

# Hotels providing alternative to airport-airline food

By Nancy Trejos, USA Today

Hotels are taking your takeout orders.

A number of hotels across the country are offering gourmet meals for guests to take with them on their airplane rides home. They are packaged to fit in a carry-on and abide by the Transportation Security Administration's 3.4-ounce maximum for liquids.

Hotels says the meals are popular with guests who don't want to rely on airport concessions that often serve fatty fare or airlines that serve hardly anything at all unless passengers pay.



Hotel restaurants offer guests an alternative to airport food. Photo/Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles

Some examples:

- At the Hotel Bel-Air, in Los Angeles, Wolfgang Puck and his team have designed a "Meals on the Move" menu that can be made-to-order right before guests take off for Los Angeles International Airport. Items include Thai Style Chicken Salad,

Lobster Cobb Salad, and Santa Monica Farmers Market Fruit Bowl. The menu is posted in all rooms on iPads; costs range from \$14 to \$34.

- The Four Seasons Boston has a “For Your Trip Home” menu located on the reverse side of the pre-order breakfast menu that guests hang on their doors before bed. Offerings vary from “The Classic” featuring fresh mozzarella with basil and tomatoes, a Cobb salad and a slice of apple pie to the “Sky High” with American Spoonbill caviar with toast points and accompaniments. Prices range from \$25 for the Breakfast On the Go to \$120 for the “Sky High.”
- The Four Seasons Seattle has a “Want It To Go, Let Us Know” menu with a la carte items such as cheese with crackers, charcuterie with olive rosemary bread, a hard-boiled egg and nut butter and jelly sandwiches. The items are boxed, wrapped and bagged. Prices range from \$2 to \$8.
- Kimpton’s Hotel Monaco in Denver has a “Breakfast with Wings” menu with such options as fresh fruit, Greek yogurt and a granola parfait and steel cut oats, ranging in price from \$7 to \$10.

“We really just wanted to offer something more convenient, affordable, healthy and better quality than what they can get at the airport,” says Josh Mayo, general manager of Panzano, the restaurant at the Hotel Monaco in Denver. “We have many guests leaving the hotel early to catch a flight and they don’t have time to stop for the most important meal of the day, so we thought we could help them out with that.”

The hotels package the items so they can get through security. For instance, the liquid offerings at the Four Seasons Seattle are each 3 ounces. The Hotel Bel-Air makes sure liquids are extremely small and that salad dressing is in a sealed container on the side.

“We make sure that we package all items properly so that we

protect the integrity of each dish, but also ensure that our guests will be able to take these boxes on the plane," says Stephane Lacroix, director of Food and Beverage at the Hotel Bel-Air.

Hotels say the meals are increasing in popularity as airlines cut back on free pretzels and charge passengers for boxes of cheese and crackers.

The Hotel Monaco gets about three requests for meals-to-go each day. The Hotel Bel-Air has sold about five to 10 meals each week since starting the service about a month ago. "We expect the demand to increase during the busy summer season," Lacroix says.

Maryam Wehe, senior vice president at Applied Predictive Technologies, which does hotel consulting, says the takeout meals can be a way to make a hotel stay more memorable.

"Offering meals-to-go can provide hotels with several opportunities, such as differentiating their brand from other hotel brands," she says. "Furthermore, providing branded meals extends a positive guest hotel experience beyond checkout as long as guest expectations are managed carefully for meals to go versus in-hotel dining."

Pamela Sievers, a home furnishings sales representative in Thousand Oaks, Calif., says she'd be willing to pay for a hotel takeout meal rather than rely on airport food.

"If one encounters delays and food concessions begin to close or run out of food, one can really be stuck," she says.