



Over the moon—and under budget

» navigating RECESSION CONCESSIONS

THESE MEAL DEALS SPARE YOUR WALLET WHILE PLEASING YOUR PALATE

BY RACHEL LEVIN

You may be tightening your belt these days, but there's only so much ramen one can eat. And if you're a foodie weaned on truffles and Kobe burgers, chances are lots of cheap eats won't cut your mustard, no matter how low your portfolio has dipped. Thankfully, restaurants feel your pain: Many trendy spots are now rolling out special nights, menus and tastings to cater to epicureans who've fallen on hard times. From gourmet hot dog stands to high-end bistros, these deals run the gamut from cheap to cheaper to free.

Bistro 31: Afternoon Dining Menu
If your budget suddenly recalls your days as a starving student, why not seek out food at a student-run restaurant? Bistro 31 at the Art Institute of Los Angeles—open for lunch Monday-Wednesday 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.—serves up gourmet fare cooked by AILA's culinary students. The chefs-in-training are in their final quarters of study and are supervised by faculty, so you can rest assured that your meal won't wind up as some lab experiment. And the price is right: Appetizers such as seared sea scallops top out at \$4.50 apiece, and salads like Oriental chicken and sandwiches like Reuben roast beef are all under \$6. Entrees include tequila-lime BBQ ribs or mango glazed shrimp, each for under \$8. During some terms, Bistro 31 is open for dinner as well; call in advance. **2900 31st St., Santa Monica, 310-314-6057**

Cafe 50's: Pajama Night
Not since you wore footsie pajamas has eating been this cheap—or this fun. On the last Wednesday of every month from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Cafe 50's, you can eat free with the purchase of beverages off a special menu—if you come to the restaurant in your pajamas. Sorry, no boxers or negligees allowed. For these Wacky Wednesdays, you must show up in traditional, two-piece, button-down, long-sleeved, long-legged, collared, matching-top-and-bottom jammies in order to get the freebie. Once given the green light by the Pajama Judge, you'll have your choice of selected burgers, sandwiches and omelettes. **11623 Santa Monica Blvd., West L.A., 310-479-1955 / 838 Lincoln Blvd., Venice, 310-399-1955**

Dominick's: Sunday Suppers
Italian grandmothers know that Sunday suppers are the foundation of a good week ahead. Dominick's fills nonna's shoes with a weekly three-course Sunday Supper. It's a steal at \$15 per person. The menu changes every week but always includes a starter, main dish and dessert—a recent menu featured green salad, balsamic glazed brisket with polenta and vanilla bean rice balls. Bottles of Dago red or white go for \$10, and Moretti beers are \$2 apiece. Next to eating at grandma's, it's as cheap as you're gonna get. **8715 Beverly Blvd., Beverly Center District, 310-652-2335**

Frida Taqueria: Taco Tasting
Taco trucks are always go-to cheap eateries, but if you don't feel like chasing one down, settle into the Taco Tasting at Frida Taqueria at the Brentwood Country Mart. The offshoot of the Beverly Hills restaurant Frida offers your choice of any five tacos, excluding daily specials, for

\$10. (The tacos are usually \$2.75 each.) The wide choice of fillings includes slow-roasted pork marinated in citrus juice, chicken with chili-chocolate sauce and *cochinita pibil*. **225 26th St., Santa Monica, 310-395-9666**



Frugal feeding @ Frida

Il Forno: \$6 Power Lunch Menu
If power lunches on your expense account have dried up, keep the spirit alive with Il Forno's Power Lunch Menu, served Monday-Friday 11:30 p.m.-3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m. Six clams buys you your choice of pasta or salad served with homemade hot bread (tax included). Selections include pastas like *linguine marinara con salsiccia* and salads such as the *insalata della zia* with chunks of light tuna. You can also snag a pizza Margherita for \$6 (\$7 if you want pepperoni). Two catches: You have to pay with cash, and you must order your food to go. **2901 Ocean Park Blvd. #109, Santa Monica, 310-450-1241**

Little Dom's: \$10 Bottles of Prosecco
Little Dom's, the younger sibling of Dominick's, recently rolled out brunch on Saturdays and Sundays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. For only \$10, you can make like you're a hotel heiress with a bottle of Carpena Malvolti prosecco for

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BY KATHERINE SPIERS
Contributing Editor
and Guest Blogger

THE MISCONCEPTION THAT JAPANESE FOOD IS EXPENSIVE HAS GOT TO END.

Sure, a dinner at Urasawa will set you back, but Little Tokyo is chock-full of restaurants offering amazing deals. The secret? Go at lunch. Even if you're not near Downtown, the money you'll save on lunch is worth what you'll spend on gas (or better yet, take the subway!).

Here's the deal: Arrive in J-town around noon or 1 p.m. and survey the surroundings. Any place with lunch specials will do you right, offering a mix of Japanese classics in one easy-to-navigate bento box, and it's always less than \$12. While that may not seem like a legendary deal, consider this: You won't have to eat dinner. Seriously, it's that much food. My personal favorite, the No. 6 at Oomasa, includes miso, pickles, green salad, mac salad, sushi, sashimi, tempura and rice for \$11. Eating anything for the rest of the day would just hurt.



Of course, if you want to end your meal with something sweet, here's another economical tip: A small yogurt at Céfiore, on the same block as Oomasa, is the same size as a medium at neighboring Pinkberry—and it's \$2 less. Let's hear it for gorging on the cheap!

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