

50 Fave Arizona Restaurants

Written by Story by Caley Goldblatt, Melissa Larsen and Cassandra Weinman
Monday, 02 August 2010 11:04 - Last Updated Tuesday, 03 August 2010 10:18

As far as we—and our taste buds—are concerned, Arizona's cities certainly deserve to be among culinary capitals like New York City and San Francisco. From south-of-the-border fare and scrumptious steaks to some of the nation's best ice cream and sushi spots, read on as we introduce you to 50 of our favorite Arizona eateries.



St. Francis

St. Francis is an inviting, modern neighborhood spot to come together and enjoy great food in an architectural wonder. This family-owned and -operated establishment is also home to a one-of-a-kind brick oven which creates St. Francis' signature wood-fired cuisine. Plus, we appreciate the restaurant's nod to the neighborhood—its name comes from the area's land deed circa the 30's. **602.200.8111**, www.stfrancisaz.com.

Kai

Kai, at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, provides an unforgettable dining experience influenced by Native American culture and cuisine. Kai is the well-deserved winner of the Forbes Five-Star Award and the AAA Five-Diamond Award (the only restaurant currently with this honor in the state) and is truly a local treasure as its menu is artfully crafted to tell a story using authentic Arizona ingredients in its dishes. **602.385.5726**, www.wildhorsepassresort.com.

NOCA

BETWEEN NOCA's special Thursday-night tasting menus and Sunday Simple Suppers (Chef Chris Curtiss's fried chicken night is a favorite), there is always something new to sink your teeth into at this top-notch Phoenix dining destination. On any given night, diners are always delighted to receive a pre-dessert heap of cotton candy. **602.956.6622**, www.restaurantnoca.com.

Chestnut Lane

We love a cute cafe, and this Phoenix darling is about as charming as they get. In addition to fresh-baked goodies (the caramel cake is heavenly), Chestnut Lane has an exquisite selection of salads and sandwiches made with local, organic ingredients. **602.535.5439**, www.chestnutlanecafe.com.

Modern Steak

This femme and fab Scottsdale steakhouse is a welcome departure from the dark, masculine steakhouses that we're used to. In addition to top-notch design, Modern Steak dishes out one of our favorite salads (the warm Maine lobster salad) and desserts (the divide peanut butter cup). **480.423.7000**, www.foxrc.com.



Vincent on Camelback

With more than two decades of making culinary history in Phoenix, Vincent on Camelback provides the Valley with classical French dishes that have a Southwestern spin. This hybrid cuisine, doled out by restaurateur and chef extraordinaire (and James Beard Foundation Award winner) Vincent Guerithault, continues to wow patrons and critics alike. The restaurant manages to stay contemporary with mouth-watering meals like the lobster chimichanga topped with basil beurre and avocado salsa and Chef Guerithault's more casual wood-fired pizzas. **602.224.0225**, www.vincentsoncamelback.com.

Quiessence

If the Farm at South Mountain is one of Phoenix's most excellent treasures, its Quiessence restaurant is the crown jewel. The menu of Contemporary American cuisine changes nearly daily to show off what's fresh and seasonal from Arizona's top purveyors, but patrons can always count on Chef Greg LaPrad to deliver deliciousness. Plus, it's hard to beat Quiessence's dreamy twinkle light-laden patio. **602.276.0601**, www.quiessencerestaurant.com.

Jalapeño Inferno

Anytime we're looking for who-cares-about-calories Mexican fare, we head to this longtime Scottsdale staple. And the restaurant loves its customers right back, even introducing menu items at their request and naming it after them. **480.484.6442**, www.jalapenoinferno.com.

Bryan's Black Mountain Barbecue

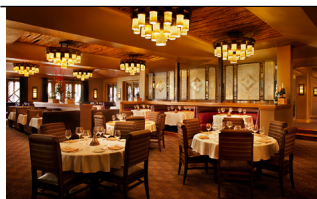
At this Cave Creek gem, patrons roll up their sleeves and dig into incredible ribs, pulled meats and even an incredible vegetarian pulled squash sandwich. If Bryan's usuals weren't tempting enough, the restaurant's seasonal fare is something to celebrate (i.e., this summer's tomato sandwich and cardamom-honey watermelon). **480.575.7155**, www.bryansbarbecue.com.

