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## **2013 Airport Food Review: Denver Tops List for First Time in Decade; Atlanta Remains Grounded for Third Year**

A Report by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine  
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The Physicians Committee’s 13th annual Airport Food Review finds 76 percent of restaurants at 18 of the busiest U.S. airports offer at least one healthful plant-based entrée. The results are consistent with the 2012 report, which finds 76 percent of airport eateries serve at least one high-fiber, cholesterol-free entrée as an option to more than 100 million U.S. travelers who fly during November and December each year. In 2001, the average score in the Airport Food Review was 57 percent. The good news is travelers won’t have to look far this year to find healthful options.

Dietitians with the Physicians Committee look for airport restaurants that offer an array of immunity-boosting vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes. Denver International Airport tops the report for the first time since 2003, with 85 percent of its airport eateries offering at least one healthful option, including Colorado Sunshine Wraps at Itza Wrap! Itza Bowl! and barley burgers at Boulder Beer Tap House. Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport makes the biggest gain this year, ascending from 11th to third place, offering healthful bites, including a wide variety of leafy green salads, at more than 80 percent of its restaurants.

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport—the world’s busiest airport—remains in last place for the third year in a row, with healthful entrées available at just 50 percent of its restaurants. Las Vegas McCarran International Airport plummets from second to 12th place, offering one heart-friendly option at just 68 percent of its restaurants.

### **Method**

From April to August 2013, Physicians Committee dietitians reviewed restaurant menus at 18 of the top 30 busiest U.S. airports, according to 2012 data from the Bureau of Transportation. Data collection methods for the Airport Food Review include confirming prepared or customizable menu items through in-person visits, phone calls to restaurant managers, and internet research. Each airport’s score is determined by dividing the number of restaurants offering at least one healthful plant-based entrée by the total number of restaurants in the airport. A restaurant ranks as healthful if it serves at least one high-fiber, cholesterol-free menu item, which includes a breakfast, lunch, or dinner

entrée. The healthful option must include at least two of the four food groups on the Physicians Committee's Power Plate: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, or legumes.

Examples of healthful meals that make the cut this year include veggie black bean burrito bowls from Sir Veza's Taco Garage at Phoenix Sky Harbor; a veggie roll, edamame, and seaweed salad combo from Wicker Park Sushi at Chicago O'Hare; and a kale salad with soba noodles and kimchi-marinated vegetables at Lemonade restaurant at Los Angeles International. Anchor Brewing Company at San Francisco International passes the dietitians' test with a healthy twist on the BLT: bean sprouts, lettuce, and tomato.

Snacks and facilities that do not serve entrées, such as snack food kiosks, newspaper stands, and small coffee shops are not included in the review. Larger coffee shops and bakeries, including Starbucks and Caribou Coffee, count as restaurants in the 2013 report. Healthful options at these chains typically include blueberry almond oatmeal or hearty vegetable and brown rice salad bowls.

## **Results**

PCRM's 2013 Airport Food Review finds consistent results from the 2012 report, which shows considerable improvements from 2001, when only 57 percent of restaurants offered at least one healthful option. While scores may fluctuate by a few points from year to year, the overall trend is to offer passengers a variety of nutritious options, available at more than 75 percent of fast casual restaurant chains and five-star restaurants.

Registered dietitian Susan Levin, M.S., R.D., C.S.S.D., advises travelers to trim excess calories and fat by asking chefs to steam vegetables; treat healthful fats, such as nuts, seeds, and avocados as light condiments; and skip high-cholesterol toppings, including meats, oils, cheese, mayonnaise, and sour cream.

As stress, flu season, and holiday travel often go hand in hand, an easy way to stay healthy is to load up on colorful immune-boosting foods. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says air travel may facilitate the transmission of influenza and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services advises people to get adequate sleep, exercise, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat healthful foods for flu prevention.

A study published earlier this year in the *British Journal of Health Psychology* finds loading up on fruits and vegetables does more than boost your immune system: It can improve your mood. The more fruits and vegetables the study participants ate, the calmer, happier, and more energetic they felt.

