

Tip Sheet for Hungry Guys on the Road

1. Eat locally. Never ask anyone if there's an excellent restaurant in town. You'll get sent to a tourist trap or the most expensive place around. Ask the locals where they like to eat on their own time and money.
2. Eat seasonally. Consider where you are and what's in season. If it's summer and you are in the Pacific Northwest, look for fresh berries; in winter, fresh Dungeness crab. Early summer in Tucson is green corn tamale time. Cajun crawfish are biggest and sweetest in the spring. And what's nicer than autumn apple pie?
3. If you want a real feel of where you are, look for lunch in a restaurant with a counter that encourages community cross-talk or a big round table where folks have an ad hoc coffee klatch.
4. Don't eat in a restaurant. If it's just you or you and a close acquaintance, stop in a small market or gourmet grocery and get things to eat al fresco. Most places have ready-made meals, sandwiches and salads, but if not, what's wrong with a hunk of good cheese, a loaf of fresh bread and locally brewed soda or beer?
5. Dine at the bar. Even if you're not a big drinker, some bars (but not all!) can be great places to eat if you are alone and want to socialize.
6. Do your research. If you are an out-of-towner entertaining a local client, make it your business to find an especially interesting eatery. If you know their taste, choose one that they'll especially like. Or give them a short list of local places you would like to try and solicit their opinion about which they prefer. In other words, don't totally rely on others to choose the place. Bring something to the table.
7. Street food. Some cities have an extraordinary bounty of sandwiches, tacos and other street-cart meals that can be delicious. San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York come to mind. If you're on your own or even if you are meeting someone that you know has a fondness for ultra-informal eating, consider a sleeves-up meal at a single-digit price.
8. The sushi option. If you're dining alone and don't want to sit at the bar or to bring along a magazine or book to read, go to a sushi restaurant and have a seat where you can enjoy the show of expert sushi chefs at work.
9. Even if you are not a wine expert and can't really tell the difference between a cab or merlot, ask to taste a wine in which you're interested. Most good restaurants allow a bit of sampling before you commit.
10. Get a haircut. There is no better place to find good dining tips than in a barber shop, where locals tell it like it is and are always ready to share what they know.