



2023

The Lunch Report



Contents

SECTION 1

04

The lunch crunch is real, and it's trending hungrier

New ezCater research reveals that more people are skipping lunch than last year, despite their best intentions.

SECTION 2

06

The generational lunch break divide

Turns out, there's a big difference between how Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers eat lunch at work.

SECTION 3

08

How does lunch look across the U.S.?

From sandwich styles and condiment preferences, to who takes the longest lunches, we crunched the numbers to explore regional lunch data.



SECTION 4

09

Social norms around work-lunch etiquette are changing

In an evolving hybrid work environment, workers have strong feelings about whether it's ok to "meet and eat" on camera.

SECTION 5

10

For companies, employees and restaurants, lunch is a win-win-win

Free lunch at work improves productivity and attendance — and generates new business for local restaurants.

SECTION 6

12

How employers can help beat the lunch crunch

Lunch matters. Follow these three steps to deliver the value of a midday meal to your teams.



INTRODUCTION



Are today's workers finally taking the lunch break they deserve?

According to ezCater's latest research, the answer is no.

Of the 1,000+ full-time employees we surveyed*, the tendency to pause for a midday meal is trending downward.

Our report also reveals a surprising contradiction: While more people acknowledge the positive impact of lunch breaks on their lives, today's workers are 40% more likely to say they never stop for a midday meal than they were a year ago.

Despite reported trends of "bare minimum Mondays" and social media memes depicting "lazy girl" jobs, more people are working through lunch — and the youngest are the least likely to stop for a break.

In this year's report, we share the reasons workers give for skipping lunch, explore the generational divide between the youngest and oldest workers, and reveal regional distinctions, including who's skipping lunch most often.

Dig into ezCater's 2023 Lunch Report to understand workplace lunch trends, and learn new ways employers can help create an environment that fosters healthier eating habits — as well as a more productive and satisfied workforce.

*ezCater surveyed 1,000 full-time employees nationwide, and 4,000 workers across ten different major U.S. cities for region-specific data.

SECTION 1

The lunch crunch is real, and it's trending hungrier

With mounting pressures to hit deadlines and “perform” at work, more and more people are facing a time crunch when it comes to eating lunch on the job, according to ezCater’s latest research.

Workers are **40% more likely** to say they **never** stop for a midday meal than they were a year ago



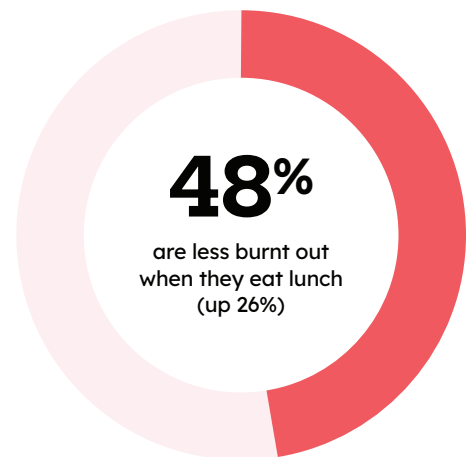
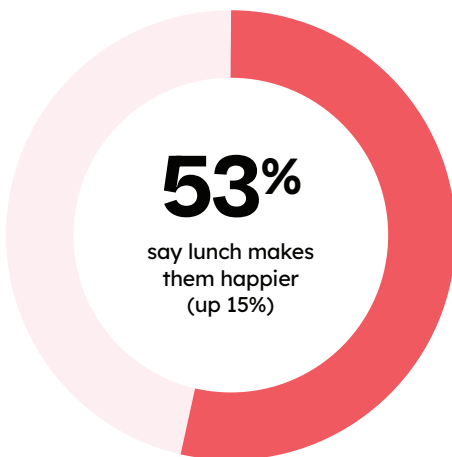
Lunch makes a difference, so why aren't workers stopping to eat?

The amount of people who say they're happier, less stressed, and less burnt out when they take a lunch break has increased in the last year, but still, the number of people who say they never take a lunch break away from their workstation **has increased 40% year over year**.

Workers say they're too busy for lunch

- 23%** want to finish their work ASAP
- 22%** fear they won't have enough time to get work done
- 20%** have too many meetings to take a break

Lunch makes a positive impact on workers' lives



Workers can't catch a break

29% of office workers block out time on their calendars for a lunch break, but...

