

Where to Eat: Regional Food & Eating Out Solo



What to order in each host city, how the buffet-by-weight system works, how to eat well alone, and how to keep your stomach and your drink safe.

Brazilian food is regional, not national

The dish you eat in Salvador has almost nothing in common with the dish you eat in Porto Alegre. Treating "Brazilian food" as one cuisine is like treating "European food" as one cuisine. Eating your way across the eight host cities is one of the real pleasures of this trip.

Formats you need to understand

FORMAT	HOW IT WORKS
Por quilo (by the kilo)	A buffet where you serve yourself and pay by weight. Ubiquitous at lunch. Brilliant for solo travellers, vegetarians and anyone with dietary restrictions - you see everything before you take it, and nobody expects conversation.
Prato feito / PF	The set plate of the day: rice, beans, a protein, salad, farofa. Cheap, fast, filling. Ask "qual e o prato feito hoje?"
Padaria (bakery)	Far more than a bakery - breakfast, coffee, sandwiches, juice, sometimes a full lunch counter. Open early, always busy, and a completely comfortable place to sit alone.
Boteco / bar	Casual neighbourhood bar serving beer and petiscos (snacks to share). The social heart of Brazilian evenings.
Churrascaria rodizio	All-you-can-eat grilled meat brought to your table. Flip your card to green for more, red to pause. There is always a full salad and hot buffet too - good for non-meat-eaters in a group.
Lanchonete	Snack counter. Pastel, coxinha, juice, quick and cheap.

What to order, city by city

Salvador & the Northeast (Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza)

- **Moqueca** - fish or prawn stew with coconut milk, dende palm oil, peppers and coriander, served bubbling in a clay pot. The Bahian version is the richest. Order for two, share.
- **Acaraje** - black-eyed pea fritter fried in dende, split and filled with vatapa, caruru, prawns and pepper sauce. Sold by *baianas* in white lace at street stalls. Ask for "sem pimenta" if you do not want it hot. Buy from a busy stall with steady turnover.
- **Bobo de camarao** - prawns in a creamy cassava and coconut sauce.

- **Tapioca** - a crepe made from cassava starch, filled sweet or savoury. Naturally gluten-free and everywhere in the Northeast.
- **Agua de coco** - chilled coconut water straight from the coconut on any beach.

Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte)

- **Pao de queijo** - warm cheese bread rolls. Gluten-free. Best in the country here.
- **Feijao tropeiro** - beans with cassava flour, bacon, egg and collard greens.
- **Frango com quiabo** - chicken with okra, the region's signature.
- **Queijo Minas** - the artisanal cheeses are genuinely world-class.

Rio de Janeiro & Sao Paulo

- **Feijoada** - the black bean and pork stew, traditionally eaten at Saturday lunch. Order it at midday, plan nothing afterwards.
- **Sao Paulo is the food capital** - the best Japanese food outside Japan (Liberdade district), extraordinary Italian (Mooca, Bixiga), and Brazil's most ambitious fine dining. The Mercado Municipal's mortadella sandwich and pastel de bacalhau are worth the queue.
- **Rio beach food** - globo biscuits, mate tea, grilled cheese on a stick, acai.
- **Botequim culture** - order a chopp (draught beer) and petiscos and stay for hours.

Porto Alegre & the South

- **Churrasco** - this is the home of Brazilian barbecue. Picanha is the cut to ask for.
- **Chimarrao** - shared yerba mate from a gourd. Being offered it is a gesture of welcome; it is normal to share the same straw.

Brasilia

- A city built by migrants from everywhere, so it has the widest regional spread - you can eat Northeastern one night and Minas cooking the next. The *quadras comerciais* in Asa Sul and Asa Norte are where the restaurants cluster.

Vegetarian, vegan and allergies

Easier than Brazil's reputation suggests, if you know the moves:

- **Por quilo buffets are your best friend** - rice, beans, salads, vegetables, all visible.
- **Key phrases:** "Sou vegetariana" (I am vegetarian, female) / "Sou vegana" / "Sem carne, por favor" (no meat, please) / "Tem gluten?" (does it have gluten?) / "Sou alergica a..." (I am allergic to...).
- **Watch for hidden meat:** beans are often cooked with pork, and farofa frequently contains bacon. Ask "o feijao tem carne?"

- **Naturally gluten-free wins:** tapioca crepes, pao de queijo, acai bowls, grilled meat and fish, rice and beans.
- **Dende (palm oil)** is heavy and unfamiliar to many stomachs. Delicious, but do not make it your first meal after a long flight.

Eating alone, comfortably

Brazil is a sociable eating culture, but eating alone is unremarkable - especially at lunch.

- **Lunch is the easy meal.** Por quilo, PF, padaria counters - all designed for solo diners in a hurry.
- **Sit where you can see the room** and keep your bag on your lap or strapped to the chair, never hanging on the back or on the floor.
- **Dinner works best on a busy street.** Pick a restaurant with pavement tables on a lit road rather than a quiet romantic spot down a side street.
- **Hostel kitchens and communal dinners** are the fastest route to a group to eat with.
- **A polite, firm "nao, obrigada"** ends most unwanted approaches. You do not owe anyone a conversation, and being direct is not considered rude.
- **Match days:** fan zones and pre-match bars near stadiums are full of other visiting women. It is the easiest social entry point of the whole trip.

DRINK SAFETY - READ THIS TWICE

- Watch your drink being poured or opened. Do not accept a drink from a stranger that you did not see made.
- Never leave a glass unattended - take it with you or leave it.
- Caipirinhas are much stronger than they taste. Cachaca is 38-48% and the lime and sugar hide it completely. Pace yourself, and alternate with water.
- If you suddenly feel far drunker than your intake explains, tell staff or a woman nearby immediately and get help. Do not walk out alone to "get some air".
- Agree a check-in time with a friend before a night out, and share your live location.

Stomach and water

- **Tap water:** treated in major cities but not what locals drink. Stick to bottled or filtered. Filtered water dispensers are standard in hotels and hostels - refill a bottle.
- **Ice** in restaurants and bars in host cities is made from filtered water and is generally fine.
- **Street food:** the rule is turnover. A busy stall with a queue is safer than a quiet one with food sitting out. Hot, freshly fried, handed straight to you is the safest category.

- **Fruit:** peel it yourself where you can. Brazilian fruit is spectacular - try cupuacu, graviola, caju, jabuticaba and pitanga.
- **Pack rehydration salts and an anti-diarrhoeal** from home. Pharmacies (farmacias) are excellent and everywhere, but you want this in your bag at 2am, not on your shopping list.

Money at the table

- **A 10% service charge** is usually added to the bill. It is customary to pay it and no further tip is expected.
- **"A conta, por favor"** - the bill, please. It will not arrive until you ask.
- **Cards are accepted almost everywhere**, including many street stalls. Contactless is standard.
- **Pix** is Brazil's instant bank transfer system and is dominant, but generally needs a Brazilian bank account. Do not count on it; carry a card and some cash.
- **Keep small notes** for beach vendors and small stalls. Do not flash a full wallet - keep the day's cash separate from your reserve.

Please double-check before you fly. This guide was written in August 2026 for the FIFA Women's World Cup Brazil 2027 (24 June - 25 July 2027). Visa rules, prices, and safety conditions change. Always confirm with your own government's travel advisory, the Brazilian consulate for your country, and the official FIFA tournament site before booking or travelling. Safe Passage Brasil 2027 is an independent travel resource and is not affiliated with FIFA, CBF, or any government body.