



# Where to

**50 WAYS TO FILL  
UP FOR \$10 OR LESS**







BY REBECCA FLEMING

# Eat Cheap



It's been almost seven years—and one global pandemic—since our last feature on Toronto's best, most affordable bites. A lot of things have changed in the interim, chief among them how hard it has become to find a meal (or anything, really) for \$10—but it's not impossible. We scoured the city's new takeout spots and discovered 20 delicious ways to fill up for less. We also rounded up our all-time favourite budget-friendly bites and asked Toronto's top chefs where they eat well on the cheap.



\$10

**SATAY BEEF AND SCRAMBLED  
EGG IN A PINEAPPLE BUN**

**GOOD LUCK HONG KONG CAFE** | 5533 Yonge St. | [goodluckcafe.ca](http://goodluckcafe.ca)

THIS NORTH YORK *chaa chan teng* (“tea restaurant” in Cantonese) specializes in belly-filling comfort food, including bowls brimming with noodle soup, baked rice dishes and thick wedges of brick toast (think a half-loaf of bread, hollowed out and filled with things like cheese and alfredo sauce). For something just as satisfying that doesn’t induce a food coma, we recommend the Hong Kong-style satay beef and fluffy scrambled eggs on a pineapple bun—which, for those who don’t already know, neither tastes like nor is made with any of the actual fruit.







## **CLASSIC CEVAPCICI SANDWICH**

**\$10**

### **SOMUN SUPERSTAR**

998 Kingston Rd.  
somunsuperstar.com

This popular Upper Beaches bakery and restaurant has been churning out cevapcici since 2019, but their value-driven sandwich-only menu is a new addition. For just a tenner, they'll fork over one of their pillowy house-baked somun (think pita that's a bit extra) stuffed with their signature springy pork sausages. Some raw white onion and tangy kajmak cut through the richness of the meat.



"I could eat Free Times Cafe's latkes with sour cream and applesauce all day long—they're some of the best in

the city." \$8.50 for three.

—Anthony Rose, co-owner, **Fat Pasha**, **Fet Zun**, **Schmaltz Appetizing**

## **FRIDAY BURGER**

### **FRIDAY BURGER CO.**

162 Danforth Ave., 416-425-9881,  
and 81 Bay St., 4th floor  
fridayburgercompany.com

It's no surprise that a North Carolina-born chef who has a fine-dining background and—get this—spent three years tasting more than 250 hamburgers all over North America has managed to produce a perfect patty. For his eponymous Friday Burger, chef Joe Friday tops a smash burger with American cheese, lettuce, tomato and—the stars of this single-patty show—house-made pickles, crispy onions and signature sauce.

**\$10**





## CONCH FRITTERS

### OLD NASSAU AUTHENTIC BAHAMIAN CUISINE

2047 Weston Rd. | @oldnassau.food

This Bahamian fast-casual kitchen in Weston Village offers a protein that's unique in these parts. Andros-born chef-owner Kaylandra Edgcombe cooks up all things conch, including the classic conch salad and—our favourite—conch fritters, in which the mollusk is diced, battered and deep-fried, then meant to be dunked piping hot in the creamy house sauce, a spicy mayo amped up with a bit of scotch bonnet.

\$8



"Whenever I'm at Gerard Square, I always grab a few barbecue pork buns from Kin-Kin Bakery. They make for a quick and delicious snack." \$3 each.

—Nuih Regular, chef and co-owner, Pai, Kiin, Chaiyo, Sukhothai

## DAVE'S SALAD FRIES

### SUNNYSIDE PROVISIONS

287 Roncesvalles Ave.  
sunnysideprovisions.ca

\$6

Like a blessing in disguise, this Roncesvalles grocery store with a takeaway counter hides a pile of guilty pleasure fries under a colourful riot of mixed greens, diced tomatoes, pickled banana peppers and onions two ways (pickled, crispy) in a delightful vinaigrette. Mix it all together for variety in every bite, or finish the salad first before enjoying your french fry reward. (At its core, it's a vegan dish—but for a few extra bucks, meat-eaters can ask to tack on some turkey confit, pulled pork or sloppy joe.)