62% say they usually can't use that time for a meal



NEW YORKERS are the least likely to be able to use their blocked time for a break. Instead:

42% work while they eat (v. 37% national)

28% just work without eating (v. 24% national)

26% meet with coworkers (v. 18% national)



MORE THAN A THIRD of workers take 30 minutes or less for their lunch break

48%

say they skip lunch at least once per week



DC (59%) and NYC (57%) workers are most likely to skip lunch at least once per week (compared with 48% nationally)

BOSTONIANS are most likely to never take a lunch break away from their workstations (20% v. 14% national)

Having to make do

Over two-thirds of workers have made a “makeshift meal” — meaning they’ve eaten whatever random snacks they can find in the office.

> Makeshift meals are up 11% from last year



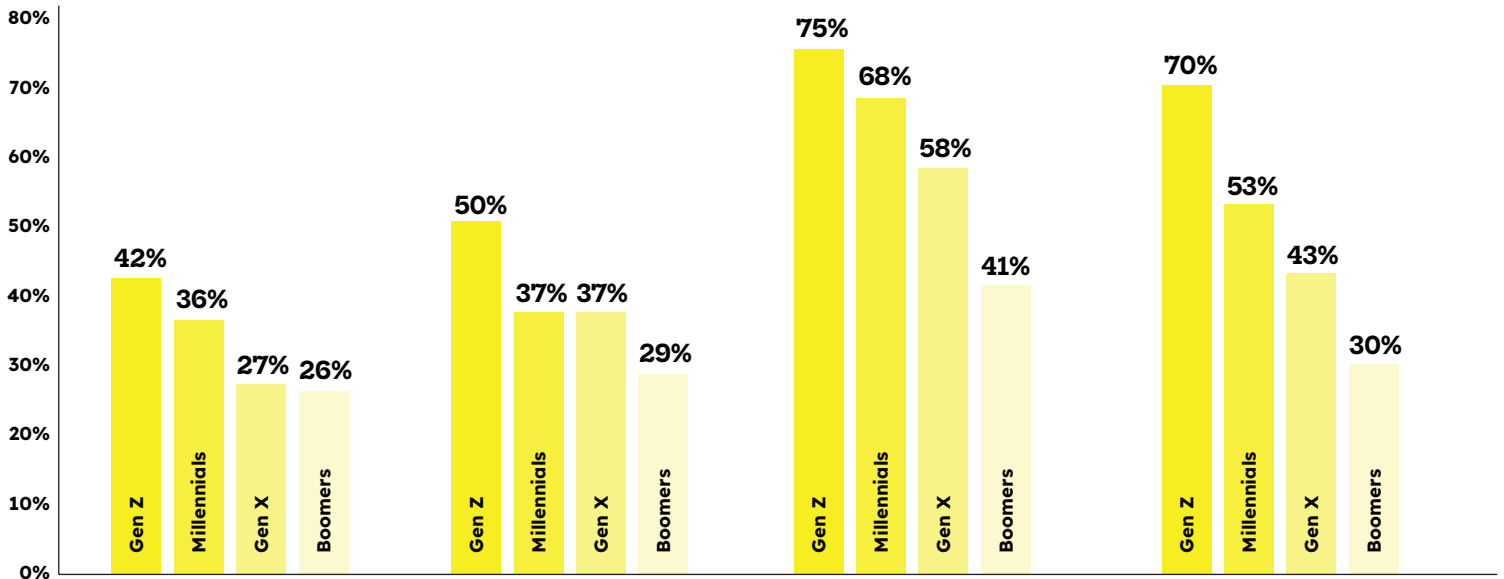
Workers in **ATLANTA** are more likely to have made a makeshift meal (77% v. 68% national)

SECTION 2

The Generational Lunch Break Divide

The lunch crunch is strongest for Gen Z

Gen Z is most likely to say lunch is their favorite part of the day, but because of the pressures of work, they're also the most likely to skip meals — and they take the shortest breaks.



