

Your Financial Life

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We spend how much on lunch?!

May 15, 2015

Brown bag your lunch and put the extra cash toward your 401(k).

The average American splurges on lunch out twice a week for an average of \$10 per meal* — and that adds up!

- \$1,000 / year if you eat out twice a week
- \$1,500 / year if you eat out three times a week
- \$2,000 / year if you eat out daily

That's a lot of cash you could be allocating elsewhere. Check out this piece from [Time Magazine](#), which explains how much you could potentially save by contributing your lunch savings to your retirement fund — if you start contributing \$2,000 per year at age 22 and your employer matches your contribution, savings in a 401(k) could grow at 7 percent a year to \$640,828.71 by age 62.

Related: [5 steps to take before spending your first paycheck](#)

Making a few simple changes to your lifestyle can positively impact both your short- and long-term

Can we help?

Schedule an appointment to come in and chat with one of our bankers.



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Daytime dining habits in the U.S.

Number of times an average American goes out to lunch: **2x a week**

Average amount women spend: **\$15**

Average amount men spend: **\$21**

Most lunch-loving region:
Southerners eat out twice a week, spending an average of \$20

Least lunch-loving region:
Northeasterners eat out the least, spending about \$17, 1.5 times a week

Source: 2013 Visa® survey

savings. Check out these 6 tips to get started:

1. Plan your meals weekly:

Sit down and make a list of the lunches you'll take each week. Create a grocery list based on your meal selections, and head off to the store. [Look for coupons](#) and mark-

downs to help you save even more, and resist the urge to buy extras — stick to your list.

2. Stretch a Sunday meal: Use a Sunday (and maybe your slow cooker) to create easy meals that will stretch through several weekday lunches. Here are a few healthy [slow cooker meals from EatingWell.com](#) that you can make for under \$3 per serving, including beef goulash and vegetarian lasagna (yum!).

3. Cook extras when you make dinner: Stretch a buck by bringing your leftovers for lunch. Once you finish dinner, pack up your lunch for the next day so you can simply grab and go in the morning. Check out this list from [epicurious.com](#), which gives you recipes for dinner and ways to use the leftovers for lunch.

4. Stock your desk with staples: Keeping a jar of peanut butter, cans of soup you find on sale at the store and other non-perishable snacks can prevent you from eating out if you're pressed for time or forget your lunch at home.

Additionally, consider keeping a few condiments and supplies at the office if you have access to a refrigerator, as this gives you the option to create fresh sandwiches or salads at your desk.

5. Lunch exchange: If you look at lunch out as a way to connect with co-workers, invite your colleagues to participate in a meal swap and eat in the office together. Each person cooks extra portions at dinner to share with the group the next day. Create a simple schedule to stay on track, keeping in mind lifestyles and work schedules so everyone can participate. If your colleagues aren't big into cooking, organize a brown bag lunch day once a week to keep things social but simple.

6. Deal-of-the-day websites: If you can't resist the urge to eat out, monitor sites like [Groupon](#), which feature daily deals, coupons and discounted gift certificates that can be used at local restaurants for up to 70 percent off. These websites deliver unbeatable deals and weekly savings.

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