## TACOS

Our all-time favourites

### 1. Itacate's Volcan

There's an excess of great options here, but the Volcan—with its boldly seasoned strips of steak, sweet caramelized onions and stretchy layer of mozzarella—sits at the top of the menu for good reason. \$8. [@itacate\\_to](#)



### 2. Tacos 101's al pastor

After his original downtown location was kicked out by a condo in 2018, chef Julio Campos took his trompo to Kensington Market. He swaddles his al pastor pork shavings in a double layer of corn tortillas along with a dollop of avocado sauce, onion, cilantro and a fat spear of fresh pineapple. \$6.25. [tacos101.ca](#)

### 3. Puerto Bravo's pulpo al carbón

This taqueria in Little India—whose owners hail from the Mexican port city of Tampico—stuffs its tortillas not with carnitas or al pastor but with seafood, like smoky and tender grilled octopus laced with a vibrant house salsa macha. \$8.50. [puerto bravo.ca](#)

### 4. Seven Lives' Gobernador

This long-standing Kensington Market taqueria doesn't call itself "Home of the Gobernador" for nothing. The fan favourite is crafted like so: two corn tortillas are blanketed with melted queso, crammed with smoked blue marlin and chubby shrimp, then topped off with pickled onions and a lashing of crema. It may seem like an unholy marriage to some, but we give it our full blessing. \$8. [sevenlives.to.ca](#)

### 5. Gus Tacos' carnitas

Gus does almost everything in house, including its tortillas and colourful salsas and hot sauces. It's hard to go wrong with the classic carnitas, shreds of meltingly tender braised pork topped with diced white onion and cilantro. \$5. [tacosgus.ca](#)



## VEGAN SHAWARMA WRAP

EAT NABATI | 160 Baldwin St. | [@eatnabati](#)

Most of the pitas on the menu at Kensington Market's vegan Egyptian kitchen cost less than \$10, but the Mama Shawarma pita—stuffed with strips of soy-based "chicken," organic tomatoes, lettuce, pickled turnips, cabbage, onion, hummus and a deluge of lemon tahini—is the thing to get. It's satisfyingly filling for a plant-based sandwich.

\$9



## SAUSAGE, EGG AND CHEESE

**EMMER**

61 Harbord St.  
emmertoronto.ca

At Emmer, Philip Haddad's three-years-in-the-making Harbord Village bakery, all the usual sweet and savoury suspects are present: flaky croissants (the twice-baked pistachio is next level), boules of tangy sourdough, fruit-filled danishes and freshly made pies. Go before 11:30 a.m. and you can also get a pretty amazing breakfast sandwich. A house-made (of course) English muffin comes stacked with a thick sausage patty and a fried egg, all blanketed with melted cheddar and dripping in house hot sauce.

**\$10**



"The rice balls at Omu-subi Bar Suzume are the perfect lunch. They have multiple flavours in meat and veg." \$4 each.

—Kate Chomyshyn, co-owner and chef,  
Fonda Balam

## GOAT TACO

**VASAN'S TACOS**

7179 Brimley Rd., Scarborough,  
vasanstacos.com

Toronto's taco scene has many an al pastor and carne asada to offer, but in a city like this one, cultural cross-pollination is inevitable, and we're the lucky beneficiaries. Vasan's South Asian spins on taqueria fare are pretty special. The mutton taco is known as the GOAT for good reason. House-made naan is loaded with mutton curry, dressed with a refreshing cilantro-lime cream and finished with hickory sticks, so there's a little Canadian crunch to every bite.



**\$5.50**

## PIZZA

Our five favourite slices



### 1. Badiali's vodka pie

Almost three years after it opened, Badiali still attracts lineups for its NY-style pies. We totally get it. The vodka slice—dough fermented for two days, then topped with a kicky rosé sauce and creamy fior di latte—is worth the wait. \$5.25.  
pizzeriabadiali.com

### 2. Superpoint's pepperoni

Each floppy slice is super saucy and salty; each shiny curled-up cup of pepperoni cradles a smattering of parm, melting like teeny piles of cheesy snowflakes. \$7.  
@superpoint184

### 3. Revolver's 'nduja special

The pies at this Mimico pizzeria are of the thin, blistering wood-fired style. We're big fans of this umami bomb topped with fior di latte, punchy 'nduja, wild mushrooms and a liberal sprinkling of nutty sesame seeds. \$4.50.  
revolverpizzaco.com