Gen Z is most likely to say lunch is their favorite part of the day

Gen Z is most likely to take a lunch break of 30 minutes or less

Gen Z is most likely to skip breakfast at least once per week

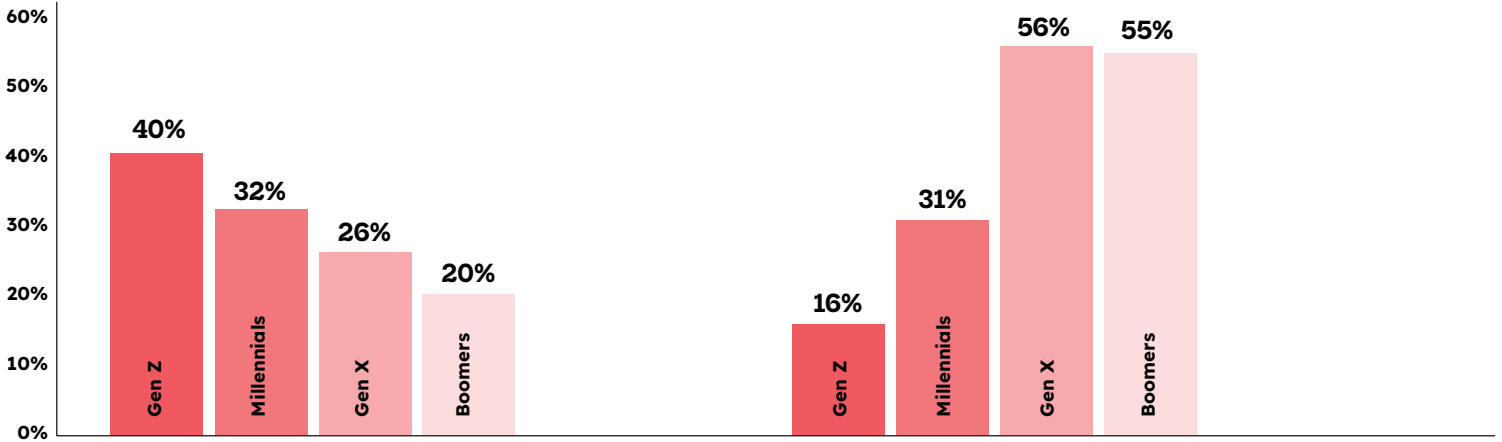
Gen Z is most likely to skip lunch at least once per week



Gen Z is twice as likely to worry that their bosses will judge them for taking a lunch break

More than any other generation, the youngest workers skip lunch because they think their employers won't look favorably on them for it.

