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The D.I.Y. Man > Pack a Lunch That Packs a Punch

Your mom's not making you PB&J's anymore (we hope), but if you're smart, you'll still brown-bag it occasionally. You'll eat better, save cash, and never have to schlep to Quiznos again



1. Build a Smarter Sandwich

- **Sturdy, grainy bread** from a bakery, sliced by you. Not only will it taste fresh and flavorful; it won't turn into a squishy mess.
- **Cheese** adds a salty, creamy texture to the mix. Use something good, like an aged Cheddar or Gruyère, sliced thin.
- Like Tom Colicchio preaches, "Keep the wet stuff away from the bread" so it doesn't turn soggy. Your **Dijon or mayo?** Spread it on the cheese instead.
- Use **greens** that taste like something. Try arugula. It'll add a big, peppery kick to every bite.
- Invest in quality **cold cuts**. Look for markets that prepare their own turkeys and roast beef. Or order up a pound of good real ham, sliced feathery thin.



3. Get All European

• This one's easy: no cooking, hardly any assembling. Start off with a hunk of bread. Olives. Cornichons (those little pickles). A hard cheese, like Pecorino or Piave. Finally, some kind of hard European salami that you will cut yourself, at your desk, with the Swiss Army knife you bought expressly for this reason. The salami should have a casing that looks rumped, hard, and covered with flour (it's really mold). It should have a name like Felino or Crespone. If it's vacuum-packed and made in Ohio, it's the wrong kind.

4. Say Yes to Pasta, No to the Microwave

• Leave your leftover carbonara and bolognese at home. What you want is something lighter and simpler that can be eaten at room temperature. Dress the pasta with a quality olive oil, salt, pepper, and a sharp cheese like ricotta salata or feta and throw in some chopped olives. If you're a meat guy, add sausage.—HOWIE KAHN

2. Avoid the Soup Nazis

• This is soup as a meal, so you want something hearty (and easy), like potato leek. Here's how to make it. In a stockpot, sauté a chopped onion with a bit of olive oil. When it turns translucent, add a chopped garlic clove, then three big chopped leeks (trim the tough green parts), a pound of peeled, diced potatoes, and salt and pepper. When the potatoes start to brown, add enough chicken stock to cover the vegetables. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat, cover, and simmer. The longer it simmers, the deeper the flavor becomes, but it's good to go after about 30 minutes. If you have a blender, puree the soup. In the morning, grab half a baguette and transfer the soup to a thermos. Zap it in the office microwave; then, if you want, add some heavy cream—the kind in the little packets near the coffee machine will do just fine. Finally, if you feel like adding some shredded cheese—the same Gruyère you already have in the house for sandwiches—we're not going to argue.

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