

Nothing- not a conversation, not a handshake or even a hug- establishes friendship so forcefully as eating together.

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Lunch is Served: Salad Socials Increase Productivity

Eating meals with team members and employees can help boost collaborative efforts, healthy eating habits, even overall productivity for a worksite!

A study at Cornell University on fire station personnel, showed higher levels of productivity in fire stations that ate together than in stations that ate separately. Eating together helps people bond and find areas where they can collaborate.

While employees eating with each other is important, healthy foods also boost productivity. Some people may go through life with the attitude of “It doesn’t matter what I eat as long as there is fuel in the tank”, yet it is just as important to consider what we are “fueling” up with. Harvard Business Review author, Ron Friedman, counters this “something in the tank” analogy by stating:

The foods we eat affect us more than we realize. With fuel, you can reliably expect the same performance from your car no matter what brand of unleaded you put in your tank. Food is different. Imagine a world where filling up at Mobil meant avoiding all traffic and using BP meant driving no faster than 20 miles an hour. Would you then be so cavalier about where you purchased your gas?



www.queenfalafel.com



Healthy foods feed our body slow, sustained energy and allow us to absorb nutrients. Unhealthy food like those high in sugar or made with processed white grains, can spike our energy up then leave us to “crash” and feel sleepy and unproductive. Also, many highly processed or “fast” foods leave us feeling sluggish as it takes the body a while to breakdown fats, and a high salt content can leave us feeling dehydrated. Planning to eat a healthy lunch ahead of time can be a good way to deter unhealthy choices.

Salad Socials

Salad socials are one way to make this happen in your workplace. Employees pay a small fee for a ticket. Fees are used to purchase supplies and, if organized and planned well, can sustain the social each time it is held. The socials are most effective when held in a common space.

A “salad bar” is set up and as people arrive, they deposit their ticket into a box and build their salad. Along with a variety of lettuce choices, options can include fresh fruits and vegetables, cut or prepared in a number of ways. By all means be creative in the process, but be sure to maintain the wholesome healthy aspect of the meal.

Encourage participants to stay and socialize while they eat; giving them an opportunity to take a break from their workday, build connections with their peers and focus on taking time to both eat *and* enjoy their meal.

Other options could include having a food truck come by once a week, having a chili cook off or a potluck, or having a local chef come in and make something new. Get people together and let food work its magic and create the social glue and healthy options needed for increased productivity and collaboration at work.

How to Host Salad Socials:

To Begin: Conduct a survey. (Paper or online)
(www.Surveymonkey.com)

Ask employees:

- ❖ What types of salads they enjoy.
- ❖ If they have any food allergies.
- ❖ What may prevent them from participating (cost, times, ingredients etc.)
- ❖ If they have a preferred time, day for activities.
- ❖ If they would like to be on the wellness team in charge of putting together salad socials.

Assess Resources

- ❖ Can administration provide monetary support for this wellness activity?
- ❖ Is an employee willing to share his/her recipes for variety?
- ❖ Was there a history of shared work meals in the past? This is a great opportunity to chat up your higher-ups about getting support in moving forward as well as some lessons/materials from the past.

Prepare

- ❖ Make a plan: When, where, and who is helping?
- ❖ Seek approval of and encourage management and administration to be involved.
- ❖ Determine where you can host the social:
 - Is there a working fridge and is it cooled to the proper temperature? (35°F)
 - Is there somewhere to designate as a place to line up ingredients?
 - Are there tables and chairs for everyone?
- ❖ Encourage your co-workers to participate.
 - Send emails, post to community/ all-staff calendar/ place sign-up form in breakroom (if potluck)/ notice with paystub or in wellness newsletter.
- ❖ Create a needs list and have equipment donated, or pool money to purchase equipment, if necessary.
- ❖ Fundraise if necessary.
- ❖ Have a team take turns in prep, setup and clean up.



Implement

- ❖ Host an event.
 - Pre-sell tickets to get a head count.
 - Create a list and go shopping.
 - Buy ingredients.
Buy enough salad fixings to cover tickets sold, as well as, enough for a few extra that may come the day of. Some ingredients can be used week to week, like dressings and toppings. *A budget from administration or fundraising could be useful in getting started.*
 - Send a reminder email the morning of social.
 - Wash and prepare vegetables.
 - Set up salad bar and ticket box.
 - Enjoy. Social can be set up for up to two hours without needing to be cooled. Having a couple of hours allows for people to come as they like.
 - Clean up.
- ❖ Continue to promote at work and at wellness committee meetings. Welcome the opportunity for new ideas to flourish.

Evaluate

- ❖ Track: costs, tickets sold, and dollars made to measure success and see if a fee increase is necessary.
- ❖ Conduct a survey (online or paper) asking if and why employees enjoyed the event.
- ❖ Report findings to wellness committee to create a successful future event or team.
- ❖ Keep it up. Start cycle again with a new or improved program.

Resources:

<http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8638-employees-eat-together.html>
<https://hbr.org/2014/10/what-you-eat-affects-your-productivity>
<http://www.discovery-surveys.com/articles/itw-088.html>