Gen Z plans for lunch, but they can't always follow through

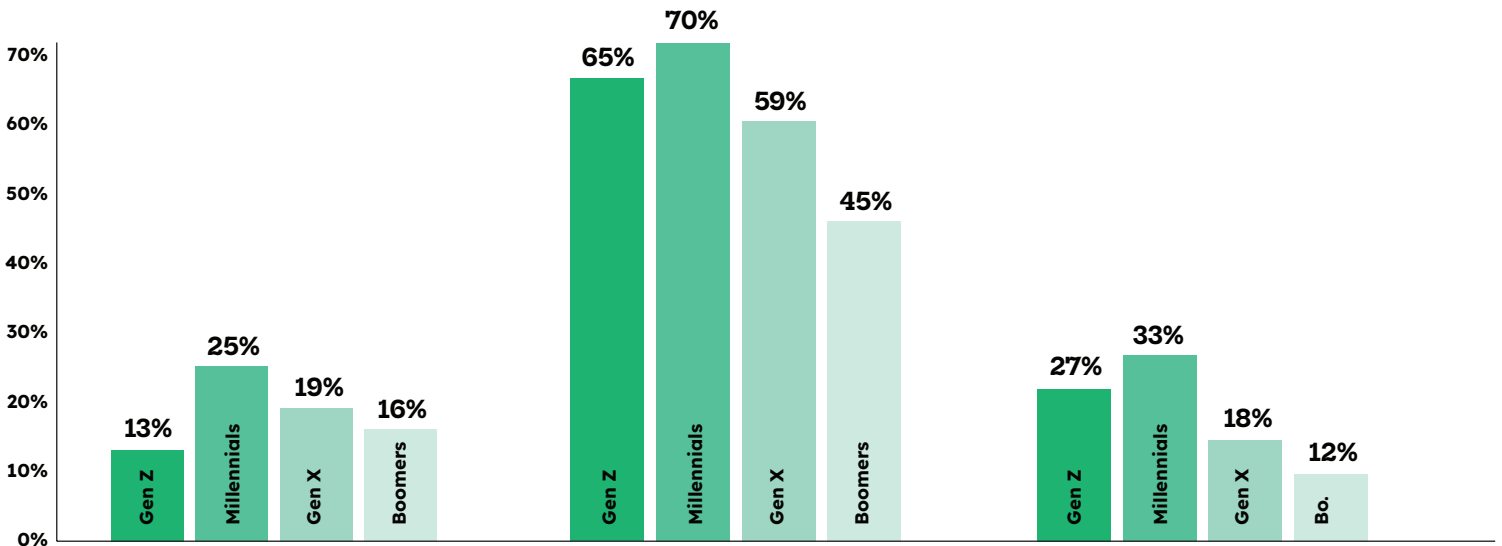


Gen Z is most likely to block lunch time on their calendars...

... but least likely to be able to follow through and use that time for a meal break

Busy millennials spend the most money — in order to save valuable time

Millennials are in prime earning years, with busy careers and often families at home. To save time, they are the most likely to buy lunch, and they spend the most per lunch.



Millennials are most likely to say too many meetings or meetings during lunch get in the way of a proper lunch break.

Millennials are most likely to pay for lunch at least twice a week

Millennials spend the most on lunch, with one third of them saying they'll spend \$16 or more per meal.

SECTION 3

How does lunch look across the U.S.?

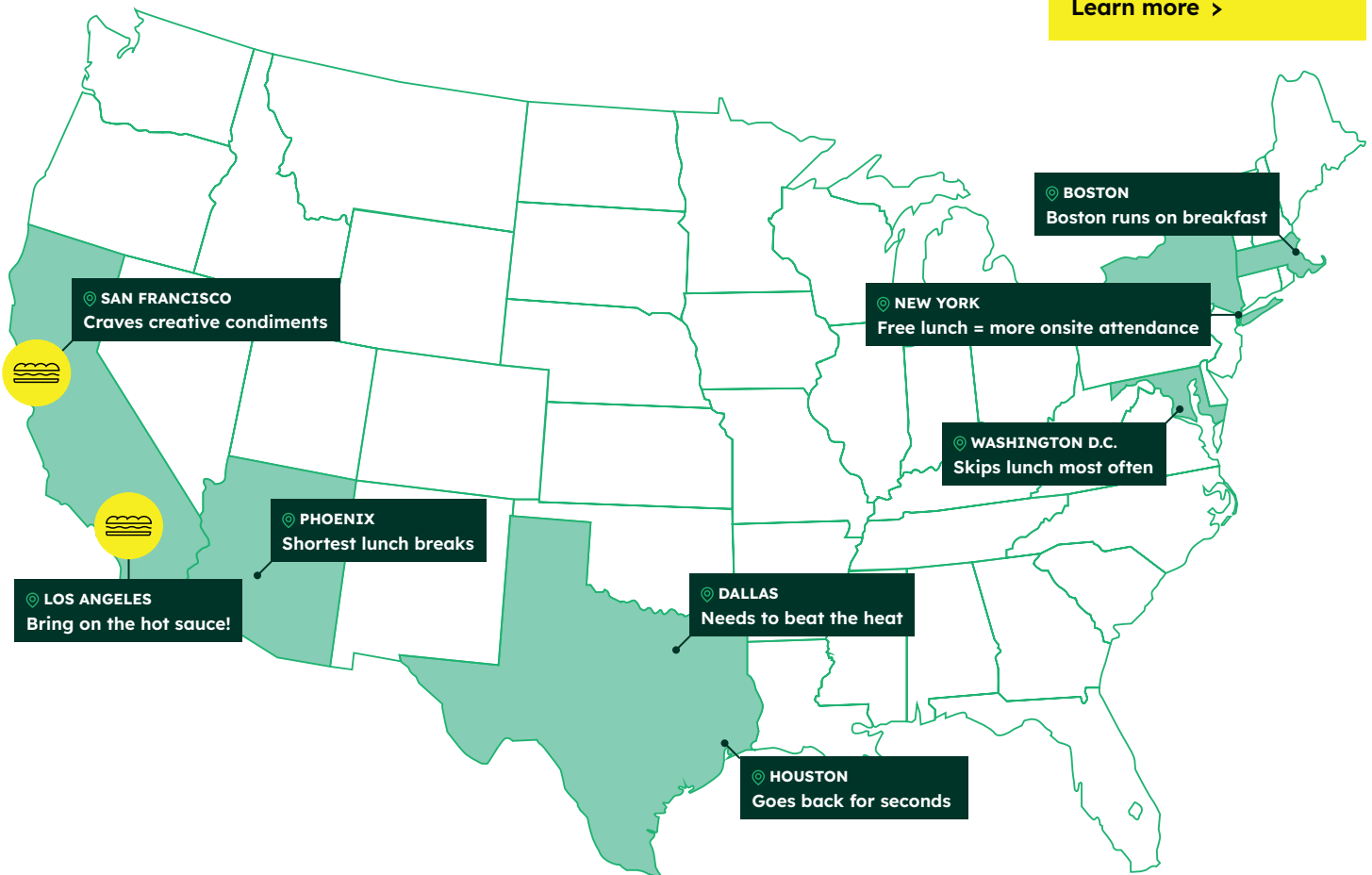
Lunch habits vary regionally, from the length of a lunch break to the cost of a midday meal. Take a look at which cities stand out for their lunch break behavior.



