



# Is your lunch making you FAT?

CHANCES ARE THOSE QUICK-FIX LUNCHES YOU GRAB ON THE GO ARE NOT AS HEALTHY AS YOU THINK. OFTEN LADEN WITH HIDDEN KILOJOULES, THEY COULD BE THE ONE THING STANDING BETWEEN YOU AND DROPPING A DRESS SIZE. BY JESSICA MONTAGUE

**H**ow do you pick your lunch? Do you ask a colleague to grab you "a little something" on their break or opt for the "special" at the canteen because, well, it's cheap? And hands up those who leave it so late that you end up snacking on whatever the nearest vending machine has to offer? Sounds like you? Then join the queue. Because while we all know breakfast is the most important meal of the day and the virtues of a carb-light evening meal, few of us have the skinny on the perfect lunch.

"A lot of working women in their 30s do one of two things when it comes to lunch," explains Tara Diversi, dietician and manager of Health Management Dietetics. "Either they buy the first thing they see because it can be eaten quickly – and it's unexpectedly laden with kilojoules – or they skip lunch entirely and spend the afternoon snacking before topping up with a filling dinner at night when they're least active."

Whether you're a vegetarian or a carnivore, a soup-lover or sandwich fiend, we've compiled a smorgasbord of the best – and worst – lunchtime options for you.

## Before you start ...

Familiarise yourself with the table below – it's a guide to what your lunch should be comprised of.

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Kilojoules    | No more than 2000kJ  |
| Fat           | Aim for 10% of the total weight of your lunch. For example, 10g or less per 100g |
| Carbohydrates | Up to 40g  |
| Protein       | Minimum 10-15g   |

## The G-O with GI

The glycemic index (GI) of a food is a ranking between one and 100 of how quickly the carbohydrates they contain are digested and absorbed into the blood. As it can be upwards of six hours between lunch and dinner, the gradual release of energy is crucial. At lunch, steer clear of foods with a high GI, like white bread, pasta or couscous, and opt instead for low-GI foods which will keep you feeling fuller for longer. For a list of low-GI foods, visit [glycemicindex.com](http://glycemicindex.com).



back

## THE PERFECT SALAD

### SALAD (VITAMINS AND MINERALS)

A mixture of lettuce leaves, tomatoes, cucumber, mung beans, carrot, capsicum and more should make up the bulk of your salad. Organic produce is preferable because it has superior vitamin, mineral and nutrient content than non-organic food and up to six times higher levels of salicylic acid – a protective compound that acts as an anti-inflammatory and helps protect against heart disease.

✓ Good choices: Any ultra-fresh selection of vegetables, particularly richly coloured ones.

✗ Bad choices: Starchy vegetables like potato. A high-GI rating makes them a no-no.

### MEAT (PROTEIN)

Aim for 60-75 grams of lean meat (or vegetarian option). Made up of amino acids (the "building blocks" to a healthy body), protein provides energy, aids the growth and repair of muscles and bones and helps control metabolism.

✓ Good choices: Chicken or turkey breast, lean lamb or beef, chickpeas, egg, tuna in spring water, smoked salmon.

✗ Bad choices: Bacon, any fried meat, tuna in oil.

### DRESSING

This is where hidden kilojoules can sneak in. Avoid creamy dressings, and if you're eating out, ask to have your dressing on the side so you can control how much you use – the ideal amount is two tablespoons.

✓ Good choices: A splash of extra-virgin olive oil (spray is even better), a squeeze of lemon, balsamic vinegar.

✗ Bad choices: Sweet chilli sauce, mayonnaise.

### PASTA AND RICE (CARBOHYDRATES)

Pasta and rice are not off limits – as long as they're a low-GI or a soy variety. Ask before you dig in, though, as most takeaway outlets use starchy rice and pasta.

✓ Good choices: Brown rice, wholemeal pasta, soyaroni.

✗ Bad choices: White rice, white pasta, couscous.

