GRUB STREET

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62 Ways to Upgrade Your Desk Lunch

You could try a spaghetti sandwich, for instance.

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As you may have noticed, no one goes out to lunch anymore: The average office zombie spends his lunches scarfing down a salad with one hand and typing with the other. While this should be cause for concern as well as nostalgia (gone for most people who aren't hedge-fund executives is the three-hour boozy lunch, a fact made all the more real by the recent closing of The Four Seasons), it shouldn't occasion too much depression: In the past few years, the options for desk-lunchers have gotten a lot better. Forgotten are the days when the sauce from your steam-table lo mein's seeping into your Greek salad would be met with a resigned shrug, or when Chipotle and Subway were the best chains around. Healthy and consistently tasty salad purveyor Sweetgreen has spawned a slew of build-it-yourself spots throughout the city. And the success of delivery-only restaurant Maple has inspired other start-ups that are now competing for your lunch money. As for those who want to bring their own? Innovative chefs are telling us that a sandwich made with Fritos and Funyuns isn't just convenient, it's delicious.

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What to Make at Pax

According to Daniel Holzman, chef-owner, the Meatball Shop.

His salad: Mixed greens, chickpeas, red onions, cucumbers, olives, avocado, and artichoke hearts with salmon on top, and red-wine vinegar and olive oil.

Steer very clear of prepared dressings: "They put weird emulsifiers in there to keep olive oil and vinegar together." So ask for something much more simple, like red-wine vinegar, olive oil, and salt.

Get a good look at the ingredients, and ask when they were prepped: "Onions are a scary one: If they sit around, they get this horrible ammonia flavor." Holzman says that chickpeas are reliable: "They're a safe bet — they come from a can, and canned chickpeas are great."

If you must do a meat, choose salmon: "Conventional farming methods are a little bit scary, and there are some ingredients that it matters more for. I usually stay away from the meat, the eggs, the dairy. But farm-raised salmon is fairly innocuous."