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## The best restaurant gift card to buy this season

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In last Sunday's "On Your Side" column, I mentioned a bunch of local independent and chain restaurants that offer a free bonus gift card when you purchase \$25 to \$100 in gift cards. I've copied the article below. I even have more in my column on Sunday, Dec. 6. But here are a few more that I couldn't fit in Sunday's column:

The best deal of the more than 20 offers I've written about is from Morrissey Hospitality Companies, which owns the Saint Paul Hotel, the St. Paul Grill, Pazzaluna in St. Paul, Restaurant Max in Hotel Minneapolis as well as the hotel, Tria in North Oaks, and Enjoy in Apple Valley. Here's the deal: Buy \$100 in gift cards from any of the seven businesses and get a \$20 gift card for Pazzaluna, Restaurant Max, Hotel Minneapolis, Tria and Enjoy for a total of \$100. The original gift card or cards are transferable, which means that if you give someone a card for Pazzaluna, he can use it at Enjoy too. The five bonus cards must be used by March 31, 2010 and are valid only at the specified location. There are no minimum purchase restrictions on the bonus cards, but there are two caveats: The bonus can only be applied to food, not drinks, and most of us aren't likely to use the \$20 bonus to the Hotel Minneapolis (applied toward a room). The gift card offer continues through Dec. 31.

Blue Plate restaurants ([www.blueplaterestaurantcompany.com](http://www.blueplaterestaurantcompany.com)) including 3 Squares in Maple Grove, Highland Grill in St. Paul, Edina Grill, Longfellow Grill in Minneapolis and Groveland Tap in St. Paul offer a \$25 gift card with a purchase of \$100 in gift cards or a 2010 Discount Book worth \$100, according to Blue Plate (filled with dollar off coupons for each month of the year).

Heidi's in Minneapolis ([www.heidismpls.com](http://www.heidismpls.com)), a fave of local restaurant critics, gives a \$20 bonus card with the purchase of \$100 in gift cards.

Here is the list of bonus cards from last Sunday:

- Applebee's  
(37 metro locations, [www.applebees.com](http://www.applebees.com)) Get \$10 bonus for each \$50 spent. The bonus offer is available in restaurants only, not online.
- Parasole restaurants  
(10 metro locations, [www.parasole.com](http://www.parasole.com)) Get a \$25 gift card for every \$100 spent on cards at Burger Jones, Il Gatto (the Figlio replacement), Manny's, Chino Latino, Muffuletta, Pittsburgh Blue, the Good Earth and Salut. Orders can also be placed online plus \$3 shipping.
- Kincaid's

(St. Paul and Bloomington, [www.kincaids.com](http://www.kincaids.com)) Get a \$10 bonus for each \$50 spent.

Free shipping for online orders.

- McCormick and Schmick's

(Edina, Minneapolis, [www.mccormickandschmick.com](http://www.mccormickandschmick.com), 1-877-622-6780) Get \$10 bonus for \$50 purchase or \$25 for a \$100 purchase. Online and phone orders include \$3 shipping.

- Palomino

(Mpls., [www.palomino.com](http://www.palomino.com)) Get a \$10 bonus card for each \$50 spent in gift cards. Free shipping for online orders.

- Spill the Wine

(Mpls., [www.spillthewinerestaurant.com](http://www.spillthewinerestaurant.com)) Spend \$100 in gift cards and get a \$25 bonus card.

- Ruth's Chris

(Mpls., [www.ruthschris.com](http://www.ruthschris.com)) Get 10 percent gift card credit after \$250 spent.

#### Restaurant.com

Another way to save is to sign up to receive e-mails from Restaurant.com. The e-mails provide a discount code to get additional savings. Last week the code was THANKS. With the code, \$25 certificates were \$3 at restaurants such as Lone Spur in Minnetonka, Woolley's Steakhouse and Chevys Fresh Mex in Bloomington, Park Tavern in St. Louis Park, Pannekoeken in Maplewood, Lindsey's in Arden Hills, M & S Grill in Minneapolis and Frankie's Chicago Style in New Hope.

Because the site is nationwide, it will also work for friends or family in other cities. Check the restrictions before purchase. Some restaurants might not allow the card to be used on Saturdays or for lunch. Most require a minimum purchase. For example, to use a \$25 certificate, the bill might need to be \$35 in food (alcohol is subtracted). The certificates must be printed from your computer — no card is sent.

#### TCOriginals.com

The best deal for smaller, independent restaurants is the quarterly sale at TCOriginals.com. Last year the site had a sale in December, but the next sale isn't until Jan. 12 at 10 a.m. Be ready to purchase online at 10 a.m. sharp. Each of the 20 restaurants offers about 10 \$50 certificates for \$35 and 10 \$25 certificates for \$17.50, including Dancing Ganesha and Murray's in Minneapolis, Laredo's and McCoy's in St. Louis Park and Luci Ancora in St. Paul.