

Restaurant Survival Guide

**+ Airports, Hotels
& Road Trips!**



The Restaurant Survival Guide

Written by Trevor Justice

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In this book, I share with you many of my personal strategies for eating well at restaurants, airports, and hotels.

I also include tips from contributors Nomi Shannon, Jill Nussinow, Elaina Love, Raederle Phoenix, and our subscribers Yvonne, Peggy, Dee, Lin, Ladell Neitzel, Pamela, Sergeant Blake, Barbara Vicary, Kirsteen, Karen, Alina Munson, Shelley, and Ava.

Do you have restaurant survival tips or you'd like to add to this booklet? Or tips for eating well when traveling? If so, we'd love to share them with our other customers. Just post them to our [blog here](#). That blog post is the original version of this booklet, and has many comments from subscribers already.

Ask For A Custom Plate

Many people today have dietary restrictions – ranging from gluten intolerance to lactose intolerance to veganism. Special diets are so common, in fact, that restaurants have gotten used to making custom meals on the fly.

So if a restaurant doesn't have an entrée you're willing to eat, don't be shy about asking for a custom meal.

Here's a time-tested approach: Look at the menu for the ingredients in other entrees. Then ask if the chef could create a plate with just those ingredients.

For example, at Mexican restaurants, I regularly ask for a plate of romaine lettuce, whole beans, and a "double side" of guacamole – with *no* rice or tortilla shell. I'll also request grilled vegetables if available.

Some sandwich shops will let you add grilled mushrooms to any sandwich. Keep it simple so it's not too difficult or time consuming for the chef. Here are some specific tips:

- 1) **Choose whole grains over flour products.** For example, oatmeal is a more nutritious (and less fattening) breakfast than bagels, pancakes, French toast, or sugary cereals. So are potatoes. At lunch or dinner, visit a Thai and Chinese restaurant that serves brown rice, rather than going for pizza or pasta.

- 2) **Keep healthy snacks in your car or bag.** For example: fresh fruit, dried fruit, trail mix, almonds, sunflower seeds or pumpkin seeds. Then when you get hungry while away from home, you won't have to resort to second-rate restaurant food or processed snack foods.
- 3) **Order multiple side dishes.** Sadly, entrees are often devoid of vegetables. To create a meal full of vegetables, you can order side dishes such as broccoli and green beans, and ask for the "guts" of a sandwich without the bread.
- 4) **Order platters, not sandwiches or wraps.** At restaurants, ask for the "guts" of your sandwich on a bed of greens, not wrapped in bread. For example, when hummus is available, I ask the restaurant to serve it on a bed of greens. At Mexican restaurants, I ask for beans, romaine lettuce, and guacamole – no tortilla.
- 5) **Dress your salads with olive oil and vinegar.** Or ask for lemon wedges and squeeze them over your salads. This will save you from processed salad dressings with questionable ingredients.

Here is a creative tip that will work at any quality restaurant from our subscriber James Wilson. On the back of his business card he has a note "To the chef –" explaining the exact constraints of what he wants to eat.

James specifies that he wants a dish containing no animal products, no oil, minimal flour, lots of vegetables, some grains and/or legumes, savory fruits (tomatoes) and fungi (mushrooms).

If you're going to be getting business cards printed any time soon, and eat out regularly this tip is worth while. It only costs \$5 to \$10 more to have black and white text on the back of your cards instead of a blank back, and it will save you a lot of trouble.

Planning Ahead

If friends or relatives invite you to meet at a certain restaurant, look for the restaurant's menu online to see if they have something healthy to eat. If there's no menu online, call ahead and find out if they serve food you're willing to eat. If there's nothing good, suggest another place.

FLYING & AIRPORT TIPS

Flying Tips: Getting Through Security

If you try to bring a container of hummus or almond butter through security, it'll be confiscated. (After all, garbanzo beans and almonds pose a serious threat to airline safety!) But if you bring a hummus sandwich or almond butter sandwich, you can skate through with no hassles. Go figure.

Our subscriber Yvonne says, "When traveling by air, I've never had a problem getting fruit past security if it's cut up in a ziplock bag. For example, chopped pineapple, apples, strawberries, etc. I also add some celery and carrots to the bag."

