

Fall/Spring 2012-2013 Meal Plan: 23 Most Frequently Asked Questions About the Meal Plan

DINING DOLLARS AND MEAL SWIPES

1. Where can I use my meal plan card?

Dining Locations: Burger King, Orange Grove Bistro, Panda Express, Sierra Marketplace, Arbor Court, El Pollo Loco, The Pub Sports Grill, Juice it Up, Geronimo's**

Convenience Stores: West Side Store, The Edge, La Tienda, Arbor Grill, Mercantile Exchange.

All 5 of the Freudian Sip Coffee shops on campus.

**Geronimo's is the campus residential dining hall. Students on the Meal Plan use their 5, 7, 10, 12 or 14 meal swipes here and are given a discounted price per meal on their Dining Dollars after their meal swipes have been used up for the week which runs from Sunday morning until Saturday evening.

2. What are Dining Dollars?

To supplement your dining hall meal swipes, we have added Dining Dollars to each meal plan. Dining Dollars are a cash value (meaning dollar for dollar) added to your meal plan card that can be used at any food service location. You can use Dining Dollars for on campus meals, snacks and drinks or to purchase additional dining hall meals whenever your meal swipes are used up for the week. If you use up all of your meal swipes for the week, you may continue to dine at Geronimo's using your Dining Dollars at the reduced rate of \$8.00 per meal.

3. How do I know how many meal swipes and Dining Dollars I have left?

Meal Swipes: The register receipt does not keep track of meals per week therefore you should keep all your Geronimo's receipts for the week as a way of keeping track of your meal swipes per week as we do not as yet have a way to have all your meals for the week calculate on the register receipt. Once you start on this routine to keep track of what meals you have eaten at Geronimo's, you should be able to keep track.

Dining Dollars: The remaining balance of dining dollars does appear on your receipt as the total you have left for the semester. Keep in mind that whatever plan you purchase, we will give you half of your Dining Dollars each semester to help you pace yourself over the course of both semesters. If you are on the plan that gives you 300 Dining Dollars per year, this means we have only put 150 on your card for the fall and will put the other 150 on for the spring. This ensures that you begin the spring semester with Dining Dollars. Whenever you spend Dining Dollars, look at your receipt. At the bottom, next to your name, there will be a number in brackets, this number is your remaining balance. If you run out of Dining Dollars, you can purchase more in The Meal Plan Office.

4. Do Dining Dollars roll over?

Unused Dining Dollars from the Fall 2012 semester will roll over and be added to the Spring 2013 semester allotment. All must be spent by the end of the Spring 2013 semester, which is May 24, 2013, or they will be forfeited. All meal plan cards will be shut off at the end of the day on May 28, 2013.

5. Can meal swipes at Geronimo's be converted to Dining Dollars?

No they cannot.

6. Can I use my meal swipes to feed guests?

No you cannot. The 5, 7, 10, 12 and 14 meals are designated exclusively for the student who has purchased the meal plan. However, if the student has enough dining dollars, those can be used to pay for guest meals at the retail price.

7. I have used up all of my Dining Dollars. Am I out for the semester?

You can purchase more Dining Dollars at any time during the semester by contacting The Meal Plan Office. There is a form to fill out in which you provide the additional amount you wish to purchase and credit card information. Your parent or other designated person can contact us by phone to buy more with a Visa/MasterCard. Financial aid cannot be used nor can you charge the extra Dining Dollars to your portal account.

8. Will I get a refund of my unused Dining Dollars?

No you will not. Unused Dining Dollars will be forfeited after May 24, 2013. They will not be refunded and you cannot convert them to a gift card.

9. Do my dining hall meal swipes roll over every week?

No they do not. The meal plan week begins on Sunday morning and ends on Saturday night. Any meals missed during that time are lost.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

10. Why are the 10, 12 and 14 plans priced the same but the number of meals is different?

Meal plan cost is based on statistical fact that not every participant will eat every meal per number of swipes in his or her plan, which helps keep the cost affordable. Students may become frustrated by the perception that they are not receiving the full value of their meal plan because missed meals are lost. It is important to note that when meal plans are priced, we price the cost of the meal plan based on national averages for missed meals. So even though it seems that you are getting less value because of missed meals, the cost of the meal plan would be much higher if missed meals were not taken into consideration.

11. I have already submitted my meal plan application and the meal plan charges are now posted to my portal account. How do I make these payments?

