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Welcome, Disney Food Fans!

We're so glad you're here!

Hopefully you've got a Disney trip coming up. But even if you're planning for a dream trip far in the future, we're going to make sure you have the best possible visit.

10 Great Disney Dining Money-Saving Tips

You'll hear it over and over again while you're planning: food in Disney's parks and restaurants is pricey! And, let's be honest; while you're on vacation, you want to eat well. There's no reason to spend beau coup bucks on bad food, right? And we're not going to let that happen.

With over 25 years of Disney eating experience – four of those years as a dedicated food blogger – I've eaten just about everywhere...and just about everything. And over the next few pages, I'm going to share with you some of my favorite suggestions for reigning in the budget while on a Disney World vacation. There are many more tips where these come from, but these are a few of the best!

When you're done here, find us over at DisneyFoodBlog.com, where we're talking about the latest Disney food news, reviewing Disney restaurants, and sampling eats so that we can share what's worth the money, and what should be left on the shelf.

And I hope you'll stick around for a while! We'll be sending you some great tips over the next few days to help with your Disney dining planning.

So, without further ado – let's get down to it! Happy Planning!

– AJ & the DFB Team
#1 Eat At The Right Times

Even if you’re used to eating three meals per day at home, Disney restaurant portions are massive and most folks feel plenty full after eating two big meals per day instead of three.

But the most important part of this tip is WHEN you eat! Schedule dining so that you’re eating brunch and “linner” (yes; I DID make that word up – it means a combo of lunch and dinner)!

The trick here is that **breakfast and lunch both cost less than dinner in most Disney restaurants** (even if the lunch and dinner menus are very similar). So, by scheduling one meal for around 10am, and the second for around 3pm, you can usually escape the dinner upcharge and still be very well fed.

If you need a snack in the morning or evening, consider purchasing a few snacks or bringing some treats from home. Even with Disney snack prices, they still won't match what you'd pay for a full meal.

**Super Tip:** There are some great Disney snack options that are filling and low-cost, like baked potatoes, soup, and even this killer ham and cheese croissant! Those are the perfect options for a late-night snack that won't break the bank.

Have a big breakfast and a late lunch to avoid high-cost dinners in Disney World!
There are plenty of dining discounts for Disney World and Orlando-area restaurants.

For Florida Residents, Disney Vacation Club members, and Disney World Annual/Season Passholders, a Tables in Wonderland membership gives you 20% off of all food and beverages (including alcohol) at most Disney World restaurants and lounges.

If you’re a member of AAA, a Disney Vacation Club Member, a Disney Visa cardholder, a Disney World Annual Passholder, or a Florida Resident, there are other dining discounts available to you. Just check the benefits section of the associated websites for details. Or use our Disney World Restaurant Search Tool to find out what discounts apply.

Headed off-property to dine? Restaurant.com offers great deals and gift certificates for several Orlando-area restaurants!

Super Tip: Want to hear more? We’ve got dozens of Disney Dining Discounts listed in our DFB Guide to Walt Disney World Dining e-Book. We’ll be sending you a special discount code for that later on.

A little bit of research goes a long way!
#3 Pay Less For Essentials

If you're staying in Disney World for any length of time, chances are you'll need snacks, bottled water, soda-pop (especially if you're a Pepsi product drinker -- they're not sold anywhere on Disney property), gum (also not sold anywhere on Disney property), beer or wine, and other grocery essentials. Have a baby on board? You may need a supply of baby food, diapers, or formula.

There's no need to pay excessive prices for these items in Disney gift shops. If you have a car available to you, head out to a nearby convenience store or department store to stock up.

No car? Or maybe you'd rather not spend valuable theme park time in the nearby Wal-Mart? No problem! Have groceries delivered to your hotel or vacation home through Garden Grocer, a reputable grocery delivery service in Orlando. The service even delivers special diet items like gluten- and allergy-free foods and drinks.

This can be a great time- and money-saver for those visiting Disney World – and you won't even have to leave Disney World property or rent a car to get to a grocery or convenience store.

Have bottled beverages delivered directly to your hotel!
#4 Share Entrees

This is an especially good tip at counter-service (fast-food) restaurants, since many of the meal sizes in Disney World are quite large.

Consider purchasing **two or three meals for a family to share, instead of everyone getting their own.** While I wouldn’t recommend this in most destinations, Disney World is an exception. While the food is expensive, there is definitely a lot of it per portion.

This will also work in table-service (sit-down) restaurants, but there may be an extra plate charge for sharing. You’d still likely come out on top in terms of cost at the end of the meal, though.

**Super Tip:** Speaking of sharing, one of my favorite dining options is ordering several appetizers as a meal for the whole table. Like tapas-style dining, everyone gets a taste of lots of dishes, and it often costs less than ordering an entree for everyone. Is it enough food? You bet!