The State of the Sandwich

We asked 1,000 workers to share their thoughts on sandwiches — from what makes a sandwich a sandwich to what condiments are most popular by region. Dive into our exhaustive sandwich data to learn everything you ever wanted to know about America's favorite lunch staple.

[Learn more >](#)



BOSTON
Bostonians are 18% more likely to eat breakfast every day

SAN FRANCISCO
These workers are 49% more likely to opt for aioli, 39% more likely to prefer pesto, and 38% are more likely to go for guacamole.

LOS ANGELES
Angelenos love to bring the heat. They're 59% more likely to douse their sandwiches with hot sauce

PHOENIX
Phoenix workers are 17% more likely to take a lunch break of 30 minutes or less

HOUSTON
Houston workers are 30% more likely to order from a restaurant after first trying the food through an employer-provided meal

DALLAS
Dallas workers are 18% less likely to pick hot sandwiches as their favorite variety

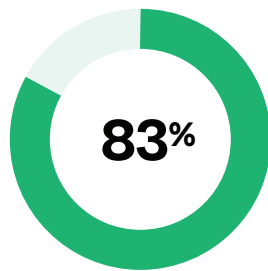
WASHINGTON D.C.
DC workers are 21% more likely to skip lunch at least once per week

NEW YORK
New Yorkers are 14% more likely to say that free lunch would impact their decision to work onsite

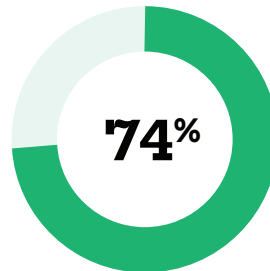
SECTION 4

Social norms around work-lunch etiquette are changing

Survey says:
It's not ok to meet and eat.
But 3 in 10 do it anyway.