T. Cook's

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The rich atmosphere and Spanish-style décor will transport you straight into a world of luxury. Chef Lee Hillson created a Mediterranean-inspired menu with such delights as seared Georges Bank scallops and Irish seared salmon. Or take advantage of the entrees straight from the fireplace like T. Cook's classic Mediterranean paella. Come for brunch, lunch and dinner, or stop by the lounge's happy hour for drinks and appetizers. **602.808.0766**, www.royalpalmshotel.com.



Red's Steakhouse

We love steak, and we're convinced that Red's Steakhouse's house-aged selection is tops. The restaurant, at the Wigwam Resort & Spa in Litchfield Park, is a contemporary take on the classic steakhouse. It features a chic lounge area and an outdoor patio complete with a fireplace perfect for warm summer nights, especially during its weekly live entertainment. **623.935.3811**, www.redssteakhouse.com.

POSH

Improvisational cuisine is the name of the game at Scottsdale's POSH—and that's what makes it one of the Valley's most unique feasting spots. Using a check-off list, diners can determine what type of menu they'd prefer and Chef Joshua Hebert whips up an amazing repast based on their requirements, sometimes with daring, unforeseen ingredients (like kangaroo). **480.663.7674**, www.poshscottsdale.com.

FnB

Though still in its infancy, this Old Town addition is already on the tip of every foodie's tongue. The best seat in the house at FnB (which is short for "food and beverage") is at the bar where guests can see Chef Charleen Badman prepare her amazing fried green tomatoes and butterscotch pudding. Plus, FnB displays plenty of local love as most of the wine list is made up of Arizona grapes. **480.425.9463**, www.fnbrestaurant.com.

Talavera

Boasting gorgeous mountain and city-light views and a supercool fire element, this Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North restaurant has one of the most coveted outdoor dining areas in the Valley. Talavera's menu, which features such fine-dining fixtures as foie gras and Chilean sea bass, impresses as well. **480.515.5700**, www.fourseasons.com/scottsdale.

Roka Akor

Sure, Roka Akor is among Scottsdale's most gorgeous dining spots, with its clean-lined design, cool sake bar and exhibition-style kitchen. But it's the Japanese restaurant's amazing award-winning sushi and robata-grilled delicacies that keep us coming back for more. The crispy prawn roll, sweet corn side and warm toffee cake are favorites. **480.306.8800**, www.rokaakor.com.



There is a lot to love about the restaurant lineup at Fairmont Scottsdale; however, it is the recently re-opened La Hacienda that makes us most eager to get to the luxury resort. Seafoodies and meat lovers both rejoice at La Hacienda's Modern Mexican offerings, with our favorites being the *huachinango a la veracruzana* and *filet a la parilla*, respectively. **480.585.4848**, www.fairmont.com/scottsdale.com.

Sassi

When there's not enough time for a European vacation, there's always the chance to dine at Sassi. Reminiscent of an Italian villa, this Scottsdale restaurant oozes romance and, even better, dishes up mouth-watering pasta dishes and an impressive selection of antipasti (we're always happy to sink our teeth into the fried squash blossoms). **480.502.9095**, www.sassi.biz.

Pizzeria Bianco

It looks like we're not the only fans of Chris Bianco's slices: Pizzeria Bianco has been featured on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and in both Martha Stewart's and Rachael Ray's magazines. Even though Bianco isn't in front of the oven as much as before (due to asthma), the popular pizzeria still hosts three-hour waits and the Valley's leading 'za. **602.258.8300**, www.pizzeriabianco.com.

Tarbell's

Tarbell's has been a Phoenix neighborhood staple for 15 years serving up fresh, elegant cuisine on white tablecloths. The restaurant's extensive menu features pasta, seafood, chops and desserts like the chocolate-covered caramel mini apples which were added after Chef Mark Tarbell dominated on "Iron Chef: America" (he's also a James Beard Foundation Award nominee). With its inviting atmosphere and friendly service, we can't resist going back for more. **602.955.8100**, www.tarbells.com.