The remaining payments after your meal plan has been all set up get paid to CSUN and you have a few choices on how the payment can be made. These choices can all be found on the Cash Services website at <http://www-admn.csun.edu/ucs/>. Click on the *Fall 2012* link and then find the section entitled "How to Pay Your Fees." This section will show you acceptable forms of payment, how to pay online, how to pay by mail and how to pay in person. Just remember that you cannot pay Cash Services for your meal plan until the Meal Plan Office has processed your application and posted meal plan charges to your portal account. The initial payment of \$110.00 should have been processed within the housing portal with your housing license agreement and this payment will appear on your student portal.

12. What if I have financial aid?

Although you may have financial aid to pay for your meal plan, The Meal Plan Office requires a minimum of the first payment of the installment plan to be submitted with your meal plan application to reserve a meal plan for you. Financial aid cannot be used for the first payment. The University applies your aid first to tuition fees, second to housing fees and third to meal plan. If your financial aid is not posted by the payment due date, you will be responsible for paying the payments as they come due every month. If your financial aid does not cover all of the meal plan costs, you will be held responsible for paying the monthly payments as they come due. Failure to do so will result in your meal plan privileges being suspended, late fees and a financial hold being placed on your account so you cannot register for classes, get transcripts, or receive diploma. Applications that are received without a payment will be returned to the applicant unprocessed. Please be sure you have enough financial aid and other resources to cover tuition, housing, meal plan, books and miscellaneous living expenses.

13. Am I paying for meals during Spring and Winter Breaks even though I am not on campus?

No. Due to limited hours of operation during Spring and Winter breaks and because of the decreased student population, the meal swipe option is not available during these times. However, your Dining Dollars are active during these periods and you can eat at any of the campus eateries that are open during these breaks. The cost of your meal plan does not include meal swipes during Spring and Winter breaks. You can still dine at the Dining Hall if they are open during these breaks using your available Dining Dollars. You will be charged a reduced price of \$8.00 per meal which will still be all you care to eat at one sitting.

14. Can I purchase a meal plan for just the Fall 2012 semester?

No, we do not sell semester meal plans but there are exceptions. When you sign up for a meal plan in the fall, it is with the understanding that you are purchasing a meal plan for the whole academic year which is fall and spring and you are financially responsible for the whole year. The exceptions are if you are a National Exchange Student who is only here for the Fall 2012 semester, or you are planning to graduate Fall 2012 or you decide to leave CSUN and not return for Spring 2013. In these cases, you will be responsible for letting us know that before the Fall 2012 semester comes to an end. Before you leave campus, you need to submit a meal plan cancellation form and your meal plan card to The Meal Plan Office. If you do not cancel your meal plan before you leave, you will incur charges so it is best if you let us know as soon as possible. It is advisable to come to The Meal Plan Office to cancel your meal plan immediately after you have been to the Housing Office to cancel your housing.

15. I am on the installment plan. How do I know when payments are due and how much they are?

Meal plan payments are due on the first of the month. Charges are posted to your portal account so you can check there for the amount and due date. If payment is not received by the 10th of each month, a \$15.00 late fee will be added to the amount due and suspension of your meal plan privileges. Please check the [payment schedule](#) for dates and amounts due.

16. I am on the installment plan. Does this mean that every time I make a payment, money gets added to my meal plan card?

No, making any of the monthly payments does not add money to your Dining Dollars. This is an installment plan, not adding money to your card. The number of Dining Dollars is set at the beginning of the contract term and is included in the total of your payments. For example, if you make a payment of \$400.00 to your portal account, your Dining Dollars do not increase by \$400.00. All the meals and half of the Dining Dollars you purchase for the year are already on the meal plan card when we give it to you. This number does not change unless you run out of Dining Dollars and need to add more. In this case you would contact the Meal Plan Office to buy more Dining Dollars.

LOST CARD/CHANGES TO MEAL PLAN/CANCELLATION FEE

17. What should I do if I lose my meal plan card?

You should immediately report your missing card to The Meal Plan Office located on the third floor of the Sierra Center, above the Marketplace. It is important that you call (818-677-2655) or come to The Meal Plan Office as soon as you notice your card missing so we can deactivate it to prevent unauthorized use. Be sure to protect your meal card balance by reporting your old card lost and getting a new one. A replacement card costs \$5.00. We can deduct this amount from your Dining Dollars if you have enough available.

18. Can meal plans be changed?

Yes, changes can be made within the first two weeks of the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semester only. The change will take effect the following week. You can also move from a lower meal plan to a higher one once each semester. Students who live in no-kitchen units are not eligible to change to the 5 or 7 meal plan unless they move to a kitchen unit. They can keep the plan they currently have or change to any of the others when they move but they cannot cancel.