### 4. Fresca's margherita with pesto

This College Street pizzeria dresses each and every slice simply and perfectly with vibrant tomato sauce, mozzarella, a few brushstrokes of pesto and fresh basil. For extra oomph, ask for a squiggle of their house garlic sauce. \$4.50.  
@frescapizzatoronto

### 5. Ciao Roma's potato and hot salami

Since 2011, this Woodbridge pizzeria has specialized in pizza al taglio, slabs cut to order and sold by weight. We're partial to this white pie covered with comforting mashed potatoes and hunks of spicy Genoa salami. Prices vary. [crpizza.ca](http://crpizza.ca)



**\$9.75**

**SMOKED BRISKET OXTAIL GRAVY PATTIES**

**JUNEPLUM BY PATOIS** | 796 Dundas St. W. | [juneplumtoronto.com](http://juneplumtoronto.com)

OKAY, \$9.75 MAY NOT SOUND CHEAP for a Jamaican patty, but hear us out. It takes the team at Patois three days to make what could be Toronto's most indulgent artisanal Jamaican patties, which chef and owner Craig Wong sells at JunePlum, his restaurant's sister retail shop next door. For the filling, Wong crams each pyramid-shaped pastry pocket (so you get four crunchy corners) with smoked brisket that's been braised for hours in a rich oxtail gravy. You'll never look at a Gateway-procured patty the same.





**\$9.50**

## **CHICKEN SHAWARMA**

**SUMAQ IRAQI CHARCOAL GRILL**  
1961 Lawrence Ave. E., Scarborough, and  
3920 Eglinton Ave. W., #25, Mississauga  
@sumaqbbq

From both the original Golden Mile location and their new Mississauga spot, the Al-Ameri family serves up tastes of their homeland in the form of tender chicken shawarma (or veal shawarma or herbaceous falafel), swaddled in pita (or, for an extra buck, pleasantly chewy house-made tanoor bread) and spread with tahini, garlic sauce and quite possibly the city's best hummus.



**\$7**

## **JIAN BING**

### **CORNER CREPE**

267 College St., #5, 416-506-0316

From their teeny-tiny takeout window at College and Spadina, Corner Crepe Co. doles out jian bing, a popular Chinese breakfast made of thin crêpes layered with eggs and other add-ins, like crunchy deep-fried wonton crackers, green onions, cilantro, lettuce and house sauce. We suggest mixing in some sausage or potato, which—in a surprise twist—is a sort-of-spicy, sort-of-sour shredded tater salad that adds just the right amount of tang.



"Fiesta Farms bundles the ends of different cheeses and meats for around \$5. Tack on one of the Blackbird

baguettes, and that's a decent, affordable snack board." \$10 or less.

—Ann Kim, co-owner, Donna's



**\$8**

## **CHILI DOG**

**NASIR**  
3665 Lawrence Ave. E.  
nasirshotdog.com

There's no shortage of hot dog carts in the city, but this Scarborough vendor stands out for his top-notch street meat and sublime toppings. Nasir Alhuttam has run his halal stand from the parking lot of a mosque on Lawrence East for more than 15 years. Our favourite is his chili-topped sausage, for which he doubles down on the cow, with an all-beef wiener cradled by a soft toasted bun and slathered in beef chili that his wife, Muna, makes daily.



## NOODLES

The best of the bowls



### 1. Manpuku's curry udon

This Japanese hole-in-the-wall is arguably one of the best vendors in what is already one of the downtown core's best food courts. Manpuku's chewy udon noodles in a smoked bonito broth come topped with a mildly spicy Japanese curry and thinly shaved strips of beef. \$8.30. [manpuku.ca](http://manpuku.ca)

### 2. Coffee In's pancit molo

Pho and ramen may get all the noodle-soup love, but Filipino pancit deserves a shout-out. This one brings a bowl of intensely savoury broth loaded with plump wontons and shredded chicken. \$6 small, \$9 large. *No website.*

### 3. Taste of Qin Yun's traditional liangpi

Experience noodle nirvana with a bowl of these slippery, chewy hand-pulled noodles sided with seitan, bean sprouts and shredded cukes. Regulars know to mix it all together with the two condiments (spicy house-made chili oil and a black vinegar liangpi sauce) and slurp away. \$9.40. [tasteofqinyun.com](http://tasteofqinyun.com)