Subscriber Ava brings frozen smoothies with her through airline security. For some reason fluids aren't okay, but a frozen smoothie is fine!

Flying Tips: Luggage

Pack a soft sided, collapsible cooler in your suitcase. Not only do they hold more because of flexible sides; they pack flat and are very light. Just ensure anything soft is in a covered firm container. Also, be sure to double-bag your ice to prevent leaking. Nomi suggests packing a thin, flexible cutting board.

When traveling with two suitcases (or a companion), you can pack your blender's carafe in one suitcase and its base in the other. Of course, fill the carafe with socks to avoid wasting precious suitcase space!

When flying in cold weather, think twice before filling your suitcase with anything that might freeze and expand. For example, I once packed a jar of almond butter and a plastic container of agave nectar in my suitcase. (The one I checked.)

Fortunately, neither one exploded during transit. But I spent the whole flight worrying that the cold air outside would freeze these foods and cause the containers to burst.

Our subscriber Lin had an experience where she packed fresh apricots in egg-cartons surrounded by bubble-wrap within her checked suitcase. The apricots arrived in perfect condition! You can try this with plums, tangerines or other small fruits as well.

I love traveling with dehydrated foods because they're lightweight and don't require refrigeration. For example, kale chips, flax crackers, and cereals made from sprouted buckwheat. Dried fruit and trail mix also fall in this category. You can find all of these at Whole Foods Market.

Flying Tips: Eating At The Airport

Many airports have smoothie places. Panda Express offers pretty good stir-fries. (And you can decline the white rice.)

Panera now has a “Mediterranean Veggie” sandwich with hummus and feta cheese. You can ask them to serve the hummus, cheese, and vegetables on a plate of romaine lettuce instead of a wrap.

Even some regular sandwich places offer “3 Bean Salad” – a nutrient rich addition to any salad. Sometimes this salad may contain sugar, so don't be shy when asking about the ingredients.

Even in cities where you wouldn't expect it, you can improvise respectable meals. For example, the Kansas City, Missouri airport has a Mexican restaurant that happily prepared my favorite plate: beans, guacamole, grilled veggies, and romaine lettuce. And a restaurant in the Nashville, Tennessee airport smeared an avocado onto whole wheat toast when I asked them to.

ROAD TRIPS

The great thing about driving is that you don't have to worry about the weight of your luggage. You can bring a large cooler filled with ice packs and vegetables. You can also bring canned soups, an electric hotpot, cutting board, knife, bowl, silverware, and even a crock pot, food processor, blender or Vitamix!

Best of all, you can bring all the fresh fruit, lemons, and avocados you want. For easy "tailgate preparation", my friend Elaina Love brings travel knives, wooden utensils, a wooden bowl, and a mini cutting board.

Bringing a blender allows you to make smoothies in the mornings.

One of our students travels with a small slow cooker crock pot. Then when she stops at a hotel/motel, she soaks her grains (steel-cut oats, millet, quinoa) with water overnight. Then in the morning she has a nice hot cereal ready. She enjoys this alongside the fruits that most hotels have in their continental breakfast.

For great snackage while behind the wheel, a nutritious mix of dried fruits can be whipped up ahead of time. While trail mix is great for hiking, the high-fat content of the seeds and nuts can leave you tired if you're just sitting in place.

My friend Raederle Phoenix makes a mix of dried mulberries, golden-berries, goji berries, raisins, maqui berries, dried apricots and other dried fruits for the road. The flavor is varied and interesting, and the natural carbohydrate keeps you alert during a long drive.

If you travel a lot, consider buying a Thermoelectric Cooler. You can plug it into your car's power socket. And some models offer a separate adapter that you can plug into any electrical outlet.

Fruit is great because it doesn't require refrigeration. Avocados turn salads into filling meals. Lemons can be squeezed over salads, keeping them fresh and adding flavor.

Planning Ahead For Road Trips

In the U.S., visit www.localharvest.com to locate farmers markets near your destination, or on the way. You're sure to find fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables. At some markets, you'll even find homemade baked goods and hot meals.

For a list of all co-ops, health food stores, and green businesses with a quick zip-code look-up, my friend Sasha Luci recommends www.greenpages.org.