feel that eating on an external video call is bad etiquette



also feel that eating on an internal video call is bad etiquette

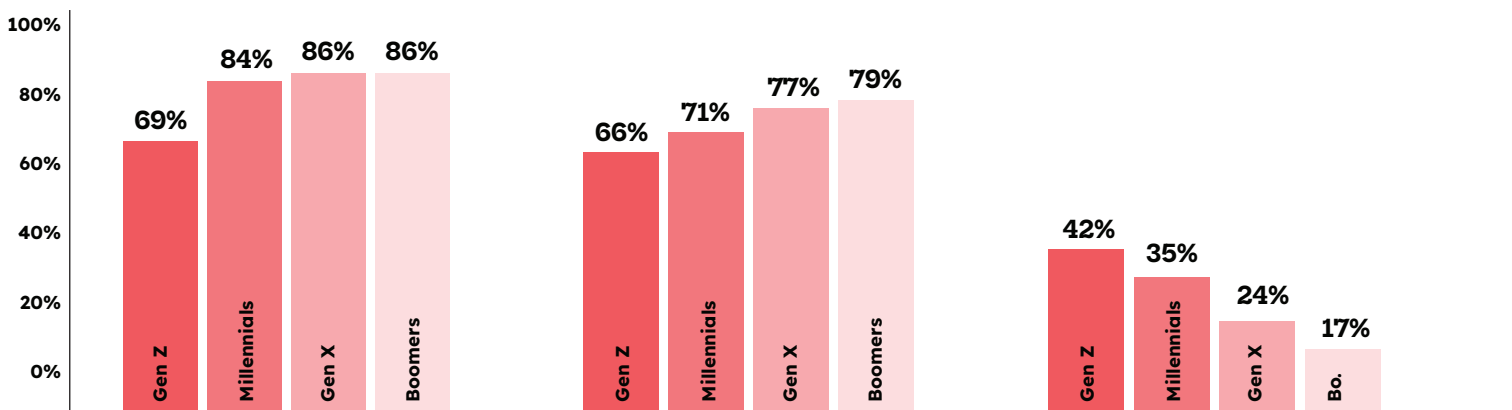


Chicagoans feel the strongest that video call lunches are a no-no



DC workers are the most likely to meet and eat

Older workers feel most strongly that eating on camera is taboo



Eating lunch on an external call with video on is bad etiquette

Eating lunch on an internal call with video on is bad etiquette

Have eaten on a call with video on

SECTION 5

For companies, employees, and restaurants, lunch is a win-win-win

Lunch breaks lead to better work

78%

of workers say taking a lunch break improves their job performance (unchanged from last year)

53%

say they have more mental clarity when they stop for lunch (up from 47% last year)

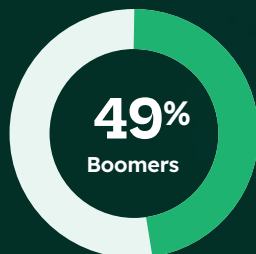
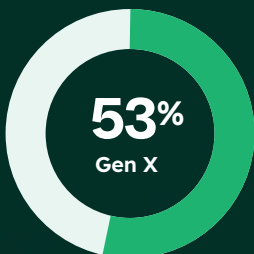
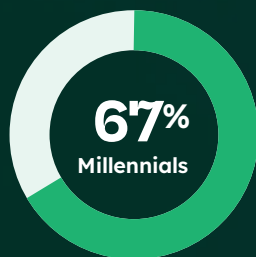
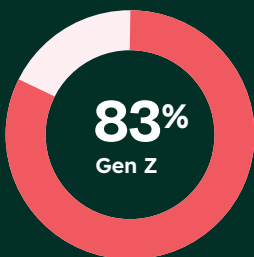


Free lunch at work can significantly increase onsite attendance

In addition to increased productivity, **67% of hybrid workers** say free lunch would impact their decision to work onsite

Gen Z is most likely to say that free lunch would impact their decision to work onsite

The younger the generation, the more likely they are to view food as an onsite motivator.





Employer-funded lunch saves workers money and builds goodwill

FACT

Nearly **8 in 10 workers** buy their own lunch at least once a week

Workers say the #1 best thing about employer provided lunch is spending less money (47%)

Providing lunch is a low-cost perk for employers

Among onsite employees who receive a lunch stipend:



Your corporate catering orders could make a bigger impact on local restaurants than you might think

47%

of workers have ordered from a restaurant after first trying the food through an employer-provided meal

The youngest workers are most likely to try these new eateries during non-work hours

Gen Z

52%

Millennials

55%

SECTION 6

How employers can help beat the lunch crunch

Encourage company-wide lunch breaks

It can be once a week or every day, but encouraging 30-minute “no meeting” lunch breaks for the entire company (including senior leadership) sets the tone that your organization prioritizes employees’ mental health and physical well-being.



Plan catered meals for hybrid “in-office” days

ezCater research shows that hybrid workers are more likely to report onsite when lunch is provided, so feed the crew on the days you want them there most. Tip: Choose restaurants known as “local faves” and survey your staff for dietary needs and preferences to help plan your menu.



Offer free or subsidized meals onsite

You don’t need to provide free lunch every day, but twice-weekly subsidized meals make a difference — to your employees’ happiness & well-being, and to your team’s performance and productivity.



Relish by ezCater is the perfect solution for recurring meal plans. You set the budget and schedule. Employees order exactly what they want.

Put the power of lunch to work

See how ezCater's solutions can help you feed any size team, on any budget, nationwide — and make your workplace work better.

[Learn more >](#)

