A $20 Brunch Dish Can Mean A $29.74 Budget Before An Optional Tip

Expanded Brunch Price Index separates verified menu facts from conditional cost estimates for 30 main-and-coffee orders in 10 cities.

October 25, 2026. A $20 plate of Bourbon Caramel Pancakes at Residents Cafe & Bar in Washington, DC becomes a $26 menu subtotal with its listed $6 drip coffee. Top Brunch Spots estimates $29.74 after the published 4% operational charge and 10% restaurant tax, assuming the charge uses the pre-tax food-and-coffee subtotal. The figure excludes optional tips and unconfirmed charges; it is not an observed customer bill.

The example leads an expansion of the Brunch Price Index that helps diners see what to include in an order budget. The research documents 30 named main-and-coffee combinations at 11 branches in 10 priority cities, with sources for menu prices, inclusions, refill terms, published charges and branch tax context.

The coffee changes the comparison

At Two Hands in Dallas and Nashville, the menus list $4 drip coffee and $1 refills. One coffee with two refills has a $6 menu subtotal before tax and charges. Buttermilk Kitchen in Atlanta lists $5 bottomless drip coffee. These are three branch examples from two operators; cup sizes are not standardized.

In Los Angeles, Lumière at Fairmont Century Plaza lists a $33 American Breakfast with eggs, bacon, potatoes, toast and a choice of drip coffee, tea or juice. Adding a separate coffee price would overstate that named order. Included coffee does not establish free refills.

The size of the table matters, too

Nashville menus show why group planners need the actual policy wording. Midtown Cafe says a 20% gratuity may be added at five or more unless otherwise requested. Two Hands lists an automatic 20% gratuity at six or more. In Chicago, Beatrix Fulton Market publishes a 3.5% surcharge that diners may ask to have removed.

The tool keeps those verified disclosures separate from calculations that require assumptions. It supports 27 conditional one-diner estimates without refills. The three Miami orders retain verified menu components, but combined estimates are withheld because eligibility for an additional restaurant levy is unresolved. Group totals are also withheld when charge bases or tax treatment are not established.

National context, local evidence

The original national menu panel contains 556 priced observations at 179 branches in 131 places across all 50 states and Washington, DC. Its food-only panel medians are $15 for pancakes across 68 branches, $19 for eggs Benedict across 68 branches and $28 for steak and eggs across 33 branches.

Breakfast-sandwich panel medians are $15 in each Census region, using seven Northeast branches, 11 Midwest branches, 15 South branches and 13 West branches. These figures describe selected menus with different servings. They do not establish typical regional spending. The new meal orders overlap the original panel and are not added to its observation count.

The expanded city examples cover Atlanta, New York City, Chicago, Houston, Washington, Dallas, Miami, Los Angeles, Charlotte and Nashville. Reporters can download national, regional and priority-city hooks with evidence labels, source links and limits, alongside the original 131-place reporting briefs.

Readers can select an order, change the party size and refill count, and compare retained or removed published removable charges. Shareable links preserve those selections. The media kit provides the source data and a line-by-line cost-model graphic.

Methods and limits

Top Brunch Spots checked the expanded official menus and government sources on October 25, 2026; original-panel checks span October 22-25. The publisher-selected research includes ten operator groups in the expansion because the two Two Hands branches share an operator. No receipts, operator-confirmed final bills or consumer survey responses are included. The snapshot does not measure inflation, a typical American brunch bill or city affordability rankings.

Brunch Price Index and meal model: https://topbrunchspots.com/research/brunch-price-index/#meal-costs

Media kit, sources and downloads: https://topbrunchspots.com/research/media-kit/

Media questions and corrections: info@topbrunchspots.com. Please identify the branch, named order, source date and relevant research version.

About Top Brunch Spots

Top Brunch Spots is a free brunch-discovery publication with city guides, restaurant information and source-linked research to help diners compare their options.