



Permission to Chow

Healthy Buffets

What could be better than paying \$10 for access to miles and miles of food? "Buffets can create meals with the greatest variety," says Lacie Peterson, a registered dietician with the Utah Diabetes and Endocrinology Center at the University of Utah. Buffets are ideal if you love trying all of a restaurant's specialties rather than committing to a single dish (and discovering your friends chose better).

By Chelsea Bush

Photos by Kevin Kiernan



Star of India

Sweet Tomatoes, Utah

The Sweet Tomatoes chain makes a host of fresh, low-fat salads daily. Choose from oriental ginger slaw, carrot raisin salad, tomato cucumber marinade and chicken penne pasta with citrus vinaigrette, or toss together your own with miles of fresh veggies. Both locations are open Monday to Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. 10060 S. State St., Sandy, Utah, 801-352-9001; 7455 S. Union Park Ave., Midvale, Utah, 801-352-9980, www.sweettomatoes.com.

Cedars of Lebanon, Utah

Cedars of Lebanon offers unlimited Lebanese and Moroccan cuisine at its lunch buffet, which features curries, shish kebabs, soups and a selection of vegetarian dishes made with fresh ingredients. Food is prepared with olive and sesame seed oils, and nothing is deep fried. The buffet is served Monday to Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. 152 E. 200 South, Salt Lake City, Utah, 801-364-4096, www.cedarsoflebanonrestaurant.com.

Café Shambala, Utah

This local favorite hosts a flavorful lunch buffet with a dozen Tibetan items that vary daily. Eat as much as you like of the nutritiously prepared beef or vegetarian entrées, seasoned mixed vegetables, lentil or vegetable soup, and salad. Vegans and vegetarians have plenty to choose from. Dig into the buffet Monday to Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. 382 E. Fourth Ave., Salt Lake City, Utah, 801-364-8558.

Star of India, Utah

An indulgence of Tandoori-style Indian cooking awaits those who stop by Star of India's lunch buffet. Among its 20-plus choices are meats roasted in the Tandoori clay oven and seasoned with ginger, garlic and cayenne pepper. Load up the rest of your plate with vegetable samosa, vegetable coconut curry, lentil beans, pumpkin, spinach, eggplant or salad. Catch the lunch buffet Monday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. 55 E. 400 South, Salt Lake City, Utah, 801-363-7555, www.starofindiaonline.com.

Thankfully, not every all-you-can-eat buffet is a diet disaster. Slip aside, fried chicken and gravy-soaked mashed potatoes — a number of restaurants in Utah and Idaho serve healthy buffet-style fare, especially if you're looking for a lavish lunch.

Here, you'll find banquets of homemade dishes: Meals that are grilled or baked instead of battered or deep-fried, broth-based soups full of vegetables, steamed rice, and produce so fresh you wouldn't dream of dipping it in butter, oil or cream.

A balanced healthy meal should contain a rainbow of colors, Peterson says, and these are six buffets where you'll find exactly that. Go ahead, eat your money's worth.



Star of India

Souper Salad, Utah and Idaho

This healthy buffet chain’s 40-foot salad bar hosts more than lettuce and high-calorie toppings: You’ll find fresh-cut beets, bell peppers, spinach, zucchini, tomatoes and carrots, as well as made-from-scratch minestrone and vegetable beef soups, baked potatoes and a taco bar. The Riverdale location is open Monday to Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. 4071 Riverdale Road, Ogden, Utah, 801-621-8895. The Taylorsville location is open Monday to Sunday from 10:45 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. 5486 S. 1900 West, Ste. 8, Taylorsville, Utah, 801-964-6452. The Boise location is open Monday to Sunday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. 3327 N. Eagle Road, Ste. 170, Meridian, Idaho, 208-884-4490, www.souper salad.com.

Chuck-a-Rama, Utah and Idaho

Bet you didn’t think you’d see this classic “chow hall” here, did you? But for the nutrition conscious diner, believe it or not, there are plenty of healthy choices. Let your friends dive into the enchiladas, fried scones and brownies; you’ll be sampling the simpler meat dishes and heaping fresh fruits and a crisp green salad onto your plate. The Boise and Idaho Falls locations serve a buffet lunch Monday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and dinner Monday to Saturday from 4 to 9 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. 7901 Overland Road, Boise, Idaho, 208-327-4800, 999 S. 25th East, 208-524-5511, Idaho Falls, Idaho. There are also eight locations in Utah. www.chuck-a-rama.com.

Madhuban Indian Cuisine, Idaho

Enjoy traditional Indian favorites at Madhuban’s bustling all-you-can-eat lunch buffet, such as lamb and chicken curries, chicken tikka masala, vegetables, several vegetarian dishes and steamed rice. Waiters are happy to point you toward the most healthily prepared items in the buffet. Dish up to your heart’s content Monday to Sunday from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 6930 W. State St. Boise, Idaho, 208-853-8215, www.madhubanindiancuisine.com.

Be sure to contact restaurants for current hours and prices. ☺



Café Shambala



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