

50 Favorite Restaurants in Phoenix 2016

Written by Alyssa DeMember and Melissa Larsen

Wednesday, 30 November 2016 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 07 December 2016 10:32



Could you go for a hearty steak or a stellar slice? Perhaps your sweet tooth needs to be satiated? Look no further. In no particular order, here are 50 of our Valley favorites.



- 1. **Quiessence at the Farm**

One of three restaurants located at Phoenix's The Farm at South Mountain, Quiessence at the Farm comprises a farmhouse among towering trees and a beautiful patio (where you will find dreamy firepits and twinkle lights). Guests gather for a menu of ever-changing farm-fresh eats (with ingredients from purveyors like McClendon's Select, Danzeisen Dairy and Two Wash Ranch), complemented by top Arizona wines. qatthefarm.com.

- 2. **Virtú Honest Craft (pictured, by Grace Stufkosky)/Nico Heirloom Kitchen**

Chef Gio Osso has found a winning combination in his two outstanding Valley restaurants: Virtú Honest Craft makes for the ultimate date night with an intimate setting and some of Scottsdale's most remarkable dishes (his charred octopus is what dreams are made of) while Nico, which opened early this year, serves the same quality eats at a slightly lower price point in a comfortable, more family-friendly setting (it was named after Osso's young son, after all) to accommodate its Gilbert-area crowd. virtuscottsdale.com; nicoaz.com.

- 3. **The Mission/The House Brasserie/Zinc Bistro**

Whether your cravings call for impeccable Latin fare, French-inspired eats or cozy, Modern American cuisine, you better believe one of these romantic sister Scottsdale restaurants will deliver. Chef Matt Carter dishes up some of the Valley's most impressive Latin dishes at The Mission in Old Town (alongside divine cocktails) while Kierland Commons' Zinc Bistro features French faves like onion soup and croque monsieur. At the charming House Brasserie, nibble on a selection of shared plates with friends, including Maine lobster gnocchi and steak tartare. themissionaz.com; zincbistroaz.com; thehousebrasserie.com.

Coming Soon: The Mission opens a second location at Kierland Commons.

- 4. **Crudo/Okra Cookhouse & Cocktails**

Chef Cullen Campbell is the mastermind behind these two unique and highly successful Phoenix eateries. Crudo makes waves with its highly inventive Modern Italian fare, and Okra, which opened in 2015, specializes in Southern eats with an Italian twist in downright divine dishes like fried chicken skins with honey hot sauce. Micah Olson heads up the bar at both establishments, crafting some of the Valley's most standout sips. crudoaz.com; okraaz.com.

Okra offers a daily hot dog happy hour featuring a special tender belly hot dog creation.

- 5. **elements**

Super-stylish with innovative cuisine and a Food Network personality at the helm, elements at Sanctuary on Camelback remains one of the top spots in the Valley to see and be seen (when you want the meal of a lifetime, that is). Come dinnertime, enjoy creative dishes like kimchi bacon, escargot potpie and foie gras and wild mushroom risotta—with a side of those Camelback Mountain panoramas. sanctuaryoncamelback.com.

- 6. **Christopher's Restaurant & Crush Lounge**

He's been in the kitchen with Julia Child and made dinner for Martha Stewart. With experiences such as these, it is no shock that even a casual

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dinner on a random Tuesday night by Chef Christopher Gross is something special. Christopher's Restaurant & Crush Lounge at Biltmore Fashion Park dishes up French-inspired fare, like roasted foie gras, pig's feet and sweetbreads, in a setting that is handsome and elegant, yet far from stuffy and snooty. christophersaz.com.

James Beard Foundation Award winner!

- **7. House of Tricks**

Situated in two historic bungalows in Tempe, House of Tricks has been a Valley institution for more than 25 years. Enjoy Contemporary American cuisine, in the form of grilled orata or almond-crusted rack of lamb, for instance, on the lush, twinkle-light patio or inside the nearly 100-year-old, art-filled cottages. Pop in for the Farmers' Market Special, as Chef Andrea Bales goes to the market to choose produce, then showcases it in a special dish for lunch on Monday. A portion of the proceeds of each special is donated to the Tempe Mission Campaign, which supports local nonprofits that help the homeless. houseoftricks.com.

