

A photograph of three people sitting around a wooden table in what appears to be an office kitchen. They are smiling and engaged in conversation. The table is set with various dishes, including a large loaf of bread, a glass of beer, a glass of water, and a plate of fresh salad. The background shows bookshelves filled with books.

VICKY HAMPTON'S WORKING LUNCH

recipes for your office kitchen

Vicky Hampton



CONTENTS

Getting creative in the office kitchen 8

The kitchen kit 10

Salads and dressings 16

Bread 46

Couscous and pulses 78

Soups and smoothies 106

Pimp my lunch 120

Index 148

About the author 157

getting creative in the office kitchen

After years of working in offices – too busy with the social life to prepare my lunch the night before, too tired to get up early the morning after, and with too little money to go out every lunchtime – **I got pretty creative in the euphemistically named office kitchen.**

That's what inspired these recipes: healthy and quick, they can all be prepared on the spot, using little more than **a Jurassic toaster, a mini chopping board and a not particularly sharp knife.** They're recipes for real people – busy people – not for amateur chefs with fancy kitchens. Of course, if you want to make them at home (and I often do for lunch at weekends, too) then you can try out the more complex recipes in your own kitchen first.

Importantly, the recipes are healthy because they're made from scratch using fresh ingredients (with a few shortcuts where necessary), not because they're all about tofu and mung beans. Not that I have anything against tofu, you understand, but as I said – **this book is for real people, not part-time nutritionists.** So while you'll find plenty of fresh fruit and veg in this book, there's no calorie counting, and there's plenty of food with fat in it. “Everything in moderation” is what my mum always taught me (that and “waste not, want not”), and she's the healthiest person I know.

All recipes serve one person, though **if your colleagues get jealous you could always double the quantities** in return for some nice feedback on your appraisal. Or make some extra for your boss and hope she or he gets the hint about that bonus.

A close-up photograph showing a pair of hands mixing a vibrant green salad in a white ceramic bowl. The salad consists of various leafy greens, including what appears to be arugula and lettuce, with some dressing visible on the leaves. The hands are positioned on either side of the bowl, with fingers gently stirring and lifting the ingredients. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the hands and the salad. The text "salads and dressings" is overlaid on the right side of the image in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

salads and dressings

making salad sexy

For far too long, salad meant green stuff. It was the preserve of people on diets and 80s restaurants serving wilted garnishes of lettuce, tomato and cucumber. Thankfully, **the definition of salad has changed immeasurably**, and nowadays it can include everything from meat to fish to cheese to fruit – not forgetting the green stuff. But it's really about combining fabulous, fresh flavours and then taking the whole lot to another level with the addition of a spiky, feisty little dressing. **Rabbit food it is not.**

And if the promise of all that flavour isn't enough to convince you, here's the health-science bit. Ever since the World Health Organisation decided that we all needed to eat 400 grams of fruit and vegetables a day, various governments have been promoting healthy eating campaigns. In the United Kingdom and the USA, the message was "5 a day", while in the Netherlands our food was dotted with labels telling us to "eet 2 ons groente en 2 stuks fruit" (eat two ounces of vegetables and two pieces of fruit). And while the tagline gets reinvented every few years, the basic premise remains the same.

Now, I'm no great fan of the government telling us all what to do, and neither am I very good with numbers. But **if you listen to your body, it will talk back to you** – and it generally knows what it wants when it comes to salad. You can pack a large proportion of your daily dose of vitamins into your lunch salad alone, which feels like it kind of compensates for all that sitting behind a desk.

It's common sense really: have more energy, reduce your chances of catching bugs, and – most importantly – **enjoy fresh, tasty, moreish food that just happens to be good for you.**

STRAWBERRY, PROSCIUTTO, MINT AND RICOTTA SALAD

This really is one of my favourite summer salads. I served it at a dinner party once – it is almost (but only almost) too special for the office. I know it's not cool to drink at work, but this goes so well with a glass of dry rosé that it's worth risking a telling-off from the boss.

When it comes to balsamic vinegar, you generally get what you pay for. It's not cheap, but the thick, sweet, gloopy balsamic that's been matured for a few years is perfect in this salad.

Small handful rocket leaves
8-10 strawberries – halved
2 generous tablespoons ricotta
Small bunch mint – leaves picked and roughly chopped
Balsamic vinegar
3 slices prosciutto
Black pepper

Scatter the rocket on the bottom of your plate or serving dish and arrange the strawberries on top. Scoop out small pieces of the ricotta to arrange amongst the strawberries, and scatter the mint leaves over the top. Drizzle the salad with the best quality balsamic vinegar you can afford. Then tear strips of prosciutto over the salad and finish with a grind of black pepper.





SMOKED CHICKEN, AVOCADO AND YOGHURT PITAS

In most supermarkets (and a lot of North African stores, too) you can buy part-baked pitas. They're ideal fast food because you don't even need an oven to cook them – just pop a couple in the toaster for three minutes till they're golden and slightly puffed out. Alternatively, you could use bagels or any other type of bread roll.

- 2 pitas – toasted
- 1 smoked chicken breast – sliced
- 1 avocado – peeled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons natural (live) yoghurt
- Squeeze of lemon juice
- Black pepper

Fill the toasted pitas with the sliced smoked chicken and avocado. Dollop the yoghurt on top along with a squeeze of lemon juice, and grind the black pepper over the top to taste. The whole process takes five minutes, tops.





BUTTER BEAN, ROASTED RED PEPPER, CHERRY TOMATO AND CHORIZO SALAD

If you don't have time to go around roasting peppers of a morning (and who does?), it's fine to use those that come preserved in jars or tins if they're good quality – I particularly like the "pimiento del piquillo" from Spain. For the chorizo in this recipe, I prefer to use the whole, cured sausage (which I dice myself) rather than the pre-packed, thinly sliced stuff, as the shape doesn't work well in salads and it has less flavour.

1 roasted red pepper – diced

½ regular 400g tin butter beans – drained and thoroughly rinsed

8 cherry tomatoes – halved

Small bunch flat-leaf parsley – leaves picked and roughly chopped

Spanish sherry dressing (see page 45)

Thumb-length piece cured chorizo – diced

Mix the pepper, beans, tomatoes and parsley together in a bowl and toss with the Spanish sherry dressing (don't add much salt to your dressing as the chorizo contains quite a bit already). Scatter the pieces of chorizo over the salad at the end. Spain on a plate.