



NEWS RELEASE

November 2003

By Anna Martin
Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences Advisor
UCCE San Joaquin County

Desktop Dining—Keep it Safe and Healthy!

Is your desktop replacing your kitchen table for breakfast, lunch and ... even dinner? It is important that your mealtime multi-tasking also includes proper food safety techniques and healthy eating habits.

According to a new survey by the American Dietetic Association and ConAgra Foods, 67% of working Americans eat lunch and 61% snack throughout the day at their desk. If you are desktop dining, keep the following simple tips in mind as you prepare your foods and sit to desktop dine.

- When selecting lunch items, select as least one item from each food group. Instead of the usual two slices of white bread, try different varieties made with whole grains. Try using pita bread, tortillas, focaccia or English muffins.
- As you clear your dinner table in the evening, store them in individual serving dishes that can be used for reheating in the microwave at work.
- When microwaving, be sure to re-heat them to the proper temperature of 165°F. Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or microwave; not in a brownbag at your desk.
- Pack an assortment of veggies. Bring some low-fat ranch style dressing as a dip. Pack a green salad or take small containers of potato or macaroni salad.
- Refrigerate cold foods. Make sure the temperature in your office refrigerator is set below 40°F. If you are not sure, stick a thermometer in the refrigerator and check to make sure.
- Think snacks and make your own snack mix. Or make up small bags of chips or crackers, as well as dried fruit.
- If you choose to indulge in social snacks available in your office, find out how long the food has been sitting out before you eat. If it is perishable and has been out more than two hours, you may want to pass on those snacks.
- Bring yogurt to work; it makes a nice snack or a good addition to your lunch. The average office refrigerator is cleaned only once every six weeks—plenty of time for left over foods to spoil. Be sure to toss your leftovers within three to five days.
- If you have packed perishable food items, don't let more than two hours pass from the time you make your lunch until you put it in the office refrigerator.

- If you have lunchtime leftovers, refrigerate them as soon as you have finished eating—don't keep them at your desk.
- The same food safety tips apply to carry-out and fast food.
- Always wash hands before, during and after handling food. Keep your desk stocked with moist towelettes or hand sanitizer, if you do not have time to wash with soap and water.

Don't let healthful eating habits and safety tips go out the window when desktop dining.

Source: Memo to Working Americans: 'Desktop Dining' Trend Demands New Office Eating Etiquette.
http://www.Homefoodsafety.org/news/pr/sep30_2003_desktop.htm, 10/13/03.

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Boulder County,
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/PUBS/COLUMNCC/cc000623.html>, 10/13/03.