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Eating ■

Eating

If you've come to Toronto expecting a morass of tepid hotdogs and sickly hamburgers, think again pal. Nowhere is the city's multiculturalism more obvious, potent and thrilling than on the plates of its restaurants. Eating here is an absolute delight – ponder your profoundest cravings, identify your neighborhood of choice, then dive right in. You'll find everything here from Korean walnut cakes to sweat-inducing Thai curries, New York steaks and good ol' Canuck pancakes with peameal bacon and maple syrup. Stick with the classics, or immerse yourself in fusion food – Toronto's chefs have mastered the art of taking traditional recipes from the West, throwing in handfuls of zingy Eastern ingredients and cooking the whole lot with lashings of pan-Asian flare. Lingering British influences are hard to shake, but who wants to? Fizzy lunchtime pints and formal afternoon high teas remain much-loved traditions. Meanwhile, out on the streets, locals linger in the last rays of summer, dining out on rooftops, in shady backyards and on effervescent sidewalk patios. In winter, they beat a retreat to crackling fireside dinners and hearty pub meals.

Executive diners file into classy restaurants in the Financial District and Old York, while eclectic, affordable eateries fill Baldwin Village, Kensington Market, Queen West and the Yonge Street Strip. More ethnically consistent are Little Italy, Greektown (The Danforth), Little India and Chinatown.

Opening Hours

Restaurants are usually open for lunch on weekdays from 11:30am until 2:30pm and serve dinner daily from 5pm until 9:30pm, usually later on weekends. Many also serve weekend brunch, usually from 11am to 2:30pm. Breakfast time in restaurants is usually around 7:30am until 10am. If restaurants take a day off, it's Monday. Some restaurants may close early or on additional days in winter, then stay open later during summer.

How Much?

For American and European visitors, eating in Toronto will be an entirely affordable experience. Stretch your budget even further by eating well at lunch, when many restaurants charge about two-thirds as much for meals as they do at night – often from exactly the same menu. Otherwise at dinner, expect to pay \$15 to \$20 (before taxes and tip) for main courses at midrange eateries, with main-course prices sometimes nudging over \$40 at top-end restaurants. Many coffeehouses (p123) and pubs (p118) also serve great food. See the Price Guide boxed text (opposite) for further fiscal guidance.

Booking Tables

As a general rule, the higher the menu prices, the more strongly reservations are advised. Without a reservation, the best approach is to show up for an early or late seating, say, before 6pm or after 9pm. Free tables are generally at their most scarce in the Financial District, Old York, the Theatre Block and the Entertainment District, as well as trendy neighborhoods like Little Italy and The Beaches.

Taxes & Tipping

Toronto's feast of tables and cuisines is only soured by taxes. A hamburger and beer priced at \$9.95 on the menu will actually cost you \$13, including taxes and a tip of 15% (equal to the total amount of tax on your bill, or calculate 20% for excellent service). Either discreetly leave the tip behind on the table or hand it directly to your server. A few restaurants may include a service charge for large parties; you don't need to tip in these situations.