Binkley's Restaurant

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Listen up, New Yorkers: Cave Creek's Binkley's Restaurant rivals any big city eatery. The respected restaurant offers complex dishes (laid out neatly in a four-part menu) that any gourmand can appreciate and petite portions that are as easy on the eyes as they are on the taste buds. Diners are invited to choose from the à la carte menu, which changes daily, or partake in a four-, five- or six-course tasting menu. **480.437.1072**, www.binkleysrestaurant.com.



Different Pointe of View

When perusing the menu at Different Pointe of View, there are only two words you need to know: lobster bisque. This fine-dining restaurant, located at Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs Resort, serves up one of the Valley's top versions of the ubiquitous appetizer, among many other A-plus dishes. Plus, Different Pointe of View's eye-popping panoramas and cozy candle-lit tables place it among Phoenix's most swoon-worthy settings. **602.866.6350**, www.tapatiocliffshilton.com.

Frank and Albert's

Two men have stolen our hearts, and their names are Frank and Albert. The menu at this new Arizona Biltmore restaurant is made of contemporary takes on comfort food like its Coca Cola pork chop and organic apples or the Cheese, Mac and the Chicken. **602.381.7632**, www.frankandalberts.com.

Fred's

Any place where you can go straight from shoe shopping to having a delicious meal is fine by us. Fred's, located in Barneys New York, is casual yet elegant dining at its best. Serving up brunch, lunch and dinner, this modern bistro has a wonderful menu of soups, salads, pizza and mouthwatering desserts. Plus, its spaghetti and meatball is outstanding. Try out happy hour from 4 to 7 p.m. to crunch on some delectable pomme frites. **602.337.6111**, www.barneys.com.

Lon's

With its Spanish-inspired dining room and amazing desert views, Lon's truly captures the authentic Arizona spirit. Located at the Hermosa Inn, it has a savory menu of Americana favorites fused with a splash of the Southwest. Only the freshest ingredients and locally grown produce are used to make divine dishes like the prickly pear-glazed California lamb chops and jumbo lump crab cakes. **602.955.7878**, www.lons.com.

Metro Brasserie

This neighborhood eatery, overlooking Southbridge in Old Town Scottsdale, is known for its French food with an attitude. It serves up onion soup gratin, beef burgundy as well as amazing seafood from their raw bar. It's also the perfect date spot with dinner-for-two menus, and it's open late to guarantee you won't go hungry at any hour. **480.994.3663**, www.metrosouthbridge.com.



As part of Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa, the recently renovated elements blends seamlessly into the desert landscape and provides stunning views of Praying Monk and Camelback Mountain. An array of culinary delights crafted by "Iron Chef: America" champ and renowned chef Beau MacMillan provides options for even the most discerning palate. We always count on elements for its in-house smoked meat, a raw bar stocked with iced shellfish and sashimi and delectable vegetarian dishes. **480.948.2100**, www.sanctuaryoncamelback.com.

J&G Steakhouse

With breathtaking views and lavish décor, this is not your average steakhouse. At this modern steakhouse, Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten created a crowd-pleasing composite of favorites. The menu features a raw bar in addition to their wide array of salads, seafood and meats. Top off the visit with a piece of warm chocolate cake with caramel ice cream or J&G's amazing cheesecake. Yum! **480.214.8000**, www.jgsteakhousescottsdale.com.

Petite Maison

Friendly and French usually don't go together but Petite Maison changes all that. This adorable French Bistro is conveniently located in Downtown Scottsdale, serving up lunch, brunch de Champagne and dinner. Chef James Porter has created a menu filled of French classics like poulet rôti and bouillabaisse pour deux. Make sure to call ahead for seats because the petite refers to the size of restaurant—definitely not the taste. **480.991.6887**, www.petitemaisonaz.com.