You can also map out all the Panera's, Subways, Chipotle Mexican Grill, and/or Baja Fresh restaurants on your route. In the United States you'll be able to find Whole Foods and/or Trader Joe's along most routes as well.

Road Trips: Restaurant Tips

Mexican restaurants are my favorite, because they all have beans, guacamole, and romaine lettuce. That's all I need to make a meal. And some have grilled vegetables too!

Some healthy burrito places even offer brown rice and whole wheat tortillas. But most Mexican restaurants only serve white rice. So I tell them to hold the rice and tortilla shell. (White rice and flour tortillas are both refined foods.)

I also request whole beans – *not* refried. The oil or lard in refried beans adds extra fat and calories.

When I insist that I only want beans, guacamole and romaine lettuce (and grilled veggies, if available), the counter people sometimes look baffled. They can't imagine a Mexican plate without a tortilla and rice!

But why should I burden my digestive system with empty calories when I can have a plate of whole foods?

Ironically, the counter-person often charges me a very low price. Why? The plate they make me is nowhere on the menu.

I usually decline the corn chips, because most non-organic corn grown in the U.S. is genetically modified.

Asian restaurants (Chinese, Japanese, etc.) are my second choice. Some have brown rice.

Unfortunately, most non-organic soy grown in the U.S. is genetically modified. So if you're a vegetarian, only you can decide which is more important: avoiding GMO food or including tofu on your vegetable plate.

Indian restaurants always have dishes with lentils, split peas, and chick peas. Some Indian food is spicy, so it's natural to "cut" the spiciness by eating it with rice. However, the buffets at many Indian restaurants include raw lettuce and cucumbers.

In these cases, I combine spicy food with cucumbers instead of rice. For the reasons mentioned above, I tell them to hold the “naan” (a fried bread made from white flour).

Italian restaurants usually have romaine lettuce in their Cesar salads. Just make sure you skip the pasta, which is a refined food – just like white rice.

Mediterranean restaurants are usually happy to replace flat breads (like pita bread) with sliced up cucumbers or other vegetables. These go great with hummus or baba ganoush. Subscriber Pamela says that in her experience they have always had cucumber slices available.

Do ask if their dips are made with sugar or not. Sometimes you'll find out that two or three of their options are entirely natural.

Vietnamese restaurants almost always have vegan options, and you can skip the rice, says our subscriber Zyxomma.

Road Trips: Grocery Stores

Before traveling, search online for health food stores along your route, or near your destination. Then you can stop to buy refrigerated foods.

I'll sometimes stop at a grocery store, and buy a container of hummus along with a cucumber or a bag of pre-washed salad greens. I can slice up the cucumber and dip it in the hummus. When traveling to conferences in Las Vegas and Washington D.C., I was surprised to find a Whole Foods Market within walking distance of both hotels.

Many conventional grocery stores now have a small “Natural” section where you can find packaged foods without the artificial ingredients. For example, you can buy a natural cereal. Or you can buy natural peanut butter and then eat it on whole wheat bread or apples.

HOTEL TIPS

When you book your hotel room, request a mini fridge to store vegetables and other perishables. Some hotels will provide a fridge at no additional cost. But since they don't have enough for every guest, it's first come, first served. So reserve it in advance!

If a fridge isn't available, ask if the wet bar in your room can be emptied out so you can store food in it.

As a last resort, bring your own cooler and fill it with fresh ice each day. If bringing a cooler isn't possible, use the bucket in your hotel room (the one normally used for a wine bottle).

Even if you have no fridge in your hotel room, you can bring almonds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, or flax crackers and sprinkle them on your salad. These are easy to pack in a suitcase. You can buy flax crackers and other healthy travel food from these web sites:

<http://www.simplylovingraw.com/>

<http://lydiasorganics.com/product-category/packaged-products>

<http://www.goraw.com/shop>

My friend Meredith McCarty doesn't like to rough it all. So when she stays at hotels, if she can't get a room with a kitchenette, she'll bring her own hot plate, or an immersion coil for making hot beverages. Then she prepares miso soup, oatmeal, quinoa, buckwheat or millet, mochi and tea.

My friend Raederle Phoenix brings raw cacao and carob powder, bananas, plates and forks. With these two ingredients, a plate and a fork, a simple nutritious pudding can be made.