#### CHOOSE Tuna niçoise salad

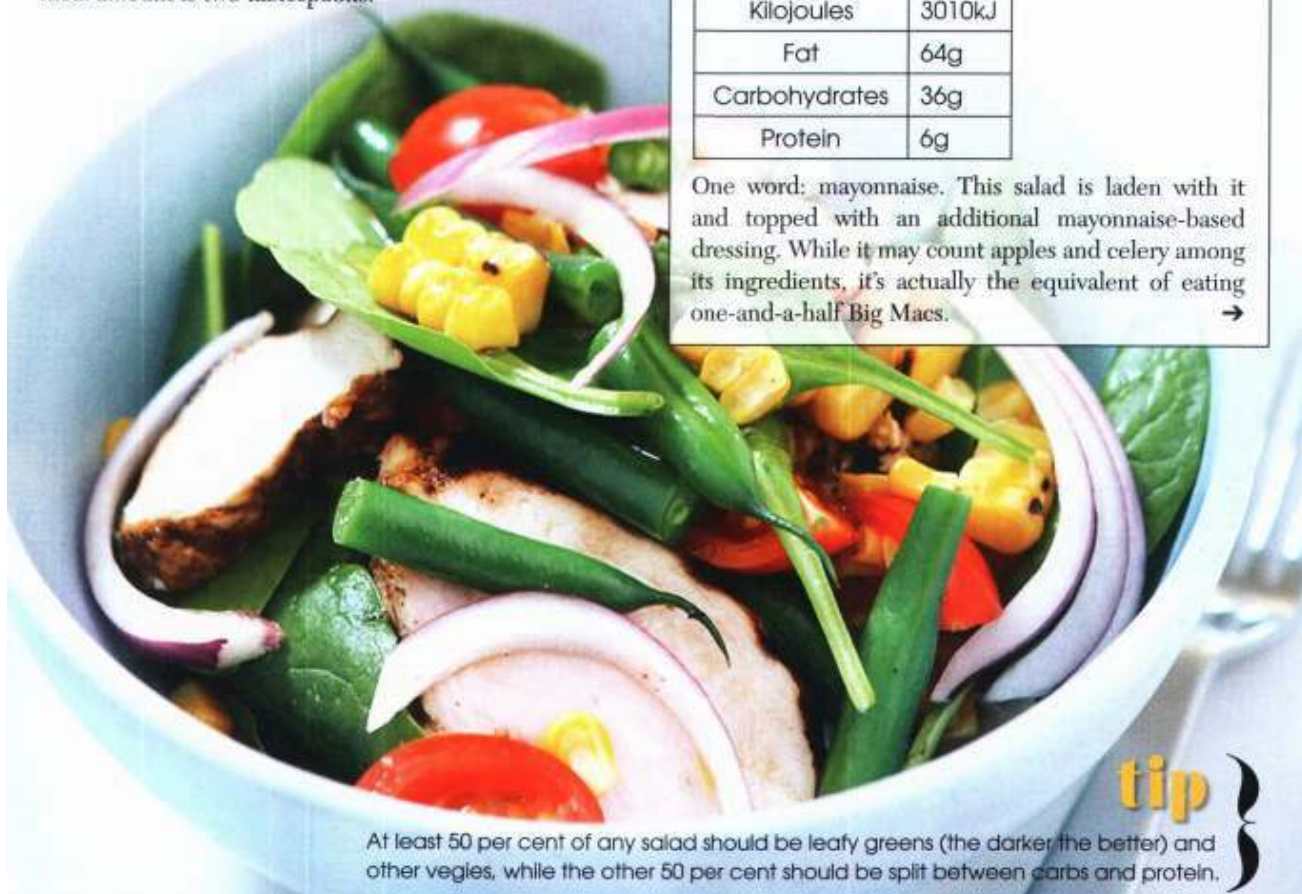
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|---------------|--------|
| Kilojoules    | 1129kJ |
| Fat           | 13g    |
| Carbohydrates | 15g    |
| Protein       | 25g    |

Like avocados, fish such as tuna and salmon are rich in the good fats that are beneficial to the body. The secret with this salad is not adding oily dressing – stick to balsamic vinegar instead. Another good tip: swap the potato for an extra serve of protein, like chickpeas. You'll cut down the refined carbohydrates by 13.2g.

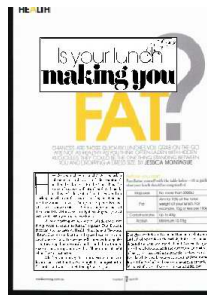
#### LOSE Waldorf salad

|               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| Kilojoules    | 3010kJ |
| Fat           | 64g    |
| Carbohydrates | 36g    |
| Protein       | 6g     |

One word: mayonnaise. This salad is laden with it and topped with an additional mayonnaise-based dressing. While it may count apples and celery among its ingredients, it's actually the equivalent of eating one-and-a-half Big Maes. →