Bourbon Steak

A classic steakhouse with a twist, Bourbon Steak is delighting carnivores at Fairmont Scottsdale. Using only organic and hormone-free cuts, the quality of the beef is incredible. Stop by the chic lounge for a pre-dinner drink or go straight for the good stuff. **480.513.6002**, www.michaelmina.net.

Matt's Big Breakfast

Sure, you might wait a while to get a table at this Downtown Phoenix restaurant, but few places make breakfast like Matt's. Just about any of

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the eatery's listings are a hearty way to start the day but our pick is the thick-cut bacon or griddlecakes with sweet cream butter. **602.254.1074**, www.mattshighbreakfast.com.



The Mission
Old Town's The Mission reaffirmed our love of south-of-the-border fare with its Modern Latin cuisine. The flavors are as impressive as the beautiful minimalist presentations and the sweet-and-spicy margaritas are among the best in the Valley. After a meal of crispy rock shrimp tacos and Mission fries, the pumpkin bread pudding, topped with crunchy pepitas, is an absolute must. **480.636.5005**, www.themissionaz.com.

Cork

Chandler's Cork, an unexpected shopping plaza standout, doles out comfort food with an elegant twist. Although the menu varies seasonally, certain staples remain a permanent fixture. Cork's mac and cheese is a delicious spin on the childhood favorite, while the organic buttermilk fried chicken will delight just about any mouth. **480.883.3773**, www.corkrestaurant.net.

BLT Steak

Add American steakhouse and French bistro plus a modern flare and you've got BLT Steak. A feast of meat, seafood, signature sauces and unbelievable desserts wait for you straight from the mind of Chef Laurent Tourondel. The pre-dinner popovers alone merit a visit to the Scottsdale steakhouse. **480.905.7979**, www.bltscottsdale.com.

Salt Cellar

Looking for the best seafood in the Valley? Well, look no further than Salt Cellar, which has been getting seafood right since 1971. Down three flights of antique wooden stairs, a piece of new England awaits, where they have all the classics including shrimp cocktail, oysters, clams, mussels and crab cakes. **480.947.1963**, www.saltcellarrestaurant.com??



Christopher's Restaurant and Crush Lounge

Contemporary, chic and undeniably hip, Christopher's Restaurant and Crush Lounge is the perfect combination of elegant yet casual dining. Located at Biltmore Fashion Park, Christopher's offers French-inspired American cuisine with such delights as vanilla-dusted scallops and truffle-infused filet mignon. The adjacent Crush Lounge has an impeccable patio on which to enjoy its impressive wine list and fabulous cheese plates. **602.522.2344**, www.christophersaz.com.

Lolo's Chicken and Waffles

There hasn't been a pairing this delicious since bread found butter. At Lolo's, you will find the best soul food around, using the influences of the south to create home-style dishes that make your feel like mama whipped it up for you. They have a menu of more than just chicken and waffles including mac and cheese, grits and Sandy Sand's red velvet cake. www.loloschickenandwaffles.com.

Marcellino Ristorante

Chef Marcellino is constantly keeping us on our toes with his nightly changing menu of delicious Italian cuisine. The chef's five-course tasting dinner is the perfect passport with which to sample a taste of Italy. They offer favorites like scallops al pesto, gnocchi Sorrentina and don't forget the apple galetta with hazelnut gelato for dessert. **602.216.0004**, www.marcellinoristorante.com?

Gallo Blanco

This Mexican-inspired eatery, located in the Clarendon Hotel, has a menu filled with authentic spices and flavors and has become a favorite for casual diners. Look for an array of tortas, ensalads and dulces; Gallo Blanco also has crowd-pleasers like their guacamole and ceviche. **602.327.0880**, www.galloblancocafe.com?



Between the risotto dishes and glorious burrata served at Prado, this Scottsdale eatery is one of our go-to places for first-class Italian cuisine. And it certainly doesn't hurt that the super-romantic InterContinental Montelucia Resort & Spa's restaurant is surrounded by gently babbling

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fountains and trees glittering with twinkle lights. www.pradolife.com.

