



## Beat the Brown Bag Blues

### *Put the Fun Back in Lunch*

*-- By Becky Hand, Licensed and Registered Dietician*

They're not glamorous, breath-taking or even mildly exciting. Instead, brown bag lunches are convenient, economical and all too often boring. But are your packed lunches becoming too mundane, unappealing and dull? If you have the brown bag blues, you may be in need of a brown bag makeover.

Years ago, Britain's Earl of the Sandwich, John Montague, couldn't be bothered wasting time at lengthy meals. Meals took too much time away from his passion for gambling. So, he asked for his meat to be brought between two slices of bread for a quick and easy meal that could be eaten while playing cards. The Earl was so proud of his discovery that he named it after himself. And thus, the sandwich was born.

Today, quick lunches are still in demand. To save time, try packing your lunch as you are making or cleaning up dinner the night before. The 10 minutes you might spend packing a lunch is often faster than the time it would take to hit the drive-thru. Lunch doesn't just have to be the limp ham and cheese your mom used to pack. Bored with bread? There are plenty of other options. Planning healthy lunches is a snap when you use this handy guide. Choose at least one item from each of the four groups.

#### 1. Breads and starches for energy all day long

whole wheat bread	low-fat crackers
oatmeal bread	tortillas
pita bread	bagels
raisin bread	whole grain buns
english muffins	pasta salad

#### 2. Protein for muscle building

water-packed tuna	string cheese
cottage cheese	deli roast beef
flavored or baked tofu	tuna salad
lean deli ham	vegetarian "meats"
deli chicken or turkey	egg salad
peanut butter	boiled eggs
nut butters	chicken salad
cheese	bean dip

### 3. Fruits and vegetables for vital nutrients

- Fresh fruit - apples, grapes, bananas, plums, peaches, cherries, oranges, berries, melon balls
- Fresh vegetables - baby carrots, cucumber slices, broccoli and cauliflower florettes, pepper rings...
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- Salads - tossed salad, coleslaw, spinach salad, fruit mixtures
- Individual applesauce or fruit cups
- Dried fruit

### 4. Dairy foods for strong bones and teeth

- low-fat or skim milk
- yogurt
- cheese
- string cheese
- pudding cups

Finally, try something that SparkPeople has become fond of around the office: plan healthy lunches with co-workers. Start a "lunch club," where every person prepares enough healthy food for the other participants once a week. This will add variety into your lunchtime and takes the pressure off being forced to come up with something healthy to eat every day.