



Many domestic U.S. airlines no longer serve free meals for economy class travelers. If you want a halfway decent meal, you must pay \$10 or more for it. Instead, and if the airline is feeling generous, you may get a free soda and a teeny foil package of peanuts or pretzels.

A simple way to eat well when flying economy class is to pack your own. You can purchase a sandwich and/or salad in an airport store before boarding. Or better yet, pack a sensible and nutritious meal at home.

However, like all airline inconveniences, even that simple act comes with a security problem. Be sure any sauces, dressings and liquids are properly packaged, or your homemade free lunch could be confiscated by a hungry airport security agent.

If you're flying peasant class on some airlines, be prepared to pay for water, soft drinks, tea and coffee. And those teeny free pillows and blankets could also cost you a couple of bucks each. What's next? When you use the aircraft john, will there soon be a coin-operated door and per-sheet charge for toilet paper and paper towels?

Food purchased in-flight, such as sandwiches with chips, now go for \$10 or more, while little packs of crackers, nuts and cookies could cost up to \$5. Booze, beer and wine prices continue to inch up, from \$5 just a few years ago, now for \$10 and up. Some still give out free water, but others peddle fancy-schmantzy mineral, vitamin and flavored water for \$5 and up.

Some inter-continental flights by both domestic and foreign airlines still give old-fashioned free meals and booze to expensive-seated flyers. They consist of fancy plates, cloth napkins and silverware, featuring such exotic selections as steaks, poultry and fish, as well as full ham and eggs breakfasts.

Of course, while sitting in one of those choice, roomy seats dining like royalty, you may be paying \$2,500 and up per flight. Meanwhile, just a couple of crowded economy seats behind you, other passengers, who must exist on free or \$10 sandwiches and snack food, are paying just \$500 to fly with you. Gotcha!