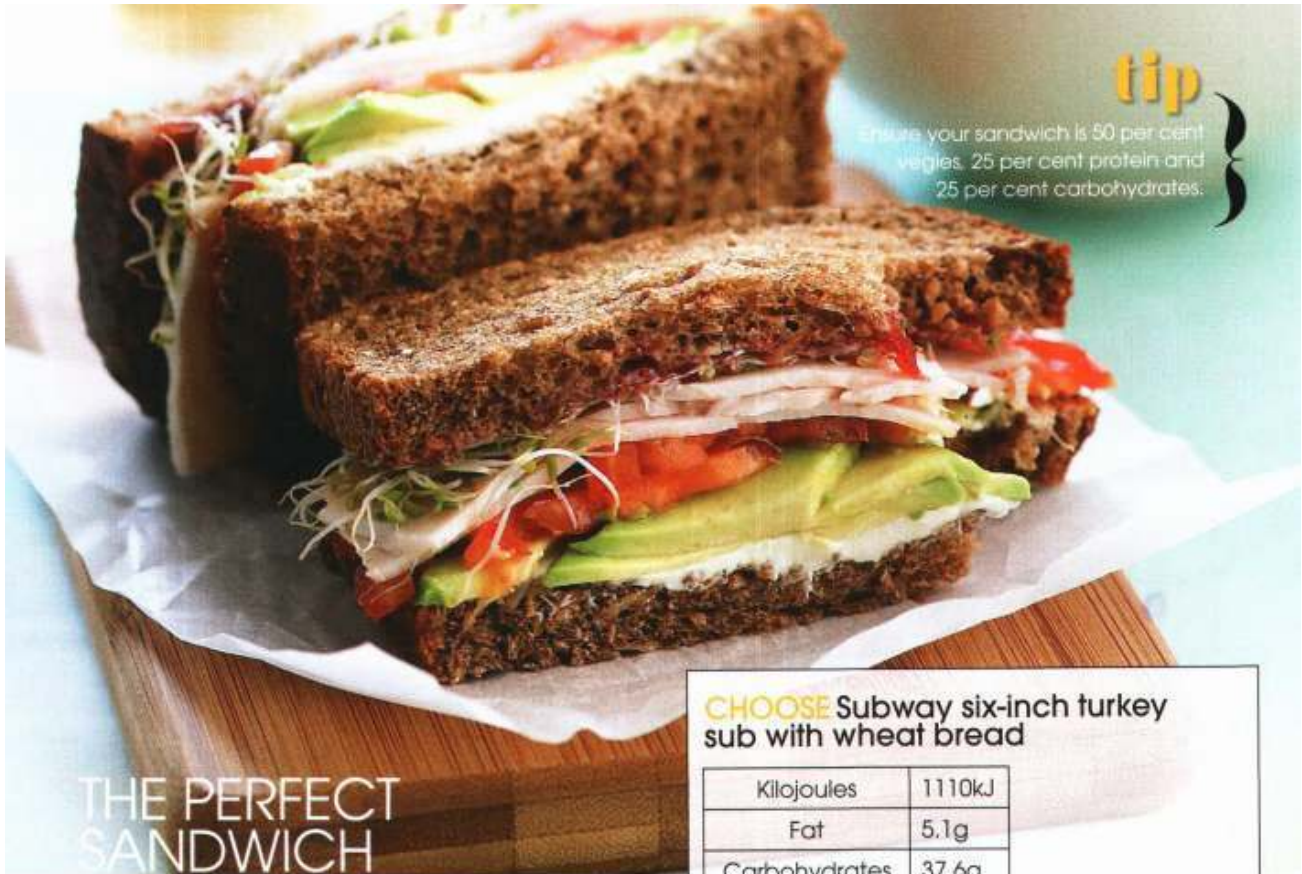


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 At least 50 per cent of any salad should be leafy greens (the darker the better) and other vegies, while the other 50 per cent should be split between carbs and protein.



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back



**tip**  
 Ensure your sandwich is 50 per cent vegies, 25 per cent protein and 25 per cent carbohydrates.

THE PERFECT SANDWICH

**BREAD (CARBOHYDRATES)**

Beware of any type of white bread (even the ones with grains) as their high-GI rating will make your blood sugar level plunge after only a few hours. Translation: you'll be struck with hunger pangs by early afternoon.

✓ Good choices: Wholemeal multigrain, rye, multigrain spelt, wheat sourdough, wholemeal pita bread.