- **8. Different Pointe of View**

The longest-running Four-Diamond restaurant in the state, Different Pointe of View (it's been around for more than 31 years) also proffers some of the most gorgeous mountain and city-light views. Located at Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs Resort, which just completed a multi-million-dollar renovation, the super-romantic spot dishes out such decadent eats as truffle-grilled filet mignon and Tahitian vanilla bean crème brûlée dessert. tapatiocliffshilton.com.

- **9. Talavera/Proof, an American Canteen**

One is among the Valley's most spectacular fine-dining destinations while the other is a cool, casual beer-drinker's paradise. One boasts foie gras and Chilean sea bass on its lineup while the other might have the most impressive dessert menu in the Valley (hello, the Cereal Milkshake). Whatever you're craving, Talavera or Proof, an American Canteen has just what you need to meet your hankering—with stellar mountain views, to boot. fourseasons.com/scottsdale.

- **10. Kai (pictured on opening page, by Debby Wolvos)**

Located at Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass in Chandler, Kai remains the only restaurant in the state to be rated Five-Star by Forbes and Five-Diamond by AAA. (It was also named among the 100 Best Restaurants for Foodies in America for 2016 and No. 3 on the 100 Best Restaurants in America, both by OpenTable.) To create such memorable cuisine, Chef de Cuisine Ryan Swanson incorporates the essence of the Pima and Maricopa tribes and locally farmed ingredients from the Gila River Indian Community. Only at Kai could an appetizer called "Hand-Picked Lettuces" be such a treat. wildhorsepassresort.com/kai.



- **11. J&G Steakhouse (pictured)**

Like amazing wine, jaw-dropping views and a stick-to-your-ribs piece of meat? Swing by J&G Steakhouse at The Phoenician for all that—and more. One of the Valley's best-looking steakhouses, the restaurant impresses our sense of sight as much as our taste buds. The menu features steakhouse classics that have been kicked up a notch—or 20—by Executive Chef Jacques Qualin. Try the J&G cheeseburger or any of the cuts of steak paired with the dreamy mac and cheese or potato gratin. jgsteakhousescottsdale.com.

J&G Steakhouse has received the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence every year since they opened in 2008, including in 2016.

- **12. Sushi Roku**

Located at W Scottsdale, it is easy to believe that Sushi Roku is one of the sexiest dining spots in the Valley. Beautiful interiors and thoughtful presentation make for plenty of eye candy, while diners can't get enough of the creative sushi dishes that even non-seafoodies will want to savor, like the popcorn shrimp roll with jalapeño. Finish your feast with the s'mores dessert—a Zen garden of crushed graham cracker, vanilla cream, chocolate and green tea truffles and a personal fire for warming it all up. innovatedining.com/restaurants/sushiroku.

- **13. Andreoli Italian Grocery**

Part restaurant, part market—all delicious. Locals pop into Andreoli Italian Grocery to pick up sometimes hard-to-find Italian ingredients while also snatching up impeccable pasta dishes, sandwiches and salads and eyeing a pastry case filled to the brim with glorious Italian cakes and cookies. Relax with a porchetta sandwich—nibble a sfogliatelle for dessert, naturally—in the charming dining room filled with regulars and

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mismatched chairs. andreoli-grocer.com.

- **14. True Food Kitchen**

True Food Kitchen has proven once and for all that you don't have to rely on lean chicken and kale to make a healthy meal (though the restaurant makes poultry and greens enticing, too). At its two Valley locations, the Fox Restaurant Concepts eatery focuses on anti-inflammatory, nutritious eats with great flavor. New favorites include the butternut squash pizza and Chioggia beet bruschetta. truefoodkitchen.com.

- **15. El Chorro**

There are few Valley restaurants more "Arizona" than this historic landmark in Paradise Valley. A picturesque spot with a popular patio and a reputation for hosting beautiful weddings, El Chorro also impresses with its time-honored eats, like shrimp cocktail, bourbon cream corn and beef stroganoff. Just don't fill up on the gratis sticky buns pre-meal—you've been warned. elchorro.com.