### 4. Miss Fu In Chengdu's dandan noodles

It's getting harder and harder to find dandan noodles for under \$10, but this Sichuan spot with North York and downtown locations delivers a big bowl of the saucy, porky, peanutty noods to suit our budget. \$9. [missfuinchengdu.ca](http://missfuinchengdu.ca)

### 5. Wuhan Noodles 1950's Wuhan dry noodles

A mountain of hot dry noodles, a specialty of China's Wuhan province, comes topped with a thick sesame paste and dotted with bits of green onion, cilantro and green beans. Sometimes simple is best. \$9. [wuhannoodle1950.com](http://wuhannoodle1950.com)

## TIBETAN MOMOS

\$9

LOGA'S CORNER | 1407 Queen St. W. | @logascornerto

PARKDALE'S PRE-EMINENT momo parlour has been serving its famous-for-a-reason dumplings at its teeny Close Avenue location since 2014, but it was joined last year by a larger sister restaurant on Queen West. Amazingly, an order of 10 steamed momos—pockets of dough filled with lamb, beef, chicken, pork, potato or veggies and perfectly pinched—still rings in under \$10. They're delicious on their own but even better topped with the kitchen's secret weapon: an electric-orange hot sauce made in house by Loga and his wife, Dolma.





## TAKOYAKI

### TAKOYAKI6IX

160 Baldwin St., #5  
@takoyaki6ix

\$8



When Kaori Hisada moved here from Hokkaido, she was unimpressed with the takoyaki. In Japan, there are food stalls dedicated to the art of the wee cephalopod pancakes. In Toronto, they're often deep-fried from frozen and served at sushi or ramen joints. Hisada's—made with sous-vide Moroccan octopus and cooked on an imported Japanese griddle—are perfect: not too runny, not too hard and packed with umami thanks to the dashi that's mixed into the wheat-based batter.



\$7

## DETROIT- STYLE PIZZA

### RENAISSANCE PIZZA

809 Dundas St. W.  
renaissancepizza.ca

This new Detroit-style pizzeria in the city's west end churns out bubbling, golden-brown, thick-crust pan pies and—the reason we're here—individual square slabs that are decidedly more satisfying than floppy traditional slices. The pepperoni comes sauced with a simple but bright blend of Californian crushed tomatoes, garlic and—after it comes out of the oven, to prevent the crust from getting soggy—olive oil. It's loaded with high-fat mozzarella, topped with crispy cups of pepperoni and finished with fresh basil and grated parmesan.

## BANH MI

Our top five stacks



### 1. Banh Mi Huy-Ky's lemongrass-garlic pork

A butter-brushed baguette with a thin, flaky crust and a smooshy interior hugs lemongrass-and-garlic-laced pork, crunchily pickled carrot and white radish, and bright cucumber and cilantro. \$5, cash or e-transfer only. *No website.*

### 2. Baguette and Co.'s French Dip

This is what happens when a banh mi and a beef dip make sweet sandwich love: a crusty French bun loaded with slow-roasted sirloin, provolone, sautéed mushrooms and onions, dressed with a lemon-pepper aioli and served with jus for dunking. \$8.85. *baguetteco.ca*

### 3. Banh Mi Nguyen Huong's garlic-honey sausage

The Chinatown storefront that gave birth (both literally and figuratively) to Toronto's Banh Mi Boys (the boys' parents opened it in the '80s) still makes a mean sandwich. Our favourite dresses grilled honey-garlic pork sausage with all the necessary pickled fixings. \$4. *No website.*

### 4. Saigon Lotus's lemongrass tofu-seitan banh mi

For a solid meat-free banh mi, this Kensington Market vegan Vietnamese spot stuffs a crusty baguette with a one-two hit of plant-based protein (tofu, seitan) along with lettuce, pickled veggies, fresh cilantro and a squirt of hoisin. \$8. *saigonlotustoronto.ca*

### 5. Banh Mi Trung Son's Vietnamese deluxe assorted

Located in a little trailer on Jane Street just north of the 401, this stall sells delicious banh mi through a takeout window. Even with the addition of extra meat and shredded dry pork, the deluxe assorted is still well under budget. \$4 (plus \$2 for extras), cash only. *banhmison.ca*





**\$9**

### **TIBETAN BREAKFAST COMBO**

**GARLEEK KITCHEN** | 1500 Queen St. W. | [garleekkitchen.com](http://garleekkitchen.com)

TSERING PHUNTSOK'S MENU includes hits from Nepal, Sri Lanka, India and Vietnam, but our pick is the Tibetan breakfast combo, which comes with a choice of egg (fried or scrambled), carb (the ginormous puffy puri is the way to go), aloo dum (a potato-based curry), chana, chutney and a tiny ramekin of salad.





