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# The end of lunch is nigh



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Living / Culture  
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CC BY 2.0 Lloyd Alter/ an empty Four Seasons Restaurant

Lunch used to be a big deal for working people; the bell or horn would sound in the factory or office and it would be off to the cafeteria. For management, power lunches were a big part of doing business; the term was invented by Esquire editor Lee Eisenberg to describe the scene in New York's Four Seasons Restaurant in 1979. But the Four Seasons is closing in two weeks; the new owner says "the future is a much more relaxed atmosphere" as he strips the historic interior to within an inch of the heritage preservation rules. Because the power lunch is pretty much dead.






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According to Arwa Mahdawi of the Guardian, 80 percent of employees no longer take a lunch break. It happens at all rungs of the office ladder; According to the New York Times, lunch truly is for wimps.

Now some 62 percent of professionals say they typically eat lunch at their desks, a phenomenon that social scientists have begun calling "desktop dining." Eating takes a back seat to meetings, catching up on to-dos or responding to email. Roughly half of American adults eat lunch alone. In research from the Hartman Group, many so-called millennial wage earners said they actually preferred eating solo. A quarter of those surveyed agreed with the statement "I eat alone to multitask better."



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In Scandinavia they do exactly the opposite. In fact, it's the law; there has to be a

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canteen, a place to have lunch. The Norwegian architecture firm Snøhetta takes it to a whole new level. They build their office around the lunch table, which is a place to eat, a place to meet, and a place to work. [I wrote about it on MNN:](#)

There is much to love about this, and much to learn from it. Above all, meals should be healthy, and meals should be enjoyed. This is very different from the tech companies that have food available all the time to encourage employees to never leave their desks.

Not in America, where Snohetta partner Craig Dykers told me that even in a company where this was part of the culture, it just didn't click in their New York office. Everyone had other plans.

Back in the Guardian, Mahdawi notes that even our sandwich at our desk may soon disappear; the meal-in-a-bottle company Soylent is going after the lunch market. Founder Rob Rhinehart tells Bloomberg: "If you take an historical view, you see that food is in a constant process of evolution. We're just a part of that". Mahdawi concludes:

So enjoy your limp sandwich while it lasts. The only thing more depressing than a sad desk lunch is a sad desk meal-replacement beverage lunch. Best consumed solo, of course, as you mutter, between sips: "I eat alone to multitask better."

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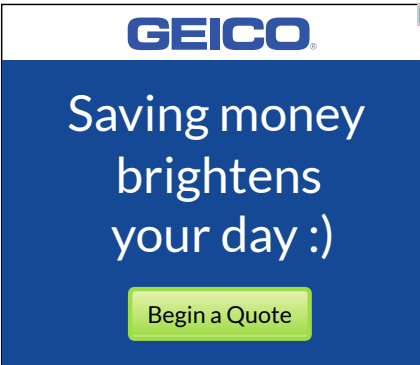
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