- **16. Michael Mina's Bourbon Steak/La Hacienda by Richard Sandoval**

Found at Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, Michael Mina's Bourbon Steak and La Hacienda by Richard Sandoval have delighted resort guests and locals for years with first-class service and, of course, impressive eats. At Bourbon Steak, dig into both Japanese and American wagyu beef selections (and don't forget the truffled macaroni gratin on the side). From tacos to a guacamole sampler to enchiladas, La Hacienda is home to what might be the best Mexican dining in Scottsdale—with more than 200 tequilas to wash it all down. scottsdaleprincess.com.

- **17. Marcellino Ristorante**

In October, Marcellino Ristorante celebrated 13 years in the Valley, hand-crafting the best pasta in Scottsdale daily (the server may even bring out samples of each featured pasta to view) with one of the area's most affable chefs at the helm, Chef Marcellino Verzino. Toast with him at Chef's Island for a personalized, intimate four- to six-course feast (taking place monthly) or enjoy live music on Thursday and Saturday nights and world-class service in the main dining room. marcellinoristorante.com.

- **18. Cibo Urban Pizzeria**

In a 1913 bungalow in Downtown Phoenix, Cibo Urban Pizzeria dishes out some of the Valley's most beloved slices and glorious handmade pastas. (The restaurant itself with is a charmer too, thanks to exposed brick, a fireplace, hardwood floors, stained glass and a twinkle-light patio.) More than 20 artisanal pizza options fill the menu, so grab some pals and order up a few. cibophoenix.com.

- **19. Cowboy Ciao**

The coming year marks the 20th anniversary of the beloved Old Town staple, Cowboy Ciao. To celebrate, on Sunday, Feb 12, join in the five-course 20th Anniversary Alumni Dinner. Nobuo Fukuda, Gio Osso and Keenan Bosworth are among the chefs slated to take part. \$150 per person includes wine pairings; \$125 for cocktail pairings. cowboyciao.com.

- **20. Clever Koi**

Via Clever Koi's Asian-inspired menu, guests of the Phoenix restaurant are taken on quite the journey of sweet, spicy, savory—often in one delectable dish. Start with a few steamed buns or the Pig Face dumpling before digging into Clever Koi's ever-changing ramen selections, with the seasonal pick always being the favorite. thecleverkoi.com.

A second location just opened in Gilbert.



- **21. deseo**

Even with a new face in the kitchen, Chef Derek Biazo of deseo at The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa has kept the Nuevo Latino restaurant a food force to be reckoned with. Don't dare miss a starter of ceviche and a freshly muddled cocktail, though a pick among the menu's South

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American wines will also keep you satiated. For a meaty main, check out the feijoada wagyu or Duroc pork chops. kierlandresort.com.

- **22. The Gladly**

From the just-opened raw bar to one of the Valley's best happy hours (every day from 3 to 6 p.m.), The Gladly in Phoenix has been an area favorite since it opened in 2014. The restaurant is home of The Original Chopped Salad, which has its own Facebook page, but the menu's impressive dishes do not stop there. Try the duck meatloaf, shiitake wagyu burger and, for dessert, the banana cream pie jar. thegladly.com.

- **23. Prado (pictured)**

At Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia, Prado dishes up incredible wood-fired Spanish-inspired eats in a beautiful fine-dining atmosphere. This New Year's Eve, diners are invited to elevate their holiday dining experience at a fireside table reserved exclusively for you and your guest, complete with vintage Champagne, dedicated service and an over-the-top seafood tower. The experience can be capped off with floral arrangements, candles, live entertainment, a midnight balloon drop and luxury overnight accommodations. omnimontelucia.com.

- **24. NEWBIE Artizen, Crafted American Kitchen & Bar**

You can find this wonderful Valley newcomer at The Camby in Phoenix. Decked in deep blues and rich copper tones, Artizen, Crafted American Kitchen & Bar impresses the eyes before moving onto the taste buds. Kick off your meal with the unique burrata salad, with roasted strawberries and hazelnut vinaigrette, before digging into a hearty main dish. Perhaps the sage tagliatelle or pork osso bucco? artizenaz.com.

Check out the new Sunday brunch!

