

Eight Ways to Save When Eating Out

1. Skip the drinks. I'm sure you've heard it before, but I will tell you again. Not only are drinks calorie-filled and probably not that healthy for you (*unless your are drinking a green juice*), it's a money sucker. It quickly adds up and when it's time to pay the bill, you wonder why your bill is \$15 more than it should be.

2. Share. I see this happening more often than not. Many restaurants serve large portion sizes and it almost requires you to take home a doggie bag. Instead, choose an entree and a small salad to share. If you tell your server that you're going to share, they split the order into two dishes. Now you've cut your bill in half.

3. Lunch it. Dining out at dinner is twice as expensive as eating out at lunch for the same menu item. If you can, try to lunch it and in the process save 50% off.

4. Happy Hour. I used to think that Happy Hour meant that it only applied to drinks. Many establishments offer Happy Hour where everything on their menu or a special menu is 50% off or more. You may have to go in before 6pm, but that doesn't mean you have to leave at 6pm. Just order everything before 6pm and enjoy.

5. Free munchies. Free housemade bread, garlic bites, edamame, salsa and chips, they all fit the bill. Most of the time you go out for the ambiance and to be with your friends and family. If you're not that hungry, you can munch on these house freebies and order something small.

6. Kids eat free. Of course, this applies if you have children. Find out what establishments offer free kids meals with the purchase of an adult entree. If you have a family of 4, you'll only have to pay for you and your spouse's meal. Check for days and times.

7. Rewards programs. Some chain or larger establishments offer rewards programs. Sign up for them because it's free and you may get a coupon for a free appetizer or entree and most times, [a free meal for your birthday](#).

8. Check coupon sites. Not everyone is used to checking coupon sites for meal deals, but you can save a huge chunk off your bill. I usually go to [Valpak.com](#) or [SmartSource.com](#) to see if there are any coupons for my favorite spots.