In several minutes of mashing the powder into the bananas with a fork, you have chocolate and/or carob pudding. For variation, she sometimes uses paprika, cinnamon, vanilla powder or other spices.

Subscriber Ladell Neitzel brings chia seeds, essential oils, fruit and distilled water. You can soak the chia seeds in a glass jar overnight with water, an essential oil and fruit and wake up to your own healthful pudding. (You'll want to do this within a fridge, cooler or fairly cool room to prevent spoilage.) Ladell likes to soak her chia seeds in coconut water or almond milk.

Subscriber Kirsteen says, “I carry a small jar of miso and a packet of sea vegetables. It's easy to get hot water and then you've got instant soup. I also take a wide mouthed thermos flask and a mixture of oatmeal, quinoa flakes, dehydrated fruit and mixed seeds. I put this in the flask at night, add hot water and I've got a nutritious tasty breakfast waiting for me when I get up.”

If you're going to bring a blender, you aren't limited to smoothies. Subscriber Karen makes juice by straining blended vegetables with a nut-milk bag.

Getting Enough Vegetables

Whether you're at a fancy American hotel, or traveling in Costa Rica, it can be hard to get vegetables. (Ironically, during my trip to Costa Rica, the only restaurant I could find with a green salad was McDonalds!)

Here are some shrewd solutions to this problem:

Sea vegetables (aka “seaweeds”) such as dulse and sea palm are lightweight and don't require refrigeration. They can be rehydrated and added to any salad.

You can purchase silky sea palm, sea palm, sweet kombu and dulse from Ocean Harvest Sea Vegetable Company at <http://www.seaweedmermaid.com>; They are delicious right from the bag and easy to tuck into a purse or backpack.

This is one of only two companies on the west coast to test their seaweed for radiation. Their test done in May 2012 showed that their seaweed was radiation free.

Our subscriber Melissa points out that sea vegetables are available at health stores and Whole Foods around the country. Look in the “international cuisine” section or ask a sales clerk for dried sea vegetables.

Lesson 35 of the [Vegetarian Mastery Program](#) is called “Amazing Benefits of Sea Vegetables”. In it, you'll discover how sea vegetables increase your longevity and lower your breast cancer risk.

You'll get the lowdown on six seaweeds: their nutritional profiles, strong points, and popular uses. You'll find out which ones unleash the minerals in tofu, beans, and grains, and which can be used as thickeners, in place of gelatin. And learn to sneak them into your daily meals.

Kale chips. These salted, spiced dehydrated kale leaves are as addictive as Doritos – but

far healthier. Search Google for recipes. You can also buy them from Whole Foods Market or from: <http://shop.kaiafoods.com/>

Wheat grass tablets. You can buy these in a jar from any health food store. According to the label on Pines International wheat grass tablets, 7 tablets equals a serving of deep green leafy vegetables.

[Veggie Delicious mix](#) contains dehydrated raw vegetables including Broccoli, Green Beans, Sweet Corn, Peas, Tomatoes, Green Peppers, Red Peppers, Green Onions, & Carrots. It's lightweight and doesn't require refrigeration. You can [order Veggie Delicious here](#).

When traveling by car, my friend Jill Nussinow likes to pack mason jars with newly started sprouts (and sprout tops). That way she's assured fresh "vegetables" for at least a few days. Of course, she rinses them with bottled or filtered water, not tap water.



When traveling by plane, you can pack dry grains, seeds or quinoa, and start sprouting once you arrive. Since jars are heavy, you can choose to sprout them in a hemp sprout bag or one of Elaina Love's nut milk bags.

Lesson 20 of the [Vegetarian Mastery Program](#) covers sprouting in detail. It's called: "How to Skyrocket the Nutrition in Nuts, Seeds, Grains, and Beans".

Sprouts have far more nutrition than their adult counterparts. For example, one-week old broccoli sprouts have 50-100 times more nutrients than mature broccoli. In this lesson, you'll discover how to sprout with only one minute of watering per day. No soil and no green thumb required.

This lesson includes a comprehensive chart showing how to sprout 34 types of seeds, beans, and grains. Plus, where to get sprouting supplies, and how to avoid mold and mildew.

Bring Sweeteners

When it comes to sweeteners, most restaurants and hotels only offer white sugar and carcinogenic alternatives – like "Sweet & Low". So it's smart to bring your own sweetener.

