



Dust off your lunch boxes

If you want to get ahead with your savings goals in 2019, packing a lunch each day is a great place to start. (And forget the soggy cheese sandwich, as with a bit of planning and thought, you'll be guaranteed to give your colleagues lunch box envy.) With ING research showing that Australian employees spend a whopping \$129 on average per month filling their bellies at lunchtime, you could tuck away over \$1,500 in your savings account in one year alone, just by getting a little lunchbox virtuous...

So why dust off the lunch box?

Tuck into the savings

With the average lunch being \$15 a day, it's not hard to give your savings a major boost by cutting out the daily pilgrimage to the sandwich shop. And it's not just money that you'll be saving, there's more...

Quality 'you' time

People often say buying lunch is an excuse to get out of the office. However, instead of spending half your lunchtime standing in a cafe queue, you could spend that time meaningfully. Go for a run or walk around the nearest park. You'll not only fit in your 10,000 steps but it will clear your head. The best way to come back alert and refreshed to work.

Underwhelming, indeed

How often do you get excited about getting take away, and then feel underwhelmed or like you need a decontamination shower afterwards? As well as being more expensive than bringing food in from home, takeaway food can often be less fresh and nutritious than your own pantry. It's also hard to justify buying fruit from a takeaway cafe or shop too because it's often more expensive than supermarkets. So to guarantee your daily 'five' veggies and 'two' fruit intake, it's worth being ready to pack and go.

Waste wars

In our waste conscious society, it's good to look at our food wastage. Packing up a lunch each day is a great way to decrease food waste and save leftovers from going furry in the fridge. You can take last night's meal as is or be creative and give the dish a lunchtime twist.

Gain savings, lose pounds

With a combination of having more time to exercise at lunchtime and by bringing in nutritious and controlled amounts of food (without the temptation of buying that banana cake at the counter) your healthier lifestyle could convert to diminished kilos.

How to create lunch box envy.....

Plan A

Planning is key to rolling out enviable packed lunches each day. Shop for your lunches on the weekend, and batch cook and freeze/chill items such as salads, frittatas, soup and rice paper rolls so you can grab and run during the week. You can even freeze sandwiches in advance (yep you heard right)! Just seal them well. Take it one step further and divide and store your food into individual containers in advance to make mornings more relaxed.

Go naked and nude

Treat yourself to some quality Tupperware or splash out on a state of the art Bento box. The beauty of Bento boxes is that you can reduce plastic wrapping waste and go with nude food! The environment will thank you for it. Why not keep your lunch cool with a frozen bottle of water or for extra nutrients, coconut water.

Pick and mix it up

Inject as much variety as you can into your lunchtime treats. If you don't, you'll be back in the food court queue quicker than you can butter your bread. Get out of your comfort zone and enjoy the process. Go crazy in the fruit and vegetable aisle, and treat yourself to healthy snacks you wouldn't usually buy. Try baby cucumbers, snow peas, or baby sweetcorn for quick grab and go snacks. And prep-free fruits, fresh or dried, like lychees, apricots, dates or cranberries. Swap recipes with colleagues and find the perfect sweet treat, such as Taste's Cacao Coconut Date Balls or Coconut Sesame and Sultana Bar.

Stuck for ideas?

Ditch the daily egg sandwich and be inventive. There's a wealth of free lunch box ideas online to give you inspiration. Explore making items such as vegetable patties, savoury slices and try quinoa as a base for salads. As well as go-to recipe sites such as Taste and All Recipes, government health and association websites such as the Dieticians Association of Australia are great for recipes and nutrition insight. The Healthy Eating Advisory Service has a great lunch box guide for kids and adults.