**\$7**

## **STUFFED CORN DOGS**

Korean corn dogs are all the rage. And at this North York hot-dog outpost, the trendy snacks on sticks are filled with a choice of pork or—get this—Wagyu beef sausage, plus mozzarella or marble cheese. But what's on the outside counts just as much: Arirang's dogs come coated in a crispy-chewy batter adorned with things like chicken nugget chunks, churros, Flamin' Hot Cheetos or crunchy nacho cheese Doritos. Somehow it all manages to stay on the stick.

### **ARIRANG HOTDOG**

5 Byng Ave.  
ariranghotdog.ca

**\$9.75**

## **A POUND OF WINGS**

**BUTCHER'S BBQ** | 33 Gunns Rd. | [butchersbbq.ca](http://butchersbbq.ca)

NOTHING ON THE FIXED menu at this Stockyards food truck costs more than \$10, but it's hard to find a better wing deal at any of the city's bars. The crispy smoked wings, seasoned with a house spice blend (salt, pepper, paprika, garlic), are exceedingly fresh: the trailer is parked right outside St. Helen's Meat, where the chicken is sourced, which means these drums and flats were basically clucking mere hours before hitting the deep fryer.



"Gaucho Pie Co.'s crispy empanadas are perfectly crafted. Each one has a unique crimping pattern, offering

delightful variation." \$3.75 each.  
—Michael Lam, chef and co-owner,  
Good Behaviour

## **CUBANO SANDWICH**

### **CUBANO KINGS**

141 Spadina Ave.  
[cubanokings.com](http://cubanokings.com)

Felix King's 18-square-foot storefront is a sunny little slice of Miami right on Spadina. His classic Cubano layers cooked ham, Swiss cheese and dill pickle slices, all slathered with yellow mustard on buttered soft bread and then pressed on the grill until it's melty on the inside, golden and crisp on the outside.

**\$10**





## BURGERS

Five primo patties



### 1. Extra Burger's single cheeseburger

If the burgers here are extra, it's all in the details: three-ounces of perfectly seasoned beef, paper-thin shreds of crunchy iceberg lettuce, a slice of tomato, tangy secret sauce and thick-cut kosher dill pickles. \$9. [extraburger.ca](http://extraburger.ca)

### 2. Gold Standard's Telway Burger

Grilled in mustard and onions, topped with pickles and American cheese, wedged into a potato roll, and haphazardly wrapped in shiny gold foil, this burger isn't going to win any beauty contests—but it's what's inside that counts. \$8.50. [goldstandardsandwich.square.site](http://goldstandardsandwich.square.site)

### 3. JABS's single cheeseburger

Though the acronym stands for Just Another Burger Spot, Janrikk Millan's patties are anything but ordinary, and it's his signature condiments—like a divine onion jam—that make them stand out. \$9. [burgerjabs.com](http://burgerjabs.com)

### 4. The Real McCoy's Home Burger

While George Mihail's bestselling Mojo Burger is \$2 above our \$10 threshold, his basic-is-best Home Burger—a juicy chargrilled patty with a choice of 10 toppings—falls just under and is a solid second choice. \$9.75. [therealmccoyburgers.com](http://therealmccoyburgers.com)

### 5. Pepper's Food and Drink's Yummy Burger

Beneath the glowing menu at this store-slash-lunch-counter, Julian Ochangco cooks up these appropriately named patties that are more like slabs of juicy meatloaf, topped with American cheese and Filipino-style tartar sauce on a potato roll. \$8.50. [@peppers.189](https://www.instagram.com/peppers.189)



**\$9.25**

## CHICKEN POT PIE

**PHAMILYEATS** | 858 Eglinton Ave. E. | [phamilyeats.ca](http://phamilyeats.ca)

THE BAD NEWS: at \$11, the personal beef pho short rib pot pie from Peter Pham's stall inside East York Eats, a compact food hall on Eglinton, falls just above our budget. The good news: the equally delicious and dairy-free chicken version—a flaky pastry shell filled with tender chicken and veggies—makes the cut.