College students in Lafayette, especially freshmen, can have difficulty finding places to eat—either because they want something authentic, or because they have very little money.

Mel's Diner, Poupart's Bakery and Bistro, and Old Tyme Grocery all offer meals for under $5 and are near the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's campus.

Mel's Diner, originally opened by Lafayette natives Jack and Mel Naumann, has a 1950's style atmosphere and a wide variety of inexpensive food.

Taylor Lejeune, a freshman English major said, "Mel's is generally that place you go when you have a big group of friends, and usually ends up being late at night, but it's pretty cheap, mostly breakfast-type foods and diner style restaurant. It's a family/friends type place."

On the Mel's Diner menu, most breakfast items including a "Short Stack" and "Cake and Eggs" can be ordered for under five dollars, and most of their sides are under 3 dollars.

"In the morning you get the older group, the more quiet, and towards the afternoon, you kind of get the more younger crowds, usually a lot of school kids, and then at night you get the nightlife, so it just ranges on what time you come and eat," Linda Dupre, the night manager at Mel's said. "Mel's is unique because of the atmosphere that we create whenever you come in here. Our employees are engaged on taking care of the customer. They want to make sure that they get what they want; they get good service."

Poupart's Bakery and Bistro is another popular spot in Lafayette. Francois and Patrick Jean Marie Poupart opened the restaurant in 1967.

"It's nice. We have an open atrium area, a skylight, a lot of plants. It's so nice and calm. It's just a nice, quiet place outside the restaurant. Inside the restaurant, it's a little hectic, but it's a nice little place," said Claire Guillory, a cashier and server at Poupart's.

It also has cheap food — a mini French Croissant is 50 cents.

"I've been visiting Poupart's since the 70's and the exceptional quality of food and service has continued throughout the decades," Yelp reviewer Juliet K wrote. "The neat thing about Poupart's is that you can get a quick meal, frozen soup to go, jams, jellies and fresh breads, as well as a plethora of goodies to take home."

Between Mel's and Poupart's, college students have several options, but Old Tyme Grocery is unique in that it is a grocery store and a restaurant, and has a lot to offer.

"I love the people, they are really nice and really friendly. I love the atmosphere, either whether I'm going to pick it up or whether I'm going to sit down to eat," Bria Burrell, a public relations major at UL Lafayette, said.

"It's just really cool; I like all the stuff that they have hanging around, the paraphernalia. The food's great."

Old Tyme Grocery is famous for its po'boys, but it is unique for other reasons as well.

"The atmosphere, especially if you come at night, it's always super lively. It's a lot of fun; we always have funky music, a great crew, most of the people in there are UL students, so it's definitely more of a homey kind of atmosphere," Sarah Dupre, the night manager at Old Tyme Grocery and sophomore at UL Lafayette said.

Old Tyme Grocery is good for college students in particular.

"We offer discounts to UL students, 10% if you show your ID, it's close to campus and the food is really good," Dupre continued. "Working here, I've met a lot of really cool people, most of us are UL students, so I've met a lot of people with the same major as me. I've met some of my best friends here."

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