- **25. NEWBIE Bitter & Twisted Cocktail Parlour**

Since opening its doors in 2015, Bitter & Twisted Cocktail Parlour has become the top spot in Downtown Phoenix for innovative, sometimes over-the-top cocktails. Its 32-page Book O' Cocktails (which is a work of art itself) features dozens of unique and delicious offerings, whether you want something timeless and traditional or outside of the box—or cup, rather—like the Duck Bath Punch, presented in a miniature porcelain tub. Hungry? You can't go wrong with Chef Bob Tam's ramen "Momo" burger, served on crisp ramen buns. bitterandtwistedaz.com.

Tales of the Cocktail nomination in 2016!

- **26. NEWBIE Ocotillo**

New to the Phoenix dining scene, Ocotillo has already made a good impression thanks to its New American menu—with an Arizona flair—and its too-cool outdoor dining spaces. Though sizable fish, meat and pasta entrees are available, order up several ever-changing small plates and salads and grab a spot at the high-rise community table. ocotillophx.com.

Buzzworthy: The on-site coffee bar is open until 2 p.m.

- **27. Nobuo at Teeter House**

From his James Beard Foundation Award to his 30 years of experience, Chef Nobuo Fukuda has long been a culinary tour de force in the Valley. At his Modern Japanese restaurant in Phoenix, Nobuo at Teeter House, the gourmet genius dishes up the super-inventive and artful omakase that he has become known for. nobuofukuda.com.

- **28. Pizzeria Bianco/Tratto**

Renowned chef and pizza maker Chris Bianco created next-door-neighboring restaurants Pizzeria Bianco and Tratto in Phoenix. Pizzeria Bianco, a rustic building of brick and wood with two Phoenix locations, serves what has been called the nation's best wood-fired pizzas like margherita and Biancoverde with smoked mozzarella. A bright and inviting establishment with a white color scheme and colorful jars of foods adorning the shelves, Tratto offers upscale Italian cuisine and cocktails. pizzeriabianco.com; trattophx.com.

- **29. POSH Improvisational Cuisine**

Hospitality and a personalized touch to one's dining experience are taken to a whole new level at POSH Improvisational Cuisine. A high-end establishment in Scottsdale, guests provide the chef with their dining preferences and dislikes, as well as food allergies or restrictions. A specialized menu is then created with each guest's unique desires in mind. While there is no set menu, seasonal offerings include fennel-dusted California halibut, shaved porcini mushroom salad and prime New York strip with wild mushroom ragout. poshscottsdale.com.

- **30. Barrio Café**

Barrio Café, from former Woman Who Moves the Valley, Chef Silvana Salcido Esparza, creates regional Mexican cuisine including sopas (thick tortillas with vegetable and meat toppings), tacos and enchiladas among a variety of other authentic dishes, along with an extensive list of margaritas. With its vibrant, street-style art on the walls and in the parking area, this eatery is always lively and bustling with patrons. barriocafe.com.

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- 31. **Tarbell's**

A classy establishment with a modern flare that has hosted many a special-occasion dinner, Tarbell's in Phoenix prides itself on an atmosphere of "refined relaxation." Chef and owner Mark Tarbell's chic spot serves wines from around the world, quality, Contemporary American food, produce from local farmers and hand-selected meats. Have a seat at the expansive bar, and enjoy a glass of French rosé. tarbells.com.

- 32. **Vincent on Camelback**

Chef Vincent Guerithault brings his training in classic French cuisine to the table at 30-year-old Vincent on Camelback and pairs it with the unique ingredients only the Southwest can provide. Although set in Phoenix, the restaurant's charming atmosphere and exemplary staff will make guests feel as though they're spending the evening in France. vincentsoncamelback.com

- 33. **FnB**

A gourmet gastropub in Downtown Scottsdale, FnB employs a mix of modern and classic style interior with elaborate lighting and chandeliers overhead. A farm-to-table experience, many of the ingredients that go into its dishes come from local farms—and FnB prides itself on offering a variety of Arizona-sourced wines by the bottle like Rune Grenache (Cochise County) and Callaghan's Lisa's White Blend (Sonoita). FnB's menu changes with the seasons. fnbrestaurant.com.