✗ Bad choices: White bread, finely-processed wholemeal, Turkish bread, French baguette.

**SALAD (VITAMINS AND MINERALS)**

Cram as much salad as possible on to your sandwich. The more colours, the more bases you're covering when it comes to essential vitamins and minerals.

✓ Good choices: Everything.

✗ Bad choices: Nothing (unless it's covered in dressing).

**FILLING (PROTEIN)**

It's crucial your sandwich has a minimum of 10 grams of protein – that's around two-to-three slices of thinly-sliced meat or a couple of tablespoons of tuna.

✓ Good choices: Tuna in spring water, chicken breast, smoked salmon, ham, tofu and rice patty, one egg.

✗ Bad choices: Chicken schnitzel, tuna in oil, bacon.

**CONDIMENTS**

It's a fallacy that healthy sandwiches have to taste like rabbit food. Spreads containing the good poly or monounsaturated fats are a great idea. It's the sugary spreads and condiments high in saturated fat and sugar that will add unnecessary kilojoules. Case in point: one serving

**CHOOSE** Subway six-inch turkey sub with wheat bread

|               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| Kilojoules    | 1110kJ |
| Fat           | 5.1g   |
| Carbohydrates | 37.6g  |
| Protein       | 14.6g  |

This sandwich is an option from Subway's "under six grams of fat" menu. But don't be tricked into adding a sauce. The ranch dressing on its own has more kilojoules than your *entire* turkey sub, so opting for that will more than double your intake.

**LOSE** Turkish bread with salami, tomato and cheese

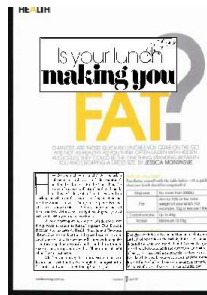
|               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| Kilojoules    | 2347kJ |
| Fat           | 44.8g  |
| Carbohydrates | 42.2g  |
| Protein       | 31.1g  |

While Turkish bread may appear healthy with its lighter-than-air texture, the GI rating is more than double that of Bùrger mixed-grain bread. As for salami and cheese, that's *way* too much fat (almost half of your daily intake).

(two tablespoons) of caesar dressing has nearly as much fat as two Snickers bars, while one tablespoon of mango chutney is the equivalent of three teaspoons of sugar.

✓ Good choices: Avocado, hummus, mustard, garlic, pickles.

✗ Bad choices: Chutney, sweet chilli sauce, mayonnaise, caesar dressing.



back

## THE PERFECT SOUP

### VEGETABLES (VITAMINS AND MINERALS)

Colourful and fibrous vegetables should make up the bulk of your soup. Lots of clear Asian soups don't have a huge variety, so when ordering, you may have to ask for extra. Your soup should also be vegetable-based; for example, tomato. Avoid soup with a creamy or coconut milk base.

✓ **Good choices:** Soups with a pureed vegetable or clear base and a huge variety of vegetables, for example, carrot, tomato, mushroom, onion and zucchini.

✗ **Bad choices:** Clear or creamy soups with lots of liquid, but not many vegetables.

### NOODLES (CARBOHYDRATES)

While you may think these should be avoided, as long as they're not the bulk of your soup (that is, no more than 25 per cent), they're okay. If your soup doesn't contain noodles, a piece of low-GI bread is the perfect accompaniment.

✓ **Good choices:** Low-GI noodles such as wholemeal Japanese, non-rice vermicelli and soy varieties.

✗ **Bad choices:** Noodles with a higher GI rating, for example, udon and rice vermicelli.

### MEAT OR VEGETARIAN OPTION (PROTEIN)

One hidden danger of soups lies in the use of fatty meat. If you're making soup at home, this is easy to avoid. If you're eating out, ask what type of cut has been used.

✓ **Good choices:** Lean chicken breast or beef, tofu, seafood, lentils, chickpeas, cannellini beans.

✗ **Bad choices:** Chicken thigh fillets, fatty pork.