Stevia and "Organic Zero" both come in single-serving packets, making them easy to travel with. On road trips, you also have the luxury of bringing liquid sweeteners like raw honey, coconut nectar, maple syrup, or brown rice syrup.

Lesson 20 of the [Vegetarian Mastery Program](#) is called “**Natural Sweetener Showdown**”. In it, you’ll get the lowdown on 19 different sweeteners, ranging from maple and brown rice syrups to xylitol, stevia, and coconut palm sugar. You’ll discover which fruits best complement chocolate desserts versus cookies versus graham cracker crusts, and which sweeteners are questionable or downright dangerous. You’ll also learn to turn dried fruits into syrups and pastes. It includes glycemic index ratings and a detailed expose on agave nectar.

Avoiding Genetically Modified Foods (GMOs)

The FDA approves genetically modified food in America, but in many other countries around the world, GMOs have been banned. The testing on GMO safety is funded by the same companies that stand to gain financially from the tests coming back as “safe.” Outside independent studies tell a different story.

If you're concerned about genetically modified ingredients you may want to watch out for Lara bars. The Lara bar company is now funding efforts against labeling GMOs. Our subscriber Alina Munson sent a question to Lara bars about it but never received a reply.

When eating at a restaurant, don't be shy to ask about organic soy or organic corn. Subscriber Shelley points out that by asking and declining non-organic soy and corn, we send a powerful message to the restaurant owner about what customers are willing to pay for.

Help From Fellow Travelers

If you're looking to meet very specific needs in a very specific location, you can search the internet with the location and your dietary needs to find blogs and articles written by other people with relevant advice.

Our subscriber Carol Wexler says that sometimes you'll be able to find a blog author who has a post specifically about traveling in the same area with the same dietary needs. Carol once found an organic macrobiotic vegan restaurant only a block from her hotel because a traveling blogger had mentioned it.

Suggestions for a Travel Checklist

- 1) Maps/directions to stores and/or restaurants that suit your dietary needs
- 2) Green stevia, xylitol, raw honey, brown rice syrup and/or dates
- 3) Veggie Delicious, kale chips, flax crackers and/or other dehydrated vegetables
- 4) Wheatgrass or chlorella tablets, AmazingGrass powder or other green substitute
- 5) Sea vegetables such as dulse, spirulina, sea palm, nori, wakame, arame or hijiki
- 6) Raw cacao or carob powder, maca powder, cinnamon, paprika and/or other spices
- 7) Essential oils such as mint oil to create flavorful puddings, smoothies and more
- 8) Fresh fruit such as bananas, apples, oranges, kiwis, pineapple, lemons and avocados. You can chop these ahead of time, but they will brown quickly. So unless you plan to eat them right away, whole fruit is safest.
- 9) Brazil nuts, almonds, chia seeds, flax seeds and a nut-milk bag
- 10) Lightweight collapsible cooler (for airplane trips) or firm cooler (for roadtrips)
- 11) Thin light cutting board and utensils (knives, forks, spoons, etc)
- 12) Electric hot-pot, hot-plate, blender, juicer – any appliance you can fit in your car
- 13) Can opener and canned vegetables (for roadtrips or checked luggage)
- 14) Sprouting jars or bags and seeds to sprout such as alfalfa seeds
- 15) Small fruits packed in an egg-carton within bubble-wrap (for checked luggage)
- 16) Enzyme tablets, probiotics and any other important supplements
- 17) Quality sea salt or Himalayan pink salt (you can carry this in a purse or carry-on)
- 18) Dark chocolate or home-made treats (such as a blend of dates, walnuts & cacao)
- 19) Miso packet and sea vegetables for miso soup (just add hot water)
- 20) Thermos, oatmeal, quinoa flakes, dried fruit and seeds (just add hot water)

When Shopping On The Road For Food, Seek These Items:

- ⤴ Hummus (unsweetened with minimal preservatives)
- ⤴ Pre-washed salad greens, cucumber, celery, jicama, red pepper and/or carrots
- ⤴ Nut butter (unsweetened with minimal preservatives)
- ⤴ Pre-chopped and packaged fruit such as pineapple chunks or mango slices

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