- 34. **Roka Akor**

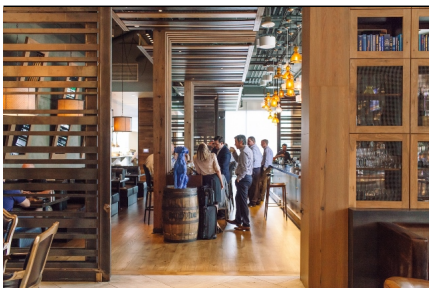
Employing the robata Japanese-style cuisine, Roka Akor is a Japanese steakhouse, seafood and sushi restaurant in Scottsdale that exudes energy and sophistication. Food is cooked on a 12-ft. robata grill with mesquite charcoal and almond wood. And it's bound to get hot—this grill, similar to a barbecue, can get up to 1,900 degrees. The name Roka Akor is a play on "Ro," which means "hearth," and "Ka," meaning "burning fire." Soak up this exuberant atmosphere with sushi and sake. rokaakor.com.

- 35. **The Parlor**

With gorgeous execution and fresh ingredients, The Parlor offers magnificent Italian fare. Get your pizza fix, but do it with style and sophistication. The restaurant has its own gardens where produce is freshly harvested, and everything from pastries to pastas are handmade daily. Wood-fired pizzas include varieties like the Smokey pizza (speck, smoked tomato sauce, olive tapenade, ricotta, smoked mozzarella and arugula) and the Autunalle (prosciutto, caramelized onion, sweet potato ricotta, fig jam, almond and arugula). While the building of this Phoenix restaurant used to be a hair salon, The Parlor has transformed the space into a jovial Italian eatery. theparlor.us.

- 36. **Beckett's Table (pictured)**

Located in the Arcadia neighborhood in Phoenix, Beckett's Table blends elegance with comfort food in an inviting atmosphere. Appetizers include roasted Brussels sprouts with lemon-basil vinaigrette, while entrées include everything from seared organic Scottish salmon to bacon cheeseburgers. The restaurant itself has a sleek, modern warehouse style to it, with a comfortable rustic feel. Founded by four close friends, restaurant namesake and chef Justin Beckett partners with local Arizona farmers for fresh ingredients, evoking the fond memories of home-cooked meals. beckettstable.com.



- 37. **Los Sombreros**

Owner and chef, Azucena Tovar, who was born in San Miguel de Allende in Central Mexico, brings the essence of Mexico to life with authentic dishes like green corn tamales, crepas (Mexican crepes) and mole poblano. Los Sombreros, a longtime Valley landmark that opened in 1994,

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serves its food on bright dinnerware and has a lively atmosphere with ambient lighting and Mexican artwork. lossombreros.com.

- 38. **Pomo Pizzeria**

Handcrafted authentic Neapolitan pizza in the true spirit of Napoli, Italy—this is what you get at Pomo Pizzeria, located across the Valley. With wood-burning ovens and an old family recipe, Pomo uses slow-rising sourdough with organic wheat flour imported from Naples (the impeccable lasagna is drool-worthy, too). Sit back, relax, and enjoy; the aroma of Italian cooking is in the air. pomopizzeria.com.

- 39. **Blue Hound Kitchen + Cocktails (pictured)**

In the heart of Downtown Phoenix, Blue Hound Kitchen + Cocktails is a relaxed neighborhood joint with a stellar bar program where diners can get comfy and breathe easy amidst the bustling cityscape. Blue Hound Kitchen has dozens of hanging lights, wood floors, wood-slatted ceilings and a bright, welcoming ambience. As part of the winter menu, enjoy food like deviled eggs with bacon jam, roasted chicken, blackened salmon or handmade pasta with pumpkin seed pesto, Marsala wine, butternut, mushrooms and sage. bluehoundkitchen.com.

- 40. **St. Francis**

Nestled within uptown Phoenix, St. Francis is a family-owned establishment with an atmosphere that's all about comfort and contemporary vibes. Brick walls, wood-beamed ceilings and a warm glow cater to the restaurant's rustic aesthetic. The wood-burning oven at St. Francis, which uses mesquite for its smokiness and almond for its heat, is what makes this restaurant truly stand out. Nearly every dish incorporates the oven in some way, whether it be roasted meats or roasted vegetables pureed to make sauce. From the wood-fired oven specifically, guests might try the Moroccan meatballs, pork chile verde or roasted chicken. stfrancisaz.com.

Kids eat free!

