

## HAWAII LAYOVER MEAL SUGGESTIONS

*Are you a flight attendant who wishes to prepare and carry your own food for layovers, but not sure how to get started and efficiently do so? Look no further! Donita Watson has graciously detailed her personal methods of carrying food for layovers. Donita is the "guru" of finding ways to pack food for four day trips while only spending money for van tips. Any questions or comments can be sent to her via Outlook. Thank you, Donita!!!*

Here are Donita's tips and suggestions:

Ziplock bag or vacuum seal nearly everything. It's not very eco-friendly, *but packing your own food IS* budget-friendly and good for your checking account!

In my large suitcase, I pack a hot plate in a bag (Hot Logic Mini from Amazon.com). A rectangular Tupperware type dish fits inside the bag and I keep a pouch of soup or Madras lentils and tuna fish inside the dish. These are great for when I plan wrong or just need an extra meal.



In the baking aisle of the grocery store, disposable mini-loaf pans are found. These are fantastic for lasagna or stuffed shells, shepherd's pie, enchiladas, etc. I make a large batch and freeze them with foil covering. Then, of course, vacuum seal to keep them from getting messy as they thaw. Out of the plastic, put them straight into our ovens (275 degrees for 15-20 minutes) or onto the hot plate.

Buy meat at Costco and vacuum seal into individual portions. Chicken, hamburgers, black bean burgers, fish (white fish doesn't have the odor on the plane that other fish will have, so cod, tilapia, or halibut is best.) I bring small amounts of different spices and spice combinations to add flavor. Wrap the meat in foil and place inside a tin to cook. It will stay moist in its own juices. Cook at 275 degrees for 15-23 minutes. Cooking time will vary but if it sits in the oven for a long time after being cooked, it will dry out.

Frozen meals (Lean Cuisine, etc.) take up a lot less space if you remove them from the original packaging. I vacuum seal them in advance so they are easy to grab and go. Just put them in a tin on the plane to cook.

Hawaii layovers aren't as limiting as you'd think. You aren't allowed most fruits or vegetables in their original form but there are some ways around this. I bring cottage cheese with blueberries for breakfast a lot in the summer. The berries alone are a no-no but for some reason fine if they are mixed with the cottage cheese. Frozen fruits and veggies are fine. Peel and slice a yam (think sweet potato fries). Wrap regular potatoes in foil. (I usually do the fingerling size because they fit better.) Cook them either completely or partially on the way over and you can bring them back with you. Frozen edamame is another great option. Blanching then vacuum sealing vegetables is a great way to bring "fresh" options.

Make protein shakes or juice fruits and vegetables, then freeze them. They help keep everything cold through the first, and sometimes second, day.

Re-freezable cold packs take up a lot less room than ice packs. Most hotels are willing to put them in their freezers during your layover. Many times catering puts dry ice on the beer bins in first class or in the little slide-out portion over our fresh food carts. These can be used to refreeze the packs.

Tortilla or flat bread sandwiches take up very little space. The "bread" can be tucked behind or in front of your food in your cooler or you can put them in your big suitcase.

The shampoo and conditioner containers from hotels work really well for condiments. Doubletree's are my favorite (the containers are taller and not as big around.) Take them home and wash them. Do this the old fashioned way as they are not dishwasher safe. I will also keep individual mustard and mayo packs when given the chance...I'm not proud.

I love my hot plate but it just warms already cooked food (in plastic, glass or metal.) If you want to cook food you can buy a (roughly) 7" electric skillet. They are around \$15.00. I got mine at Fred Meyer. They work really well for a while, but wear out pretty quickly.

Don't forget breakfast. Omelets, "McMuffins", quiches and steel cut oatmeal are all easy ways to have a satisfying hot breakfast. There are tons of recipes out there for making individual breakfasts in a muffin pan. Make ahead and freeze.

Basically, whatever you eat at home, you can make in an individual size. When possible, freeze it. It will keep your lunch bag cool. If you don't have one, invest in a vacuum sealer. They are worth it! When you have a cold, rainy day, use it to stock your freezer with meals.

Blended fruit and vegetable pouches (often stocked in baby food aisles) can be frozen and put in your bag to help keep it cold. When thawed, they are a great way to get a low calorie, low fat treat when you have a sweet tooth.

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Bottom zips down to hold manual.

