

How to save money on food in Disney World.

Eating at theme parks can be expensive. These tips will help you keep costs down. It still won't be cheap (and may not always be what we might call nutritious) but you may get more bang for your buck.

Bring your own

This is the cheapest but most inconvenient option. Walt Disney World and Universal Studios do allow guests to bring food and drinks into the parks within reason. They don't allow picnic meals or anything that needs to be reheated. Small soft-sided coolers are allowed (like the little lunch-sized ones) but no large coolers or hard-sided coolers. No glass!!!

There are usually small refrigerators in the rooms to keep things cold. There may be a microwave, but don't count on it. In the food court-style restaurant, there may be a toaster available for use, but, again, don't count on it.

If you want to get some groceries while you're down there, you have a couple of options.

<http://wdwprepschool.com/8-ways-to-get-groceries-for-your-disney-world-trip/>

1. Convenience store at the hotel: most expensive of these options, but also most convenient. You can buy larger packages of snacks and drinks. Still cheaper than buying everything a la carte.
2. Hess stations: There are two on property, one of which is near Downtown Disney (across the street from the Planet Hollywood area). Typical convenience store prices and selection, but a good place to get snacks and drinks.
3. Supermarkets: You could take a cab to a supermarket, but the cost would probably negate any savings. Many will deliver for a fee (see link above). You'd have to do the math to decide if it's worth it, but if your whole room puts in an order together, it could end up saving a lot.

Pick up a box of granola bars or other small snacks before you go and pack it in your luggage. Be careful of any liquids. You won't be able to bring anything larger than 3 ounces through security if you carry it on. If you check it, be aware that because of changing air pressure you might end up with a mess on your hands. Definitely don't check carbonated beverages. If you bring a few water bottles, pack them in plastic bags to protect the rest of your things.

<https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/faq/parks/outside-food-and-drink/>

<https://www.universalorlando.com/Resort-Information/Policies-and-Restrictions.aspx>

Special Diets

Those with special dietary needs are allowed more lenience in regards to bringing food into the parks. If you don't want to deal with it, there are many options for dining on-site. Gardens Kiosk in Animal Kingdom is a great option. See the links below:

<https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/guest-services/special-dietary-requests/>

<https://www.universalorlando.com/Resort-Information/Food-Allergies.aspx>

Discounts

There aren't really many offers in terms of discounts, but if you have AAA and show your card you may get discounts on food.

If you get the Birnbaum's Disney World Guide, they usually have coupons in the back that are good at a lot of Downtown Disney (and even some EPCOT) restaurants. Make sure it's the 2015 guide as the 2014 coupons expire on 12/31.

Drinks

Rapid Fill Resort Mug

The price tag will make your jaw drop, but if you do the math, it actually could very well save you money. These can be used for unlimited refills of soft drinks, hot coffee, and tea. While they don't work in the park, they can be used at any resort food court. 2014 prices are \$8.99 for one day, \$11.99 for 2 consecutive days, \$14.99 for three consecutive days, and \$17.99 for length of stay. These are calendar days, not 24-hour periods, so don't get a 3-day one at 10 PM on Sunday and think it will get you through Wednesday night. It will expire Tuesday night. I'm going to get a length-of-stay one, anyway.

They use a microchip to activate the soft drink dispensers, though they hadn't yet put in any sort of verification for the coffee, tea, and iced tea. Basically, it will stop working for the soda machines once your paid time is up.

It costs about \$3 every time you buy a soft drink or coffee, so if you fill up your mug for breakfast and then fill it up again as you head out for the day, you've already saved \$6. For lunch or dinner, if you want to explore the resorts near whichever park you're in, take a walk, boat, monorail, or bus over and fill up again at their food court. You can bring the mugs into the park, so you can have your coffee with you when you go get one of the awesome cinnamon rolls in the Magic Kingdom.

<http://www.themouseforless.com/tripplanning/resorts/RefillableMugs.shtml>

Club Cool

This won't solve all your beverage needs, but if you want a little refreshment while at EPCOT, check out Club Cool. This is a place to sample Coca-Cola beverages from around the world. They're dispensed about an ounce at a time, and they certainly won't let you fill up your own container, but go in and try all of the flavors. Some are disgusting, but most are pretty good. You'll have had plenty in about two minutes. Oh, did I mention it's FREE?

