



*Guest Correspondent Mila P., West Chester PA:* The traditional way is to ask where the local families go when they eat out. Hotel employees, store clerks, local cops and taxi drivers always have suggestions.

That usually works, although a recent incident proved it could be a humorous error. When I was recently in Florence, Italy, I trailed a group of Italian students into a restaurant near the Arno River. Expecting the best in local dishes, I soon discovered the fare was Chinese. I had a very enjoyable dinner, but had to renew my search for authentic Italian fare the next day. Of course, today it's easy to research for good food. I surf the internet to find ads for local restaurants, read reviews and look for possible discount coupons. One economical way to get good local food at bargain prices is to get together as a group. After deciding among several restaurants, have each person look over the menus and write down their choices.

On your own and several hours before you expect to dine, ask your hostel or hotel clerk to call ahead with your order and get price quotes. Make choices of best restaurants at the most favorable prices.

When entering to dine for the first time, make a quick check on the state of cleanliness. If you see dirty dishes, unclean floors, bugs or dingy windows, go elsewhere. Additionally, if a bad smell hits your nostrils when you first enter, turn around and make a quick exit.

When wandering in a city and hungry, it may be safe to buy from clean street vendors. However, don't eat anything raw right off the cart. Wash everything thoroughly. Another health hint concerns drinking water. Whether in a hostel, hotel or restaurant in some foreign countries, drink water from commercially-sealed bottles.

Finding good restaurants while traveling can be a fun experience, as long as you're aware of all favorable and unfavorable possibilities.