- 41. **T. Cook's**

Located at the Royal Palms Resort & Spa in Phoenix, T. Cook's serves fresh, seasonal provisions with a Mediterranean flare. We suggest planning a romantic date near one of the restaurant's cozy fireplaces, or spend a night with friends sampling spirits in the glass-enclosed Wine and Tequila tasting room. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are offered and visitors can enjoy a market brunch buffet every Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with fresh-baked pastries, mimosas, Bloody Marys and more. tcookspheonix.com.

- 42. **Postino WineCafe**

Postino Winecafe, with popular locations Valleywide, is known for its delicious and wide selection of bruschetta and expansive wine-by-the-glass program. Paired with a glass of wine and a group of good friends, this is the perfect place to spend a relaxing evening in a modern, lively environment (if you get seated in one of the cozy couch areas, even better). Order the pub board with soft pretzels and aged cheddar to start, then let the night unfold from there. postinowinecafe.com.

- 43. **LON's at the Hermosa**

A part of the Scottsdale luxury boutique hotel, The Hermosa Inn, LON's serves gourmet globally inspired Arizona fare including brunch (on weekends), lunch, dinner, drinks and dessert. As part of a resort-wise expansion, LON's interior design will also be getting an upgrade with new artwork, linens, tablescapes and other décor to give a larger sense of luxury; this is a Four-Diamond restaurant, after all. Make this culinary experience an all-night affair with the "Night at LON's" package, where guests are offered a one-night stay at the inn as well. hermosainn.com/lons.



- 44. **Sedona spotlight: Cress on Oak Creek**

A fairytale scene with glowing lanterns and candlelit tables, Cress on Oak Creek's unique dining experience allows guests to enjoy exquisite and artistic cuisine along the banks of the beautiful Oak Creek. Trees surround the stone floor of the outdoor patio, while clear crisp water rushes past, making it feel as though you're nestled right within an idyllic forest scene. The fine-dining establishment uses local, organic ingredients as often as possible. Cress on Oak Creek is part of the luxurious L'Auberge de Sedona resort. lauberge.com/cress.

- 45. **Sedona spotlight: Mariposa Latin Inspired Grill (pictured)**

Moving from the fashion industry to culinary arts, chef and restaurateur Lisa Dahl brings the flair of South American cuisine to northern Arizona

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with her Latin-inspired grill, Mariposa. Gorgeous architecture, floor-to-ceiling windows and a spacious patio offer views of Sedona's spellbinding red rocks. You've got to try the fried avocados, filet mignon, yucca fries or skirt steak chimichurri. In addition, chef Dahl makes handmade empanadas, ceviches, grilled chorizo and more on a wood-fired grill and wood-burning oven. mariposasedona.com.

- 46. **Sedona spotlight: Elote**

Chef Jeff Smedstad spent 15 years in total traveling Mexico to develop the fabulous Mexican cuisine offered at Elote Cafe in Sedona. Featuring local products like wines from Page Springs Winery and Sedona/Verde Valley produce, Elote is a fantastic place to get your fill of spicy, flavorful Mexican dishes amidst the beauty of the Sedona landscape. In addition to entrée items like roasted squash chile relleno, flat iron asada and camarones en chipotle, Elote serves a stellar selection of tequila. elotecafe.com.



Publisher Picks

Arizona Foothills Magazine president and publisher, Michael Dee, dishes on a few of his local faves.

The Henry A top spot to see and be seen in the Valley, The Henry in Phoenix offers up delectable breakfast, lunch and dinner menus, in addition to popular weekend brunch and an amazing grab-and-go coffee shop (get The Wildflower for a sweet start to the day). foxrc.com.

Steak 44 A romantic respite for date night, the ultra-sexy Steak 44 in Phoenix is a dinner-only establishment with a menu of fresh seafood, prime steaks and nearly 20 side dishes to round out your meal. steak44.com.

Spiga With a menu inspired by Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, Spiga in North Scottsdale dishes out glorious pastas (the tortiglioni portobello is an absolute must), pizzas, seafood and meat dishes in a comfortable, handsome dining room—or on the beautiful, linger-a-while patio. spigaaz.com.

CORE Kitchen & Wine Bar Nearly 3,000 bottles of wine (including the restaurant's own Cuvée) and a new menu with crowd-favorite pan-seared barramundi greet guests of CORE Kitchen & Wine Bar at the lovely Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain resort in Marana. ritzcarlton.com/dovemountain.