## **Detailed Review**

Following is a summary of what Physicians Committee nutrition experts found at each airport, ranked from best to worst:

**1. Denver International Airport (86 percent):** Denver soars from ninth to first place. It's the first time since 2003 that Denver tops the Airport Food Review. Whether travelers are looking for a quick bite or want to sit down for a leisurely layover, there are plenty of options. Grab a Colorado Sunshine Wrap at Itza Wrap! Itza Bowl!, chow down on a barley burger at Boulder Beer Tap House, or stop by City Wok for a hot vegetable entrée, including Schezeun Eggplant or Tofu-Edamame. Colorado Sports Bar offers salads and sweet potato fries, while Woody Creek Bakery Café serves hearty vegetable soups, fresh salads, and roma tomato paninis. Antioxidant-loaded meals at Wolfgang Puck include baby green, quinoa, and spinach salads with sides of broccolini and butternut squash soup.

**2. (tie) Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (85 percent):** Terminals are teeming with heart-healthy options, which helps Detroit climb from third to second place this year. Fuel up with garden burger at Online Café Bar & Grill a veggie wrap at Slapshotz, or stop by Detroit 500 for a fresh salad and fruit bowl. Hockeytown Café offers a variety of green entrees, including a Michigan salad topped with Traverse City dried cherries.

**2. (tie) Chicago O'Hare International Airport (85 percent):** Chicago soars from fifth to second place this year, tying for the second healthiest and busiest airport in the nation. If you don't have time to stop by for a fresh salad at Zoot Café, Fresh Attractions, or Farmers Market, you can throw Cibo Express' red pepper power wrap into your carry-on. Before you check in, you'll also want to check out the chili at Goose Island Beer Company; lentil and chickpea salads at Argo Tea; or the veggie roll, edamame, and seaweed salad at Wicker Park Sushi.

**3. (tie) Los Angeles International Airport (83 percent):** LAX is up 7 percent from 2012 and now ranks as the third healthiest and busiest airport in the nation. This is a huge leap from LAX's 10th place ranking in 2012. Healthful options range from international to California cuisines: Try an Asian or kale salad, or opt for the soba noodles with kimchi-marinated vegetables at Lemonade restaurant. Encounter Restaurant offers a California market salad with sides of steamed bok choy, asparagus, and butternut squash puree. Malibu Al's serves fresh cucumber rolls, while Homeboy Café offers hibiscus flower tacos, stuffed with serrano peppers and cilantro, and dishes out guacamole with grilled pineapples instead of chips.

**3. (tie) Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (83 percent):** National Airport is the most improved this year—gaining 14 points and moving up from 11th place. Travelers on the run can grab an Asian peanut-tofu wrap from Euro Café, a cup of Moroccan lentil soup or Smart Fit salad from Cosi, or stop by National Airport Grill for a grilled vegetable entrée made with squash, zucchini, and baked eggplant. Washington travelers looking to sit down can check out Cibo Bistro & Wine Bar, which offers Italian specialties, including fusilli telefono with crispy eggplant and tomato sauce.

**4. (tie) Baltimore/Washington International Airport (80 percent):** BWI gains four percent this year and moves up from 10th place. Silver Diner offers portobello vegetarian

stir-fry, an all-season summer salad and a hearty autumn veggie chili with kidney beans, mushrooms, carrots, and squash. Maryland travelers can stop by Chesapeake Café or Rams Head Tavern for a variety of fresh cut greens, including ample servings of seaweed salad.

**4. (tie) Washington Dulles International Airport (80 percent):** Dulles drops two points this year but rises from sixth to fourth place. Early risers can stop by Capitol Ground Coffee for a quick breakfast or light lunch, which might include a Greek Islands Salad or the GWU Veggie Special, piled high with spinach, tomatoes, and roasted red peppers. There is no need to worry about mystery toppings at Green Leaf's, where you can pick and mix your own salad. Matsutake Sushi serves as a healthful lunch or dinner destination, offering avocado cucumber rolls, pickled radish and asparagus, and steamed veggies with rice.

**5. (tie) Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (79 percent):** Phoenix loses three points but rises one spot this year. Fliers won't go hungry when they load up with a Brussels sprouts or kale salad from Chelsea's Kitchen, chickpea lettuce wraps from La Grande Orange, or a healthy burrito bowl from Sir Veza's Taco Garage, which omits use of trans fats. Nocawich Express offers an eclectic mix of healthy entrées, including a Gandhi grain bowl, funghi pizza, and Alice Waters salad—a mix of greens, shaved beets, apple slices, strawberries, and pecans topped with an apple cider vinaigrette.

