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**Banish Boring Brown Bag Lunches!**

By Cyndi Roberts

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One way that money slips through our fingers without our realizing it is by eating out at lunch every day.

Did you know that by taking your lunch 3 days a week instead of eating out, you could save as much as \$800 a year? Think what you could do with that much extra money!

Your lunch doesn't have to be a sandwich and chips, either. With just a little bit of creativity and planning, brown bag lunches can be pretty delicious!

Try these ideas for starters:

Invest in a few of those 1-serving plastic storage containers with lids. These are so handy—when you have just one serving left of any dish at dinner, put it in one of these dishes. Designate a shelf in the fridge for these leftovers. In the mornings, anyone in the family can choose what to put in their lunch bag!

Those little containers can also be used to hold dip for carrot or celery sticks; fill with peanut butter and pack a zipper bag of pretzels for dipping. Maybe salsa for dipping tortilla chips (not so healthy, but really good!)

Or make your own pudding cups with your homemade pudding!

Fill tortillas or pita pockets with egg or tuna salad.

Spread cream cheese on a tortilla, add a little salsa, and top with sliced turkey or ham. Place another tortilla on top, cut in fourths and put in zipper top bag.

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A good way to carry deviled eggs (that lunchbox staple)— after filling, put the two halves back together, and wrap in plastic wrap or put in a small container!

Muffins hold up well in a lunch bag or box as do slices of banana nut bread, or most any other quick bread. Great for morning or afternoon breaks.

Of course, if your workplace has a microwave oven,(lucky you!)you can always bring leftover soup, stew or chili. A quick recipe for Chicken Corn Chowder:

1 pouch Chicken Noodle Soup Mix with diced chicken

2 1/4 cups milk

1 can cream–style corn

Combine all ingredients in saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until noodles are tender, uncovered, stirring frequently, because it will stick!

Mix this up in the evening or on the weekend and store in serving–size containers. Just grab a container in the morning, along with some crackers, and you're good to go!

Try some of these ideas for your lunches this week and start saving some money!

And at the same time, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you and/or your spouse will be having a more nutritious meal than you would get at a fast–food restaurant.

Cyndi Roberts is the editor of "1 Frugal Friend 2 Another" bi–weekly newsletter, bringing you creative, practical tips to help you with budgeting, cooking, shopping, parenting and much more as you strive to "live the Good Life... on a budget". To subscribe visit the "1 Frugal Friend 2 Another" website at

## **Five Unique And Profitable Home Based Businesses**

**By David Hudson**

Have you been sifting through the piles of information on home businesses, and found that you've come up with nothing that sounds like you? In the faceless world of the Internet and research books, it can seem that the choices for home based businesses are quite bland. However, with a little left–brained thinking (creativity!) and some thought, you might be able to come up with a profitable home business idea that not only rakes in the dough, but that you also enjoy immensely. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Freelance Fashion Designer: Do you love to knit, sew or make jewelry? There is a huge market for unique, fashionable items online today, particularly with the younger generations that are tired of cookie–cutter looks. Promote your business to friends, family and through online marketing programs.

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2. Event Planner: If you have an eye for detail and impeccable taste, this may be the home business option for you. Most of the planning can be run out of your home office, yet still allow you to connect with clients up front.

3. Antique and Rare Auto Finder: Calling all car lovers! For those who find yourselves drooling over Jay Leno's car collection, think about offering your services to others by hooking people up with the cars of their dreams, while charging a 5 to 10% commission.

4. Virtual Assistant: Organized, word-savvy administrative assistants – you may finally have a chance to be your own boss! Many companies are now paying freelance administrative assistants, called "virtual assistants" to complete typing, faxing and other office tasks for a price. These jobs usually pay between \$20 and \$40 per hour.

5. Brown Bag Lunch Maker: There are lots of parents out there who can't find the time to make nutritious lunches for their kids, even though they want to keep them healthy and fit. If you are a good cook with excellent nutritional values, think about starting a lunch making company, where you deliver brown bag lunches to children in the neighborhood on a month-by-month basis.

David Hudson, after serving in the US Air Force for 23 years, decided to start his next career online. He has several businesses and writes articles to help others avoid the mistakes he has made. He can help YOU start your own profitable business too. To learn more, visit:

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