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# Pay-what-you-like restaurants

### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Some restaurants are letting patrons decide how much their meal is worth
- One Salt Lake City eatery has a customer-operated credit card machine
- Lentil as Anything is a pay-as-you-like chain in Melbourne, Australia

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By Anna Mantzaris

## BudgetTravel

(Budget Travel) – Radiohead made news when it allowed its fans to pay whatever they thought was reasonable to download the band's latest album. Now, innovative restaurants around the world are doing the same thing – letting their patrons decide how much their meal is worth.



At Der Wiener Deewan in Vienna, Austria, cash donations are accepted at the take-out counter.

At Terra Bite Lounge (219 Kirkland Ave.) in the Seattle suburb of Kirkland, most diners slip cash into a donation slot by the barista, while others just walk away without bothering to pay.

"If I forget to bring enough money, I can just give more next time," says real-estate consultant Tina Cooper, who stops at Terra Bite most mornings for what she claims is the best soy latte in the neighborhood.

"When we first opened, some people felt uncomfortable and didn't come back," says Terra Bite's founder, Ervin Peretz. "But we now have regulars who put \$20 into the slot every Friday for a week's worth of joe."

Discretion is certainly a theme of the pay-what-you-want trend. At Salt Lake City's *One World*

*Everybody Eats* (41 S. 300 East St.), you can deposit cash into a "treasure box" or use the customer-operated credit card machine. The 50-seat restaurant, decorated with Buddha statues, serves organic dishes from a combination self-serve and assisted buffet. There's also an edible herb and flower garden with outdoor seating.

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"All we ask is that you put a fair price on the food you eat, based on your income," says founder Denise Cerreta, who's mentoring other chefs to open sister restaurants in Durham, North Carolina, and Denver, Colorado.

A philosophy student opened *Der Wiener Deewan* in Vienna, Austria, where cash donations are accepted at the take-out counter. The all-you-can-eat buffet features Pakistani curries that change twice daily.

"I wasn't sure the concept would even work," says co-owner Natalie Deewan. "But after the first few weeks, our customers were so enthusiastic that they were paying more than their fair share." You can add to the funky decor by drawing on the Plexiglas walls with permanent markers.

At the *Lentil as Anything* chain in Melbourne, Australia, you drop money into a box by the kitchen. The first restaurant opened in 2000, and now owner Shanaka Fernando is working on his sixth location (when he's not running a refugee program). The cuisine is a mix of Sri Lankan and Tibetan, but eggs and veggie burgers are also on the menu.

"When it comes down to it, we just want to promote the very underutilized concept of trust," says Fernando. [E-mail to a friend](#)

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