

Ikea and Sainsbury's lead the breakfast battle of bacon, beans and hash browns

Full English? Sweden's the cheapest

EATING OUT

It may be the most important meal of the day, but breakfast certainly isn't the most expensive. A price war at many well-known stores means it's possible to get a hearty English breakfast for as little as 95p.

But it's Sweden we have to thank for such an affordable breakfast, as it was Ikea that served us an impressive plate of scrambled egg, bacon, beans, hash brown, sausage and tomato for under a pound. How can it afford such a knockdown price? All Ikea told us was that the budget breakfast has been very popular each morning.

We wouldn't advise eating a full English breakfast each day but, when you do, Ikea represents incredible value. However, our personal favourite was Sainsbury's, for its £2.49 offering that included better quality bacon and sausage than elsewhere.

Most stores offer only a set choice, but Tesco is best for aficionados, as you can choose from ten items for 35p each. Special praise goes to its golden brown mushrooms.

There are fewer reasons to breakfast at Morrisons, especially as it's the priciest, at £2.85. But the biggest disappointment was Asda's £1.50 offering, which included a tasteless sausage and hard, dry hash browns. Yet the store told us breakfast customers say the budget meal is one of the main reasons they visit the store.

At Tesco customers can choose from ten items for 35p each



Which? inspector Bob Tolliday bites into breakfast on a budget

BREAKFAST FOR LESS: WHAT YOU GET ON YOUR PLATE

STORE	PRICE	WHAT'S ON OFFER
Ikea	95p (6 items) £1.65 (10 items)	Bacon, beans, hash brown, sausage, scrambled egg and tomato Bacon x 2, beans, hash brown x 3, sausage x 2, scrambled egg and tomato
Asda	£1.50 (6 items)	Bacon, beans, hash brown, egg, sausage and tomato
Tesco	£2.10 (6 items)	Bacon, beans, hash brown, egg, sausage, tomato (grilled or tinned), fried bread, mushrooms and black pudding
Sainsbury's	£2.49 (6 items)	Bacon, beans, roast, egg, hash brown and sausage, tomato
Morrisons	£2.85 (6 items)	Bacon, beans, toast, egg, sausage and tomato

A consumer calls... Transform cosmetic surgery group

Cosmetic surgeons and campaigners have hit out at clinics that offer gift vouchers for procedures. We called the Transform cosmetic surgery group to see what it thought about the gift of youthful eyes for our 70-year-old mum

Transform
cosmetic surgery group

Which?: My mother's a big fan of cosmetic surgery makeover programmes and I thought for her birthday it might be fun to get her something.

Clinic: Yes!

Which?: What sort of vouchers do you offer?

Clinic: Anything – we have non-surgical or surgical vouchers and we leave the amount blank.

Which?: Can I get her one for a specific thing?

Clinic: Yes.

Which?: Could I put her down for a brow lift or eyelid surgery?

Clinic: Yes, but we'd have to agree a price. What would you like it to be and we can price it.

Which?: She's got a few things she wants done, but she's got droopy eyelids.

Clinic: Are they really droopy?

Blepharoplasty is where they take a bit of fat out of the upper eyelids and skin so it just widens the eyes. If the whole eyes have drooped, you need a brow lift. Really, it's up to the patient and surgeon.

Which?: If you could do a buy-one-get-one-free offer I wouldn't mind it myself.

Clinic: (Laughs) It really depends

and you must speak to a surgeon.

Which?: I was hoping to surprise her and book her in.

Clinic: We tailor it to the individual, that's the trouble.

The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons said: 'The idea that someone who is not the patient gets to choose what procedure should be done is appalling. Regardless of who pays the bill, surgery must always be self-motivated.' Look out next month for our report on the cosmetic surgery industry.

Nickel in spectacle frames causes 'really painful' reaction

Check your specs

ALLERGIES

A woman has been left with eczema on her face and will have flare-ups for life due to the metal in her designer glasses.

Muriel Bankhead's £200 DKNY spectacles made the skin around her eyes itchy, red and swollen.

She said: 'I felt as if someone had thrown acid in my face. It was bright red and really painful.' Skin tests showed that Muriel's reaction had been sparked by nickel in the spectacle frames. Nickel allergy is the most common contact allergy, affecting one in ten women and one in 100 men. Once someone becomes sensitised, they will always experience flare-ups.

The metal – which is normally associated with inexpensive jewellery – is banned in products that come into prolonged contact with the skin, unless manufacturers can prove that the amount of nickel that leaches from a product falls below a certain level.

The DKNY specs comply with the safety rules, but wear or damage to the frames could have caused the nickel to become



Muriel: opticians should ask patients about skin sensitivity

'I felt as if someone had thrown acid in my face'

exposed. However, Muriel would like the General Optical Council (GOC) to require opticians to ask patients about reactions to jewellery before recommending glasses.

'I wouldn't want anyone else to suffer what I went through,' she said.

A GOC spokesman said the council would publicise Muriel's case but added: 'It's not a dispensing issue because the regulations should mean glasses are safe.'

TAKE ACTION!

■ Spectacle frames should be coated to protect the wearer from contact with the metal, but if that coating wears away you could be at risk. If you're sensitive to nickel, look for plastic or titanium frames or ask your optician for advice.

Gas giant is rapped and must pay £5,000 Energy firm fine for phone delays

UTILITIES

British Gas has been fined £5,000 and reprimanded for keeping customers hanging on a premium-rate number for an 'unreasonable amount of time'.

Premium-rate regulator Icstis said customers ringing up about its Click Energy tariff had to wait more than seven minutes with no warning of the 75p-a-minute cost.

Such services are supposed to have a message explaining the costs, but even British Gas call centre staff didn't know the cost of calls. They told Icstis' investigators they cost 3p and 60p – both were incorrect.

Moreover, the energy giant didn't have the required permission to run the phone line.

British Gas was ordered to refund all consumers who were kept waiting. A company spokesman said: 'We acknowledged our mistake and immediately changed the contact number.'

Icstis also criticised Cable & Wireless, which provided the premium-rate number, for failing to make British Gas aware of the code of practice on such telephone services.

British Gas



Postwatch says Royal Mail should junk its scare tactics

POSTAL SERVICES

Royal Mail is using scare tactics to deter householders from stopping unwanted junk mail, according to a watchdog.

Dozens of concerned consumers contacted us after we told you how to opt out of receiving unaddressed mail (see 'Keeping you posted', *Which?*, January, p12). They were unsure of whether to go ahead after getting

Royal Mail's response to their request.

It says: 'We need to make you fully aware of the implications of opting out' and warns householders they



may miss out on 'leaflets from central and local government and other public bodies'.

But mail watchdog Postwatch has rubbished the letter. It told us: 'Consumers should not be put off. The letter is unnecessarily worrying and we're in talks with Royal Mail to get it changed.'

'As the government owns Royal Mail, it will make sure that anything of national importance is delivered to

everyone and consumers will still receive electoral information.'

Postwatch pointed out that Royal Mail itself delivered information on its new pricing structure to every UK household, even those that had opted out of receiving junk mail.

Royal Mail has also come under fire for its latest stamp price hike – the cost of a first-class stamp will rise by 2p to 34p in April and second-class stamps will go up to 24p from 23p.