

## WORST-CASE SCENARIO.

# HOW TO THWART A LUNCH THIEF

- 1 Prepare a special lunch bag.**

Staple your lunch bag shut. This will send the thief who has been stealing your lunch a not-so-subtle message that you know what he is up to. Write your name on the bag in large block letters to prevent the thief from claiming a bag mix-up.
- 2 Track the items stolen.**

A clever thief will not risk being caught red-handed with your entire lunch bag; he will simply remove his favorite items. Assess the thief's appetite and level of sophistication by observing for several days what items are taken and when. If the labeled and stapled bag does not deter him, you are dealing with a dedicated thief.
- 3 Set a trap.**

Once you have determined the thief's method and preferences, alter your lunch accordingly. If the thief likes sandwiches, hide a layer of well-chopped jalapeño peppers between the other ingredients (cover with a thin layer of mayonnaise, if necessary). If the thief prefers cookies, cupcakes, or other sweets, sprinkle a layer of cayenne pepper on the underside of these items. These traps will teach the thief a lesson and may flush the thief out into the open (wait by the water cooler later) if you are unable to catch him in the act.



*Wait until the thief has removed the item from your lunch bag.*

**4** **Monitor the refrigerator.**

Find a surveillance spot with a clear view of the office kitchen or stroll past once every few minutes. Mid- to late-morning is the prime time for lunch theft. Each time someone goes to the refrigerator, listen for the sound of your bag being ripped open. If there is no ripping sound, check the staples after each person leaves. Resume hiding until you hear a ripping sound or you see someone with his back to you, peeking into the refrigerator for a longer than usual time.

**5** **Wait for the crinkle.**

Listen attentively until you hear the thief open your bag and remove an item; if you move too soon you risk the defense of simple bag confusion.

**6** **Pounce.**

As the thief turns away from the fridge with your lunch item, jump out from your hiding spot. Say, "I believe that's my lunch you have in your hand!" If the thief denies that the item is from your lunch bag, show him the now-unsealed bag and explain that it was sealed before he opened the refrigerator door. If he still professes innocence, tell him to prove it by taking a large bite of the (doctored) item.