Water

Water is the best thing you can drink! The water in Orlando doesn't taste fantastic, but it's still good for you. You can get a cup of ice water for free at any of the counter or quick service restaurants. They probably won't fill up your water bottle for you because of sanitary concerns, but you can fill up your own water bottle with the water from the cup. There has been talk of water bottle filling stations, but I've found one only in Disneyland, not yet in WDW. There are plenty of water fountains, though, so you can fill up there as well.

Universal may not allow bottles in that have been open, so either bring fresh water bottles or an empty one to fill up there.

Food

<http://allears.net/dining/newmenusystem.htm>

The My Disney Experience app also now has menus and prices.

Kids Meals

You might feel awkward about this or you might not, but kids' meals are really good deals (I should copyright that). They usually include a smaller portion of an entrée or a kid-specific entrée (like macaroni and cheese), two sides (healthy options, even), and a small bottle of water, milk, or a juice box. Technically, they're supposed to be for kids, but at a quick service restaurant, they don't really know (or care) who is going to eat it. They offer them everywhere, even the countries in EPCOT, where you can get smaller portions of their food.

Quick Service

Counter service is the best option for most meals. Sometimes there are meal deals that can save you if you were going to get everything in it anyway.

Snacks

While not the most nutritious option, you could make a meal out of some of the snacks out there. I've been known to make a meal out of a thing of popcorn (shocking) or even an ice cream sundae. Hey, if you're gonna get a big sundae anyway, just make it your meal rather than having MORE calories. It'll probably fill you up. ☺ Turkey legs are another favorite. I also like the waffle sandwiches (which I guess are bigger than a snack) at Sleepy Hollow in Liberty Square.

Le Boulangerie Patisserie in France in EPCOT is another favorite. They have quiches as well as pastries and such to put together a nice little meal. Walk over to the Beach Club resort just on the other side of the World Showcase gates up near there and refill your mug!

Most countries in EPCOT have a quick-service place and a table service place (and many also have snack kiosks). The quick-service options often have some of the same stuff they offer at the table service place, but for less money.

Table Service

This will be your most expensive option, but if you want to save one meal to splurge on, go for it! There are options in the park, at the resorts, and at Downtown Disney and CityWalk. Ways to save are to go to one of these restaurants for an earlier meal. They'll often have a similar menu for lunch but at cheaper prices. Places like the Rainforest Café are really popular for breakfast, which is also cheaper than dinner. Or, have a lighter quick-service meal for dinner but go to the restaurant for dessert and coffee. They aren't usually crazy about it when people do this, especially if it's a restaurant that's in high demand, but as long as you don't linger all night over your shared slice of cake, it's not that uncouth.

Buffets

These are generally the most expensive option (depending on what you'd get at table service). The Biergarten in Germany is a popular one and includes German entertainment. If you do a two-meal day, this might make you come out ahead. Have a late breakfast and get in for a late lunch before dinner prices kick in, then eat, eat, eat! You may want a snack later in the evening to get you through, but could be cheaper than paying for three whole meals. We'll do a brunch buffet sometimes that gets us through lunch with no problem.

Share

Portions do tend to be generous, even at quick-service places, so you may find yourself wanting to share with someone.

Favorites

I'm cheap, so here are places I like.

Pizza

- Toy Story Pizza Planet in Hollywood Studios
- Pinocchio Village Haus in Magic Kingdom
- Pizzafari in Animal Kingdom
- Via Napoli Ristorante e Pizzeria in EPCOT (only if you're going to share)

Healthy

- Sunshine Seasons food court in The Land Pavilion, EPCOT
 - Many countries in EPCOT also have healthy options
- Anaheim Produce on Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood Studios
 - Healthy snack options
- Mr. Kamal's in Asia, Animal Kingdom
 - Also Bradley Falls kiosk
- Cosmic Ray's Starlight Café in Tomorrowland, Magic Kingdom
 - Tomorrowland Terrace in the Magic Kingdom sometimes has healthy options, but the menu changes frequently (or they're closed)

Yummies

- Boulangerie Patisserie les Halles in France, EPCOT (Quiche Florentine, Pommes)
- Kringla Bakeri Og Kafe in Norway, EPCOT (Pear Almond Tart)
- Aloha Isle in Adventureland, Magic Kingdom (Pineapple Float)
- Sunshine Tree Terrace in Adventureland, Magic Kingdom (Citrus Swirl!!!)
- Gaston's Tavern in Fantasyland, Magic Kingdom (the awesome cinnamon rolls that used to be sold at the Main St. Bakery are now sold here)
- Ghirardelli, Downtown Disney

Downtown Disney

If you want to make the hike, there are some good options at Downtown Disney, such as Wolfgang Puck Express and Earl of Sandwich.

