

**Home Time**  
**Jacksonville, FL**  
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## **Dining on a discount**

In addition to enjoying delicious food and a good time, seniors often are eligible to take advantage of special discounts when dining out.

Nevertheless, don't be surprised if you have to ask for the discount. Many restaurants don't advertise their senior discounts, and only a few advertise early bird specials, which were designed with seniors in mind.

Part of the reason is that a rapidly expanding population of older Americans is prompting restaurants to reconsider the extent and kinds of special offers they give people during their golden years.

"There's been concern that senior discounts are disappearing," said David Smidt, president of [www.seniordiscounts.com](http://www.seniordiscounts.com), a Web site that tracks discount programs nationwide.

Smidt says senior citizens are a powerful group of consumers and present a great opportunity to businesses. Many seniors have the income to spend, and they love a good bargain.

In the past, Smidt says it's been the national franchise chain restaurants that typically have offered discounts geared to seniors more than local establishments.

"We think these discounts attract the senior market," he said. "We're seeing a lot more local restaurants offering senior discounts."

Discounts vary from restaurant to restaurant, but on the average offer 10 percent to 20 percent off an entrée. Locally, all area Village Inn restaurants promote a 10 percent discount to seniors on their menu. Bono's at Beach and San Pablo gives seniors a 10 percent discount, if you ask for it.

Other restaurants, such as Gene's Seafood in Jacksonville Beach, don't offer a senior discount but allow patrons to order from the young diner's menu, which provides smaller portions as well as a lower price compared to the regular menu. Chili's Grill & Bar on Marsh Landing Parkway doesn't offer a senior discount, but promotes an early bird menu between 2:30-5:30 p.m., which features many of the restaurant's favorite items at a lower price.

There may be some restrictions with the discounts. Some restaurants honor discounts only on certain days or between specific hours, typically at times when the restaurant's traffic may be at its slowest. Other restaurants offer discounts only to patrons who dine in the restaurant and not on carryout orders.

The definition of senior age for discount eligibility can vary from restaurant to restaurant. The senior discount still starts around age 60 or 65, but some restaurants are lowering the standard to woo the baby boomer generation.

The American Association of Retired Persons considers anyone age 50 and up a member. In fact, the AARP's famous letter inviting membership into the organization is one of the signs of coming of age for seniorhood.

However, Smidt says most people entering the 50-plus community don't like the term, "senior," even though they enjoy the discount.

“What we have found is that they appreciate the discount,” he said. “By receiving the discount they feel they’re being rewarded. Businesses find that discounts can be a good way to increase their business and that seniors can be a good demographic for them.”

If you’re interested in whether or not your favorite restaurant offers a discount, the best advice is to call ahead and ask before you go. If they do offer a discount, be sure to ask if there are any restrictions.

Smidt says his organization, which is based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is learning about more new discounts every day. They rely on seniors to submit information on discounts for their Web site.

“With their help, we can save them some money,” Smidt said.

In addition to restaurants, the Web site lists discounts for a variety of products and services. For more information, visit the Web site at [www.seniordiscounts.com](http://www.seniordiscounts.com).