

EATING

top picks

- Amici Miei (p129)
- Don Julio (p137)
- Green Bamboo (p134)
- La Vineria de Gualterio Bolívar (p129)
- Sipan (p132)
- Oviedo (p134)
- Cumaná (p134)
- Oui Oui (p138)
- Il Ballo del Mattone (p136)

EATING

It's official: one of the best reasons to visit Buenos Aires is the food. Thanks to a high concentration of Spanish and Italian immigrants settling here a few generations ago, traditional pizzerias and old-school Galician restaurants proliferate alongside an ever-growing number of cutting-edge eateries where famed chefs fuse seemingly disparate cuisines (Japanese-Peruvian food, anyone?) or try their hands at classic French dishes. But the real star of the local food scene is the beef raised on the grassy pampas outside the city. The quality of produce in richly agricultural Argentina is excellent; on your plate beside one of the finest steaks in the world, you might enjoy grilled pumpkin from Neuquén and a glass of Malbec produced in Mendoza, followed by a dessert of strawberries, grown in Tucumán and topped with cream provided by the province's famous dairy cows. You'll eat so well in Buenos Aires that you'll need to power-walk between lunch and dinner to work off the excess calories.

Buenos Aires is packed with *parrillas* (steakhouses) in every neighborhood, serving perfect slabs of meat at reasonable prices. In fact, you can order a *bife de chorizo* (sirloin) at many cafés, bars or restaurants, but for the best cuts and selection, be sure to visit a *parrilla*. In every neighborhood, you'll find great steak sandwiches, fresh salads, deep-dish pizzas and traditional Italian pasta. Most bars and cafes feature surprisingly large menus and stay open into the wee morning hours, making them great places for late-night snacks. See the Drinking chapter (p144) for our bar and cafe listings.

But those who enjoy more exotic tastes are in luck: Palermo has become Buenos Aires' food mecca, offering a range of Armenian, Brazilian, Mexican, French, Indian, Japanese, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern cuisines, plus various 'international' eateries that specialize in fusion cuisine. Don't be taken in by appearances alone: many restaurants are slick and contemporary but only offer so-so food. If you're not willing to trade good cooking for flashy ambience, do your homework ahead of time: quite a few of the shining stars on the food scene don't compromise on either score. When in doubt, a crowded reservation list (and dining room) is always a good sign.

The most thorough online guide to BA restaurants is www.guiaoleo.com (in Spanish); for listings in English, try www.saltshaker.net.

If you're looking for a cooking class, see p224.

PRACTICALITIES

Opening Hours

Restaurants are generally open daily from noon to 3:30pm for lunch and 8pm to midnight or 1am for dinner. We note specific hours in reviews only if a restaurant's opening times are widely different from these. It's also a good idea to call ahead to confirm hours, since these can change.

Few places open early in the morning since Argentines don't eat much breakfast, but you can find the occasional breakfast/brunch spot. A sure bet for that morning *medialuna* (croissant) and *cortado* (coffee with milk) are the city's many cafes, which often stay open from morning to late at night without a break.

How Much?

Thanks to climbing inflation, dinner in Buenos Aires has become less of a traveler's bargain

than it once was. Still, relatively speaking – especially when you factor in the incredibly high quality of steak and wine, plus the fact that you're not expected to tip exorbitantly – there are foodie deals to be found. At finer restaurants, most dinner mains run from AR\$30 to AR\$45. Lunches are more affordable, especially if you take advantage of a *menu ejecutivo* (set lunch menu) at fancier restaurants. You won't have a wide selection of entrées, but the price almost always includes dessert, coffee and a glass of wine or sparkling water.

Be aware that not all restaurants accept credit cards – always ask first if you want to use one. Don't be surprised to see a per-

PRICE GUIDE

\$\$\$	mains over AR\$38
\$\$	mains AR\$20–38
\$	mains under AR\$20