget the perfect sandwiches and pasta with sauce that you have seen in the advertisements for lunch boxes. Take sandwich filling, bread and salad topping to work in individual containers or ziplock bags, refrigerate until lunchtime, assemble just when you want to eat. Say goodbye to limp lettuces, dry tomatoes or bread that falls apart under the weight of it all: when you really want a just-made sandwich experience, you've got it.

Freeze several cup-size portions of homemade stock in two-cup capacity plastic containers. On the day you want soup for lunch, take a single container, still frozen, to work with you, along with whatever other soup contents you want in other containers. The stock will have thawed by noon, when you'll add to it all the other ingredients, and reheating the whole lot in a microwave oven.

Never pack a dressed salad or a sauced pasta. Keep the greens, croutons and dressing in separate containers (pour the dressing into a ziplock bag then throw it away to avoid having to wash a greasy container), and the same for the pasta shells and their sundried tomato sauce—the pasta will just suck up the sauce if they're forced to nestle together in a single container for several hours.

By LS Desk

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Overcoming sugary treats

If food is at the heart of everything we do, then the lack of sweetmeat at the end of a meal, or as a part of a celebration (mishit-mukh) is what can cause cardiac arrest.

With the staggering statistics and studies that indicate a strong relation between sugar and many non-communicable diseases, it is more important than ever to understand and cut back or simply quit sugar.

Here are a few ways to get you started—

READ THOSE LABELS

Don't buy it just because it says "non/low fat" because many companies use sugar to make your low calorie bar taste better. Read the labels on the back of the package to know exactly how much sugar it contains and thus avoid. Perhaps pick a fruit instead?

SAY NO TO SUGARY DRINKS

Quit the practice of adding sugar to hot caffeinated drinks. If you are a coffee/tea addict, get into the habit of not adding that extra teaspoon of sweetness to your steaming hot cup. Instead, add some ground cinnamon which has a natural hint of sweetness to it. Also curb those sugary sodas and instead just opt for water with some added flavour like lemon, mint leaves or any fruit of your choice.

NO GUILTY SUGARY PLEASURES

This is one practice, that is a conscious/consistent mental struggle. Remember, there is no need for added empty calories especially when these food items contain no nutritional value either!

EAT REGULARLY AND MINDFULLY

Instead of eating every time you feel hungry, eat every three hours. Plan your meals and instead of opening up another packet of something processed, opt for cooking/preparing from scratch (yes that also includes snacks). This way, you stay in control of not only what you put into your body but also the amount, and avoid consuming sugar

EAT FOOD THAT KEEPS YOU FULLER LONGER

Consume protein, fibre, healthy fats and complex carbohydrates. This helps curb your sugar cravings. A handful of almonds, cashews or slices of cucumbers and carrots is a great option as a quick filling snack.

DON'T QUIT COLD TURKEY

This is one method that in most cases does

not work. Quitting sugar does not need to be a drastic, added shock value change to your digestive system. Slow and steady is the mantra, start with cutting sugar out of your drinks to progressing towards your daily meals.

That Bengali sweet tooth is notoriously known for delectable creations like Bogura's mishti doi, Cumilla's rosh malai to Tangail's must have chamchams. So, quitting or cutting back on sugar is not an easy feat. Remember it takes 21 days of continuous practice to form a habit, so pace yourself and give your body time to adjust. Indulge in sweets but with restraint, once you've overcome your sugar addiction.

By Supriti Sarkar