

# EATING

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# EATING

It's official: one of the best reasons to visit Buenos Aires is the food. New concepts in cuisine are unlikely to see their beginnings here, but who needs cutting-edge ideas when you have the best steaks in the world? The quality of produce in richly agricultural Argentina is also excellent and restaurants generally do a decent job of preparing dishes, so you're likely to have a good meal no matter where you end up. In fact, you'll eat so well in Buenos Aires that the only way you'll be able to keep the weight off during your visit is by power-walking between lunch and dinner.

For beef lovers this country is a blissful paradise – Buenos Aires is overflowing with *parrillas* (steakhouses) in every neighborhood, serving perfect slabs of meat for 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*. Pizza and pasta lovers are also well catered for, as Argentina was settled by large Italian immigrant populations that had a major influence on the country's culture. You won't have trouble finding these basic foods (steak, pizza and pasta, that is) anywhere in BA. In fact, sometimes that's *all* you'll find.

But those who enjoy more exotic tastes are in luck: Palermo Viejo (a sub-neighborhood of Palermo) has become Buenos Aires' food mecca in the past few years. Here you can find a range of Armenian, Brazilian, Mexican, French, Indian, Japanese, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern cuisines, and even fusions of several of these. Many are slick and contemporary and, frankly, passing novelties, but there are quite a few shining stars, obvious by their reservation lists and crowded dining rooms.

But it's not only straight-up restaurants that serve food. Most bars and cafés feature surprisingly large menus, and a few have exceptional food. These venues tend to stay open into the wee morning hours, making them great places for late-night snacks (as in 3am late). See the Drinking chapter (p144) for our bar and café listings.

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

## 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 cafés, which often stay open from morning to late at night without a break.

### How Much?

Despite the climbing inflation, Buenos Aires is still a very affordable place to eat out – at least for those earning hard currency. At nicer restaurants most dinner mains run from AR\$25 to AR\$40 – about a third of US or European prices. Lunches are often cheaper, and thus

a more affordable time to try the pricier restaurants (just make sure they're open then). If you have a large appetite, take advantage of *tenedor libre* (all-you-can-eat) restaurants.

Something to be aware of is that not all places take credit cards – always ask first if you want to use one. Also, many fancy restaurants add a per-person *cubierto* (cover charge), usually ranging from AR\$3 to AR\$5, which covers the use of utensils and bread – it does *not* cover the tip.

### Booking Tables

Reservations are usually unnecessary unless the restaurant is very popular, or it's the weekend. It doesn't hurt to reserve a table ahead of time to be sure. Porteños are notoriously late diners, and most eat no earlier than 9pm

### PRICE GUIDE

\$\$\$	mains over AR\$33
\$\$	mains AR\$16–32
\$	mains under AR\$15