19. I live off campus and don't feel that I would fully utilize a meal plan. Are there any alternative options for me?

You can either purchase the 5 meal 300 plan or the 7 meal 600 plan which gives you fewer meal swipes and more Dining Dollars to spend on-campus or send us an email with the following information and we will send you information on a non-meal plan option. Along with your request, you must include your name, your CSUN ID number and where you will be living during the Fall 2012 semester (IE: off-campus, on-campus with a kitchen or on-campus without a kitchen). Our email address is mealplan@csun.edu. This request can only be done via email. Please do not call The Meal Plan Office with this particular request.

20. I will be living on-campus in a kitchen unit. I plan to cook some of the time and purchase some meals on campus. Are there any alternative options for me other than a meal plan?

You can either purchase the 5 meal 300 plan or the 7 meal 600 plan which gives you fewer meal swipes and more Dining Dollars to spend on-campus or send us an email with the following information and we will send you information on a non-meal plan option. Along with your request, you must include your name, your CSUN ID number and where you will be living during the Fall 2012 semester (IE: off-campus, on-campus with a kitchen or on-campus without a kitchen). Our email address is mealplan@csun.edu. This request can only be done via email. Please do not call The Meal Plan Office with this particular request.

21. I will be living on-campus in a no-kitchen unit. I really don't want and can't afford a meal plan so are there any alternatives for me?

Living in one of the on-campus no kitchen units requires you to purchase either the 10, 12 or 14 Meal Flex Plans. There are no exceptions to this requirement, therefore, you should not request or accept assignment to a housing unit without kitchen facilities. You should contact the Housing Office to see about changing your building assignment before the semester begins. Housing will not allow you to choose your room, pick up your room key or move in to one of these building types without a meal plan.

22. Can I cancel my meal plan at any time?

The meal plan contract can be cancelled with exceptions. Acceptable cancellation reasons are not attending CSUN, withdrawal from CSUN for medical or personal reasons, or moving out of on-campus housing. The meal plan is a contract just like housing and we do have a strict cancellation policy. If you are not required to have a meal plan because you live in a kitchen unit, we advise you to consider the following before purchasing a meal plan:

- Meet your room-mates and find out what they like to do for meals.
- Decide whether you have the time and transportation to go to the store every week and cook your meals. There is always the possibility that your room-mates will eat the food you buy at the store for yourself and not replenish it or reimburse you.
- Check out all of the dining locations on campus and see if they offer the foods you like to eat. Some students are selective eaters or small meal eaters or only like to eat specific foods and a meal plan may simply be too much food.
- Feel free to contact us and we can further advise you once we assess your situation.

Cancellation Policy

Acceptable reasons for cancelling your meal plan are:

- Deciding not to attend CSUN after all
- Official withdrawal from CSUN during the semester for medical or personal reasons
- Moving out of on-campus housing to an off-campus location

If one of these scenarios applies to you, you can submit a meal plan cancellation form and your meal plan card to The Meal Plan Office. Cancellations are not automatic and we do verify that you have withdrawn or moved which means the process can take 4 - 6 weeks to complete. The date of your meal plan cancellation will be the

date your meal plan card was last used and AFTER you have completed your official withdrawal from campus and cancelled your housing. There are no retroactive cancellations so don't procrastinate.

There are also unacceptable reasons to request cancellation that we do not accept. They include:

- Undocumented financial hardship
- Not using the meal plan
- Having a kitchen and changing your mind about cooking
- Moving from a no kitchen unit to a kitchen unit. In this case, you can change to the 5 or 7 Meal Kitchen Plan

Before you purchase a meal plan or accept assignment to a room without a kitchen, you must really know whether you can afford it with all of the other expenses you are going to have. If a meal plan is not mandatory for your housing situation, there is no deadline for you to purchase one. You can purchase one anytime during the fall or spring semesters and the price will be pro-rated. It is better to take the time to see if it is going to fit in with your school, work and activity schedule first. If you are a first-time freshman in a kitchen unit, meet your room-mates first and see what they like to do for meals. If you aren't sure, please call The Meal Plan Office and we will be happy to advise you.

23. Why does the meal plan application ask for my email address and cell phone number?

Email is the primary way that we will communicate with you so please give us the address you check the most. Giving an incorrect address may cause you to miss out on important information. Make sure you always keep your contact information, including email address, current on your portal account.

The reason we need your cell phone number is because we have had students lose their meal plan card or wallet in one of our dining locations. Our employees are trained to call The Meal Plan Office to report found items and if we have your cell phone number, we can call you and let you know.

I hope this answers most of your questions. Please feel free to contact me if further assistance is needed...will more than happy to assist.

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Here is what some past meal plan students have said:

"The meal plan is simply convenience that tastes great!"

"I love my meal plan, it didn't starve!"

"I like the pizza and the peach iced tea."

"Wednesday Specials!"

"The special event parties each semester. The luau was fun, can you guys do that again?"