

DEAR ALLEE: WHAT SHOULD I CARRY IN MY DABBA?

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Is a question oft heard by those of us in the Indian corporate scenario, and a couple of readers of this blog voiced their frustration. With the not so healthy options out there - think the Friday Chinese noodles, the Monday samosas as snacks, the aloo ka sabzi on Thursdays - it's no wonder that those on a quest for a healthy lifestyle in today's stressful age are at a loss when it comes to food at the workplace. Anyone with no time to put together a tiffin is relegated to eating food not fit for human consumption, let alone for those who are fortunate enough to afford much better quality of food. So here are some (totally primal) lunch ideas to carry with you to work so that you don't end up eating something that is damaging your body or nibbling at something with chai that is doing more harm than good.

Salads - dressing on the side – Carry a large box and carry anything. All veggies go, some boiled chicken perhaps, nuts for crunch, a variety of leaves, red and yellow bell pepper, mushrooms, carrots, boiled eggs, think of it and dump it in. (No corn please!) This one is so easy; you can throw it all together the night before and stick it in the fridge. In a separate small box you can carry the dressing. It could be as simple as mixing olive oil and balsamic vinaigrette together or as varied as adding a splash of Tabasco or garlic. [Here](#) are some nice homemade dressing recipes to give you ideas. But spice it up. Add Indian spices, add *nimbu*, and add flavour to ensure that your salad is anything but boring. You can explore your culinary expertise with dressing for surprising results.

Chicken tikka/ grilled chicken: Pan toss or stir-fry in coconut oil with your favourite sauces and just carry that. Order out a plate of tikka for yourself from a nearby restaurant sans the naan.

What you can cook over the weekend: Leftovers are always a great idea to take to work. So you could be sorted Monday and Tuesday.

Here are some things you can cook over the weekend so all you need to do is pack and carry:

1) Vegetables: Cook your favourites whether they're green beans, carrots, cauliflower or cabbage. If you cook them more naturally rather than making their taste in overpowering *masalas* and salt, you won't need to carry along *chapatis* or rice. Just a huge serving of your favourite *sabzi* flavourfully cooked is enough.

You can even look up an alternative way to cook up veggies. I found one here for [glazed carrot](#) to give you an idea.

2) Chicken curry: If you're making a curry over the weekend, make sure you put extra chicken pieces in there so when Monday comes, you can take the extra ones out and pack it in your tiffin. And once those spices have sunk in deep, it'll probably taste better at lunch on Monday than it did the previous day. And who's to say it's not a completely healthy meal?

3) Rolls wrapped in lettuce: Instead of wrapping up leftovers in a paratha, consider wrapping leftover chicken or vegetables, dressed in a sauce, in lettuce leaves. Tastes delicious and is super easy to prepare. The filling could be almost anything.

Home made snacks: When it comes to snacks, it's not hard with some preparation to come up with some recipes that can be prepared and refrigerated and carried to work the next day. For example, take this [omelet muffin](#) recipe. Or how about these [grain free granola bars](#)? Or these [coconut – chocolate balls](#), which take care of the sweet tooth as well as the snack craving?

When it comes to snacks to be carried to the workplace, I'd recommend that you keep this stuff handy. The reason being, whether you are hungry or not, sometimes a slow day, or plain old boredom may just make you want to reach out the nearest pack of cookies. So here is a list of snacks with no preparation required.

- Boiled eggs
- Nuts
- Yoghurt in a huge container, mixed with nuts and a little honey perhaps.
- Very dark chocolate (80% cacao and above)
- Cut veggies like carrots, cucumber, celery with some dips.
- Seasonal fruits like strawberries, figs and cherries (some of the best fruits you can eat)

From the canteen:

Only if you must and there is no other option, there are couple of things you may nibble on from the canteen.

Chicken *biryani*: make sure you pick the pieces mostly and take less of the rice and lots of *raita*. Ask for an extra serving of the vegetable and less of the *roti*.

Maybe they can whip you up an omelet, which means you will either have to go early or late for lunch.

In the primal lifestyle [Fasting](#) is pretty easy. You can go for hours forgetting to eat and will no longer feel the need to eat every meal-time. The kind of freedom this brings is exhilarating. Imagine no longer having to be at the mercy of meals? There was a time I'd get severe migraines every time I was even an hour late for a meal, today, I can skip meals altogether and feel great.

Remember: having lunches dinners and breakfasts are only modern conveniences. Our ancestors ate when they hunted and didn't when they didn't manage to catch anything! Teaching your body to derive energy from the stored fat is an awesome feeling. To cut a long story short, there may be no real need to eat that lunch or snack after all. Try eating like this and find out for yourself.

This is the first of what I hope to be many of my Dear Allee posts! I've received a few questions from you that I hope to answer over time. Let me know if this has helped give you ideas for lunch or snacks at work. As usual, looking forward to your comments! Thanks for reading.