**5. Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (79 percent):** The fourth busiest airport is on the rise this year. Dallas loses two points but rises two spots, from seventh to fifth place. Urban Taco and Cantina Laredo offer a variety of veggie-packed tacos, tostada salads, and burritos while UFood Grill offers a unique Tofusion bowl. Looking for a veggie plate? Stop by Cousin's Bar-B-Q for Southern classics, including baked beans, corn-on-the-cob, green beans, black-eyed peas, and okra. Ill Forks offers their own veggie plate, rich with asparagus and bourbon-infused mushrooms.

**6. San Francisco International Airport (76 percent):** San Francisco loses one point but rises three spots, from ninth to sixth place, retaining a spot in the top 10 healthiest airports. Passengers can pick up more than a dozen healthy options, including beet salad, tofu wraps, or udon noodles from Plant Café and Pinkberry. They'll find heartier options, including a portobello burger at Legends of San Francisco, a smoky split pea soup at San Francisco Soup Company, and veggie chow mein at Harbor Village Kitchen. Anchor Brewing Company offers a healthy twist on the BLT: bean sprouts, lettuce, and tomato.

**7. Newark Liberty International Airport (74 percent):** Newark loses 18 points and plummets from first to seventh place. Travelers should seek out Smashburger's Harvest Salad made of fresh greens, balsamic tomatoes, raisins, dried cranberries, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, and balsamic vinaigrette or stop by Garden State Diner for their signature veggie triple decker (hold the cheese). Villa Fresh Italian Kitchen offers spaghetti, steamed veggies, and fresh salads while Jersey Mike's offers veggie wraps to go.

**8. Houston George Bush Intercontinental Airport (73 percent):** Houston loses 14 points and falls four places this year. Lefty’s Lonestar Grill serves veggie burgers and salads while Mango Taco Truck offers squash tacos and fresh mango slices. Travelers with a sweet tooth can stop by Fruteria for a jicama salad, packed with cucumbers, cantaloupe, tomato, and avocado topped with lime vinaigrette. Zpizza offers an eclectic mix, including a Mediterranean plate and Yuppie Veggie Sandwich.

**9. Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (72 percent):** Minneapolis loses six points and dips from eighth to ninth place. Year after year, French Meadow Bakery and Café is this airport’s hub for creative, healthful menu items including black bean chili, roasted beet and pear salad, and grilled tempeh reubens. Taste of Shoyu offers healthful Japanese fare, including a wild mushroom soba bowl. Midwest travelers won’t go hungry at Taste of Mill City Tavern, where they can find fresh romaine salads, black bean burgers, and seasonal dishes, including pumpkin soup.

**10. (tie) Orlando International Airport (71 percent):** Orlando loses 11 points this year and moves from sixth to 10th place. Travelers looking for healthful fare can opt for cannellini bean bruschetta, spaghetti squash, arugula salads, and roasted veggie wraps with lemon hummus at McCoy’s Bar & Grill. Or head to Ruby Tuesday’s salad bar or Brioche Doree to build a meal-sized salad with your choice with veggies, grains, nuts, and beans. Cholesterol-free options at Nature’s Table Bistro include “no bull” burrito wraps (skip the cheese).

**10. (tie) Miami International Airport (71 percent):** Miami International Airport takes 10th place, after finishing fifth last year. Most travelers won’t notice the 13-point difference as Counter—new this year—has a bean-filled burger that goes on a bun or in a salad with more than 21 fresh vegetable toppings. Casa Bacardi offers coconut mango salads, mixed greens, and fresh fruit plates while Café Versailles serves an entrée of mixed greens topped with beans, rice, and sweet plantains.

**11. Charlotte Douglas International Airport (70 percent):** The eighth busiest U.S. airport loses eight points and falls three spots this year, continuing its three-year descent from seventh place in 2011. Passengers who want to travel light should choose the Dakota Pea Soup at Taste of Carolina Bar or stop at Stock Car Café for a Pitt Stop Veggie Burger. Genghis Grill offers Mongolian fare, including a Buddhist Bowl packed with steamed veggies, while First in Flight Bar dishes out veggie maki and cucumber rolls.

**12. Las Vegas McCarran International Airport (68 percent):** Las Vegas takes a nosedive, losing 23 points and dropping from second to 12th place. The good news? Pei Wei offers Hunan vegetable lettuce wraps while Sammy’s Beach Bar prepares a mixed greens beach salad topped with portobello mushrooms. Travelers on the go can pick up black bean or grilled veggie burritos from Baja Fresh, Don Alejandro’s Texan Grill, Jose Cuervo Tequileria, and Moe’s Southwest Grill.

