SO

SOMALI LESSON

Basic Conversation 1 · Chapter 8 · At the Café

Somali Basic Conversation 1

Chapter 8 · Ordering Food & Drink at a Café

☕ At the Café — Maqaaxida

By the end of this chapter you will be able to ask for a table and a menu, order food and drink, ask what is in a dish and pay. Respellings use CAPITALS as a rough guide to stress; c, x and q stay as themselves (see Chapter 1). ***Please read the Not Yet Verified box at the end.***

💬 Six Conversations — Wada hadal

① A Table — Miis

A:

Soo dhowow! Immisa qof?

soo DHO-wow! im-MEE-sah qof?

Welcome! How many people?

B:

Waxaan rabaa miis laba qof ah.

wah-XAAN rah-BAA miis LAH-bah qof ah.

I'd like a table for two.

A:

Fadlan i soo raac.

fahd-LAHN i soo raac.

Please follow me.

② Tea, Please — Shaah, fadlan

A:

Maxaad rabtaa?

mah-XAAD rahb-TAA?

What would you like?

B:

Shaah yar koob ah, fadlan.

shaah yahr koob ah, fahd-LAHN.

A small cup of tea, please.

A:

Caano ma leh?

CAA-no mah leh?

With milk?

B:

Haa, caano iyo sonkor.

HAA, CAA-no EE-yo SOHN-kor.

Yes, milk and sugar.

③ Lunch — Qado

A:

④ A Snack — Sambuus

A:

Liiska cuntada, fadlan.

LEES-kah coon-TAH-dah, fahd-LAHN.

The menu, please.

B:

Waa kan.

waa kahn.

Here it is.

A:

Waxaan rabaa hilib ari iyo bariis.

wah-XAAN rah-BAA HI-lib AH-ri EE-yo bah-REES.

I'd like goat meat and rice.

Ii keen sambuus iyo shaah.

ee keen sahm-BOOS EE-yo shaah.

Bring me a samosa and tea. (casual)

B:

Waa hagaag, sug daqiiqad.

waa hah-GAAG, soog dah-qee-QAHD.

All right, wait a minute.

A:

Basbaas i sii, fadlan.

bahs-BAAS i see, fahd-LAHN.

Give me some chilli, please.

⑤ What's in It? — Maxaa ku jira?

A:

Caano ma ku jiraan?

CAA-no mah koo ji-RAAN?

Is there milk in it?

B:

Maya, kuma jiraan.

MAH-yah, KOO-mah ji-RAAN.

No, there isn't.

A:

Mahadsanid, taas ayaan rabaa.

mah-hahd-SAH-nid, taas ah-YAAN rah-BAA.

Thank you, that's what I want.

⑥ The Bill — Xisaabta

A:

Xisaabta, fadlan.

xi-SAAB-tah, fahd-LAHN.

The bill, please.

B:

Waa kan.

waa kahn.

Here it is.

A:

Waxaan ku bixinayaa kaarka.

Cuntadu aad bay u macaan tahay.

wah-XAAN koo bi-xi-nah-YAA KAAR-kah.

coon-TAH-doo AAD bay oo mah-CAAN tah-HAY.

I'll pay by card. The food is delicious.

🔑 Key Phrases — Weedho muhiim ah

Somali has no separate polite "you". Politeness comes from fadlan and from the softer waxaan rabi lahaa.

MEANING	POLITER	PLAINER
I'd like …	**Waxaan rabi lahaa …** *wah-XAAN rah-BI lah-HAA*	**Waxaan rabaa …** *wah-XAAN rah-BAA*
Bring me …	**… fadlan.** *fahd-LAHN*	**Ii keen …** *ee keen*
Can I get …?	**Ma heli karaa …?** *mah HEH-li kah-RAA*	**… ma jiraa?** (is there …?) *mah ji-RAA*
The bill	**Xisaabta, fadlan.** *xi-SAAB-tah fahd-LAHN*	**Immisa waaye?** (how much is it?) *im-MEE-sah WAA-yeh*
Does it contain pork?	**Hilib doofaar ma ku jiraa?** *HI-lib DOO-faar mah koo ji-RAA*	—

🔤 Three Verbs — Saddex fal

cab (to drink), cun (to eat) and bixi (to pay, to give out).

WHO	CAB (DRINK)	CUN (EAT)	BIXI (PAY)
I: *waxaan*	**cabbaa** *cahb-BAA*	**cunaa** *coo-NAA*	**bixiyaa** *bi-xi-YAA*
you: *waxaad*	**cabtaa** *cahb-TAA*	**cuntaa** *coon-TAA*	**bixisaa** *bi-xi-SAA*
he: *wuxuu*	**cabbaa** *cahb-BAA*	**cunaa** *coo-NAA*	**bixiyaa** *bi-xi-YAA*
she: *waxay*	**cabtaa** *cahb-TAA*	**cuntaa** *coon-TAA*	**bixisaa** *bi-xi-SAA*