![Antipasto Appetizer at Mama Melrose's Ristorante Italiano](image)

This Antipasto Appetizer at Mama Melrose's Ristorante Italiano is definitely big enough for sharing!
#5 Pay Less For the Same Food

You've heard all about the classic Disney Zebra Domes at Boma; the thick, sugary Tonga Toast at Kona Cafe; and the famous Grapefruit Cake at Hollywood Brown Derby; but do you know how to get 'em without paying the price of a full meal?

Often, the lounges and counter-service locations at Disney World will carry some of the most famous dishes from table-service restaurants. For example: pick up some of Boma’s famous Zebra Domes and roasted red pepper hummus at the Mara at the Animal Kingdom Lodge, or get an order of Kona Cafe’s famous Tonga Toast down at Captain Cook’s at the Polynesian Resort.

And that Grapefruit Cake? Pop into Starring Rolls Cafe next door to Hollywood Brown Derby; many guests have been able to score a slice of this decadent cake to go!

This is an option more often than you think, and it allows you to indulge in some of Disney's most famous treats, while saving on buying a whole meal and paying a huge tip.

While always subject to change, this is one of our favorite tips!

The Grapefruit Cake at Hollywood Brown Derby can sometimes be found next door at Starring Rolls Bakery! Just ask!
Remember how I said that Disney food is expensive? It's amazing what heading a few blocks off Disney property can do in terms of food prices.

If you have a car accessible to you when you're in Disney World, plan to spend a meal or two outside of those big purple gates to save a few bucks.

The prices will be substantially smaller at non-Disney-property establishments, and your wallet will thank you for it.

A super quick jaunt from Downtown Disney, the Crossroads Shopping Center area has plenty of chain restaurants and other options. This is a great place to start!

Super Tip: Use a Restaurant.com gift certificate for an Orlando-area restaurant to save even more!

Sometimes Dining outside of Disney World is the best way to save some dough.
#7 Eat Breakfast in Your Hotel Room

While breakfast in the Disney theme parks and resort restaurants is often less expensive than lunch or dinner, it's still pretty pricey.

Consider bringing packets of oatmeal (heat up the water in your in-room coffeemaker), granola bars, cereal bars, or single-serve cereal packs -- you can purchase milk at your hotel gift shop.

The best part? You'll save time by not going to a restaurant for breakfast, which means you get to the front of those Disney ride lines sooner!
The Disney Dining Plan, a set of pre-paid meal plans for Disney resort guests, could possibly save your family money on Disney dining. But it's not guaranteed. Take a look at the details and crunch the numbers to see if this is the right option for you.

For several guests, the pre-payment of the Dining Plan means they don't have to worry about a budget while they're on vacation. But for others, buying the Disney Dining Plan actually means they're spending more than they would if they were paying out-of-pocket for their food.

Making it even more difficult to decipher, Disney has recently been offering a "free dining" promotion, where guests receive the Disney Dining Plan for free as part of their vacation booking. Believe it or not, even this may not save you enough money to make it worth giving up a hotel package discount as required.

Clearly, it's complicated. Like I said, crunch the numbers to see if it makes sense for your family. If you need some guidance, our DFB Guide to Walt Disney World Dining e-Book breaks down the costs and gives a great overview of how to decide whether or not to purchase the Disney Dining Plan.

The Disney Dining Plan could save you money, but you should crunch the numbers to be sure.
Now, here's a VERY little-known tip. Say you're in line at a Disney World counter-service restaurant and you know you want to order the burger, but you'd rather not have the fries. Because they're sold as a meal, you may think you HAVE to order and pay for the fries, right?

Actually, in most locations, counter-service menu items can be ordered *a la carte!* For example, if you'd like the hot dog, but not the accompanying apple slices, simply **order it without the side dish and get a discounted price.** Yep! It's that easy.

As with any Disney policy, this is subject to change. But it's always been intact on our visits, so definitely give it a try!

Want that hot dog sans fries? Order it that way and save some cash!
#10 BYOF

Yep -- that's "Bring Your Own Food." When push comes to shove, there's just about nothing that's going to cost you less than bringing your own snacks and meals to the parks.

And while Disney doesn't encourage you to bring food into the theme parks, it is allowed. You can even bring a small, soft-sided cooler to carry your treats.

Our suggestion? Pack relatively non-melting snacks like trail mix, fresh fruit, or peanut butter sandwiches for a day in the parks.

**Super Tip:** You can get a cup of ice water for free at Disney counter-service restaurants!

Enjoy a day at the Animal Kingdom with your own eats and snacks!
Thanks For Joining Us!

Thanks again for joining us on the Disney Food Blog Newsletter! We work hard to provide you with all the latest news and information about Disney dining, but also to share our reviews and ideas to help make your Disney vacation the best it can be.

We'll be popping up in your email box for the next few days sharing some of our favorite tips and tricks about dining in Disney parks and resorts. After that, you'll hear from us a few times a month with the latest updates, deals, and Disney food information.

We look forward to your feedback, food reviews, and suggestions. Contact us here, or find us on facebook and twitter.

If you've received this guide from a friend, please join us on our Disney Food Blog Newsletter for more delicious Disney food details!

See ya real soon!