Fogo de Chao

Meat, meat, meat everywhere! Come hungry because you are going to want to try everything that this Brazilian steakhouse is cooking up. A salad bar filled with exotic cheese and fresh veggies perfectly complements the main event—which is countless waiters circling with more than a dozen types of meat, just waiting to give you a cut of what they've got. **480.609.8866**, www.fogodechao.com.

Heirloom

With its focus on locally grown dishes, Heirloom at DC Ranch seasonally changes its menu to ensure only the freshest food is being served. On the summer menu, Heirloom is dishing up lobster ravioli, lemon-seared Alaskan halibut and chocolate mousse for dessert. Try the prix fixe meal which includes an appetizer, entree and dessert for just \$36. **480.515.2575**, www.mculinary.com.

Flancer's

This neighborhood pizza and sandwich spot is perfect for the whole family. With all of the bread baked in house their sandwiches are scrumptious, including its About Thyme Chicken and Vibes of Veggie. Flancer's also has soup, pizza, calzones and desserts that are also top notch. **480.396.0077**, www.flancers.com.



When Sweet Republic opened in Scottsdale in 2008, it truly transformed how we viewed ice cream. This sweet treat no longer consists of a sugar cone with a scoop of vanilla plopped on top; ice cream's now a decadent dessert that is available in flavors like salted butter caramel, cabernet pear and basil-lime. **480.248.6979**, www.sweetrepublic.com.

Joe's Farm Grill

Everyday food has never tasted so special. By using farm-fresh ingredients and seasonal fruits and veggies, Joe's Farm Grill turns ribs, burgers and onions rings into delectable dishes. Hey, even Guy Fieri from Food Network's "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives" came by for a bite. **480.563.4745**, www.joesfarmgrill.com.

Caffe Boa

Mill Avenue is home to Caffe Boa, a Valley treasure that offers an extensive wine list to accompany its pasta, soups and meat dishes prepared for Chef Payton Curry. (We suggest the impossibly flavorful fried chicken and the chocolate cake.) Caffe Boa also offers cooking classes so if you like what you taste, they can teach you to do it at home. **480.968.9112**, www.cafeboa.com.

Los Sombreros

The open kitchen and high-energy patio provide the perfect backdrop to enjoy the traditional Mexican food that Los Sombreros has been providing for 15 years. The menu includes enchiladas de pollo or carnitas as well as the incredible margaritas to wash it all down with. **480.994.1799**, www.lossombreros.com.

Get Outta Town

The Valley isn't the only area of our fine state that serves up incredible eats. Read on as we explore a few tasty out-of-townners.



CORE Kitchen & Wine Bar

Though we're pretty sure that no one has accused Marana of being a dining destination, CORE Kitchen & Wine Bar at The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain has put it on the map. The restaurant touts Sonoran Desert-inspired dishes like the amazing chili-lacquered New York strip steak with avocado fries. **520.572.3000**, www.ritzcarlton.com.

L'Auberge Restaurant on Oak Creek

As if dining alongside Oak Creek wasn't blissful enough, the high-end cuisine at Sedona's L'Auberge Restaurant on Oak Creek makes the experience even more amazing. It's hard not to be tempted by juniper-dusted duck breast and foie gras and braised veal osso bucco with truffle-scented polenta. **928.282.1661**, www.lauberge.com.

Janos

Chef Janos Wilder is undoubtedly one of Arizona's culinary superstars, snagging the James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef: Southwest in 2000. His award-winning restaurant, Janos at Tucson's Westin La Paloma Resort, offers sensational Southwestern cuisine—with a French spin—using ingredients from Southern Arizona-based sources. (Janos also opened Kai in 2002.) **520.615.6100**, www.janos.com.

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Flying V Bar & Grill at Loews Ventana Canyon

Your next date night spot has been found so leave all the planning up to the Flying V. Every Saturday night, the restaurant screens a different classic movie for free, which is perfectly paired with the romantic dinner for two. Also, the extensive menus of both drinks and eats will be sure to make the evening special. **520.299.2020**, www.loewshotel.com.