**13. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (51 percent):** The world's busiest airport remains in last place for the third year. Just 53 of its 103 eateries offer travelers health-promoting options. Fresh Healthy Café may be travelers best bet with fresh kale wraps, dairy- and gluten-free salads, mega berry smoothies, and spiced apple oatmeal bowls. Atlanta travelers can sample cauliflower and parsnip soup, edamame, and garden mint sushi at One Flew South or stop by D8 Grill for a black bean burger. Checkpoint Grill offers fire-roasted tomato soup and a grilled Southern vegetable plate, overflowing with grilled asparagus, collard greens, and a side of sweet potato fries.

**Table 1: Airport Scores for 2013**

<b>Airport</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Healthful Restaurants/Total Restaurants</b>
1. Denver International Airport	<b>86%</b>	<b>55/64</b>
2. (tie) Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport	<b>85%</b>	<b>46/54</b>
2. (tie) Chicago O'Hare International Airport	<b>85%</b>	<b>78/92</b>
3. (tie) Los Angeles International Airport	<b>83%</b>	<b>49/59</b>
3. (tie) Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport	<b>83%</b>	<b>24/29</b>
4. (tie) Baltimore/Washington International Airport	<b>80%</b>	<b>33/41</b>
4. (tie) Washington Dulles International Airport	<b>80%</b>	<b>32/40</b>
5. (tie) Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport	<b>79%</b>	<b>46/58</b>
5. (tie) Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport	<b>79%</b>	<b>81/103</b>
6. San Francisco International Airport	<b>76%</b>	<b>52/68</b>
7. Newark Liberty International Airport	<b>74%</b>	<b>56/76</b>
8. Houston George Bush Intercontinental Airport	<b>73%</b>	<b>53/73</b>
9. Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport	<b>72%</b>	<b>48/67</b>
10. (tie) Orlando International Airport	<b>71%</b>	<b>30/42</b>
10. (tie) Miami International Airport	<b>71%</b>	<b>55/78</b>
11. Charlotte Douglas International Airport	<b>70%</b>	<b>31/44</b>
12. Las Vegas McCarran International Airport	<b>68%</b>	<b>40/59</b>
13. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport	<b>51%</b>	<b>53/103</b>

**Table 2: Comparisons from Previous Reviews**

<b>Airport</b>	<b>Score 2013</b>	<b>Score 2012</b>	<b>Score 2011</b>	<b>Score 2010</b>	<b>Score 2009</b>	<b>Score 2008</b>	<b>Score 2007</b>	<b>Score 2006</b>	<b>Score 2005</b>	<b>Score 2004</b>	<b>Score 2003</b>	<b>Score 2002</b>	<b>Score 2001</b>
1. Denver International Airport	86%	77%	82%	88%	80%	79%	84%	89%	78%	78%	83%	79%	61%
2. (tie) Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport	85%	90%	100%	96%	100%	95%	93%	96%	89%	83%	70%	N/A	33%
2. (tie) Chicago O'Hare International Airport	85%	84%	N/A	71%	68%	88%	93%	91%	92%	75%	71%	42%	64%
3. (tie) Los Angeles International Airport	83%	76%	76%	81%	80%	81%	89%	84%	69%	53%	47%	54%	60%
3. (tie) Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport	83%	69%	75%	67%	70%	60%	42%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4. (tie) Baltimore/Washington International Airport	80%	76%	76%	79%	71%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4. (tie) Washington Dulles International Airport	80%	82%	92%	89%	68%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5. (tie) Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport	79%	82%	81%	80%	87%	82%	82%	N/A	75%	44%	50%	48%	58%
5. (tie) Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport	79%	81%	83%	84%	77%	95%	94%	94%	81%	59%	43%	53%	50%



6. San Francisco International Airport	<b>76%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>96%</b>
7. Newark Liberty International Airport	<b>74%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
8. Houston George Bush Intercontinental Airport	<b>73%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>N/A</b>
9. Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport	<b>72%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>66%</b>
10. (tie) Orlando International Airport	<b>71%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
10. (tie) Miami International Airport	<b>71%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
11. Charlotte Douglas International Airport	<b>70%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
12. Las Vegas McCarran International Airport	<b>68%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>45%</b>
13. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport	<b>51%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>40%</b>