WHO	CAB (DRINK)	CUN (EAT)	BIXI (PAY)
we: *waxaan*	**cabnaa** *cahb-NAA*	**cunnaa** *coon-NAA*	**bixinaa** *bi-xi-NAA*
you all: *waxaad*	**cabtaan** *cahb-TAAN*	**cuntaan** *coon-TAAN*	**bixisaan** *bi-xi-SAAN*
they: *waxay*	**cabbaan** *cahb-BAAN*	**cunaan** *coo-NAAN*	**bixiyaan** *bi-xi-YAAN*

🍽️ On the Menu — Cunto iyo cabitaan

SOMALI	SAY IT	ENGLISH
bariis	*bah-REES*	rice
baasto	*BAAS-to*	pasta
canjeero	*cahn-JEE-ro*	sourdough flatbread
muufo	*MOO-fo*	cornmeal bread
soor	*soor*	a maize porridge, like polenta
sambuus	*sahm-BOOS*	samosa
suqaar	*soo-QAAR*	small cubes of fried meat
hilib ari	*HI-lib AH-ri*	goat meat
hilib lo'	*HI-lib lo'*	beef
hilib digaag	*HI-lib di-GAAG*	chicken
maraq	*MAH-rahq*	broth, soup
biyo	*BI-yo*	water
shaah	*shaah*	tea

SOMALI	SAY IT	ENGLISH
qaxwo	*QAHX-wo*	coffee
casiir cambe	*cah-SEER CAHM-beh*	mango juice
cabitaan fudud	*cah-bi-TAAN foo-DOOD*	soft drink

Tea and Hospitality

Tea (*shaah*) is a social drink, often sweet and sometimes spiced, and refusing it outright can seem abrupt: accept a little. Most Somalis are Muslim, so pork and alcohol are normally absent from Somali food. Many people eat with the right hand. All general knowledge, not from the sources.

Somaliland and Djibouti

I found no source on how café Somali differs in Somaliland or Djibouti, so no words are marked. From general knowledge, you may meet French menu words in Djibouti, and prices are in different currencies: the Somali shilling, the Somaliland shilling and the Djibouti franc.

📖 Vocabulary — Ereyada

20 more words. Nouns are shown with their "the" ending.

#	SOMALI	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE
1	maqaaxida	*mah-QAA-xi-dah*	the café	noun (f)
2	makhaayadda	*mah-KHAA-yahd-dah*	the restaurant	noun (f)
3	miiska	*MEES-kah*	the table	noun (m)
4	cuntada	*coon-TAH-dah*	the food	noun (f)
5	liiska	*LEES-kah*	the list, menu	noun (m)
6	xisaabta	*xi-SAAB-tah*	the bill	noun (f)

#	SOMALI	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE
7	**koobka**	*KOOB-kah*	the cup	noun (m)
8	**dhalada**	*dhah-LAH-dah*	the bottle; glass	noun (f)
9	**caanaha**	*CAA-nah-hah*	the milk	noun
10	**sonkorta**	*son-KOR-tah*	the sugar	noun (f)
11	**basbaaska**	*bahs-BAAS-kah*	the chilli	noun (m)
12	**liinta**	*LEEN-tah*	the lemon	noun (f)
13	**cab**	*cahb*	to drink	verb
14	**cun**	*coon*	to eat	verb
15	**bixi**	*BI-xi*	to pay, give out	verb
16	**sug**	*soog*	to wait	verb
17	**macaan**	*mah-CAAN*	sweet, delicious	adj
18	**kulul**	*koo-LOOL*	hot	adj
19	**qabow**	*qah-BOW*	cold	adj
20	**la'aan**	*lah-'AAN*	without (after the noun: *sonkor la'aan*)	phrase

✍️ Try It Yourself — Layliyo

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Ask for a table for two.

▼ Show answer

Waxaan rabaa miis laba qof ah.

2. Order a small cup of tea politely.

▼ Show answer

Shaah yar koob ah, fadlan.

3. Say “coffee without sugar”.

▼ Show answer

qaxwo sonkor la'aan

4. Ask if there is milk in it.

▼ Show answer

Caano ma ku jiraan?

5. Say “we eat rice”.

▼ Show answer

Waxaan cunnaa bariis.

6. Ask for the bill.

▼ Show answer

Xisaabta, fadlan.

Not Yet Verified

Checked against one page (Preply, How to order food in Somali, read 2026-11-25): the table, menu, bill and card phrases, *Waxaan rabaa …*, the polite “I would like” form, *Ma heli karaa*, *taas ayaan rabaa*, *sug daqiiqad*, *shaah yar koob ah*, and the food and drink words in the menu table (*maraq* appears there as chicken soup). The page has typos and spells some phrases several ways; this chapter writes *rabi lahaa*, *ii keen* and *ku jiraan* where the page has other spellings. Another drinks page refused the request, so there is no second source.

Not checked, from general knowledge: the milk and “without sugar” wording, *Immisa waaye?*, the praise of the food, the three-verb table, the cultural, dietary and currency notes, the vocabulary list genders and endings, and every respelling and stress mark. **If you have an**

allergy, do not rely on these phrases alone. No textbook, dictionary or native speaker was consulted. **Please have a Somali speaker check this chapter before you rely on it.**

Sources for This Chapter

Preply, How to order food in Somali.

Coming Up in Chapter 9

Shopping and prices: asking how much, money, big and small, cheap and expensive.