### CHOOSE Minestrone soup with pasta

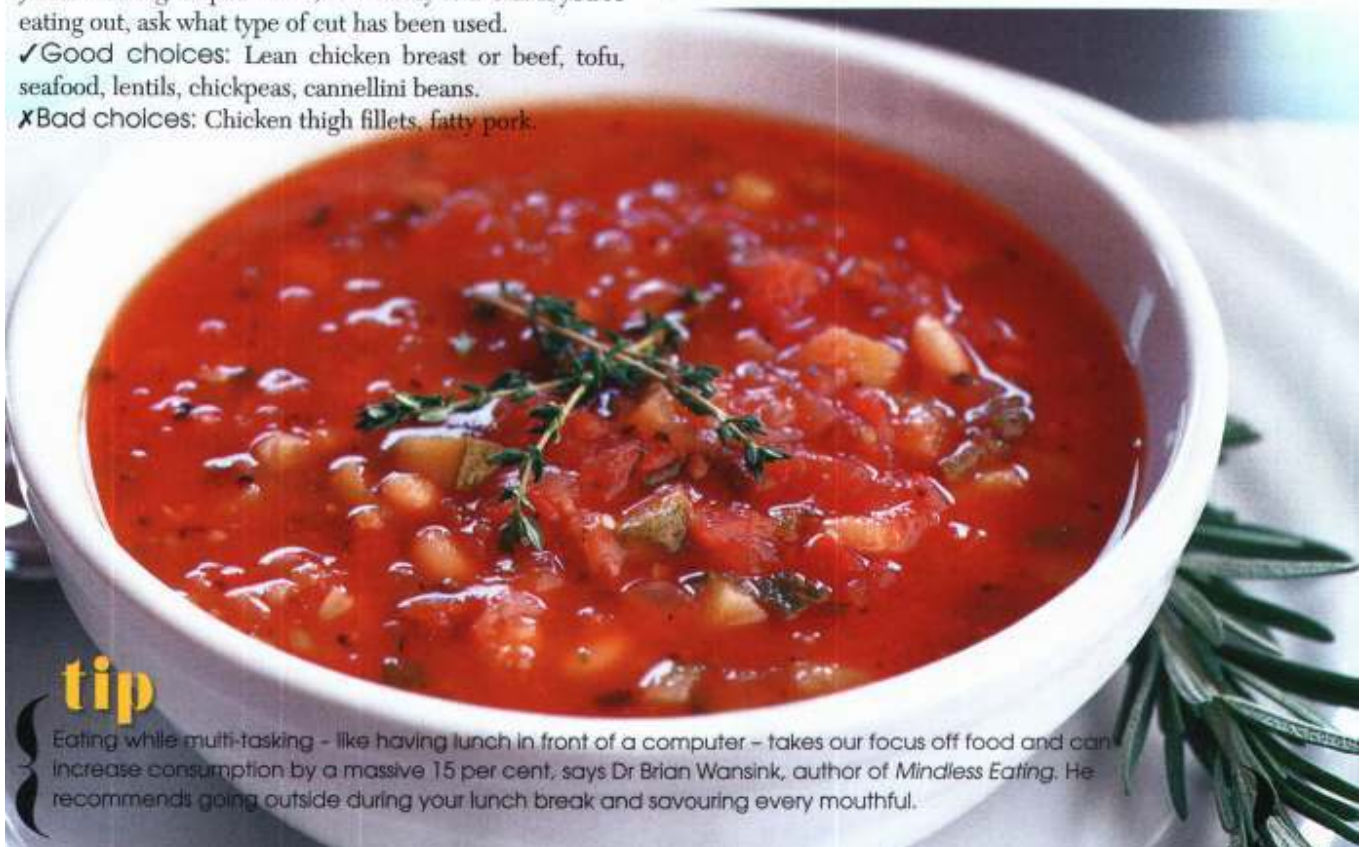
|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Kilojoules    | 900kJ |
| Fat           | 7g    |
| Carbohydrates | 29g   |
| Protein       | 9g    |

A tasty and filling fusion of garden vegetables (tomato, onion, garlic, carrot, celery, butternut pumpkin, potato, zucchini), fresh herbs and macaroni pasta. There are adequate carbohydrates to keep you feeling full (but not bloated), and by adding additional lentils or beans, you'll have the perfect amount of protein to meet your lunchtime quota.

### LOSE Chicken laksa

|               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| Kilojoules    | 2958kJ |
| Fat           | 39.2g  |
| Carbohydrates | 59.5g  |
| Protein       | 29.8g  |

The coconut milk is high in fat, the noodles are too plentiful and the vegetables too scarce. In fact, a chicken laksa has almost as many kilojoules as a meat pie served with hot chips. **m**



### tip

Eating while multi-tasking - like having lunch in front of a computer - takes our focus off food and can increase consumption by a massive 15 per cent, says Dr Brian Wansink, author of *Mindless Eating*. He recommends going outside during your lunch break and savouring every mouthful.