

Arizona's 50 Best Restaurants 2014

Written by Ashley R. Carlson and Melissa Larsen

Monday, 15 September 2014 09:10 - Last Updated Monday, 15 September 2014 12:35



We sure are lucky to call Arizona home. The Valley is chock-full of amazing, one-of-a-kind dining destinations. From old timers that have appeared on our list for years (hello, Vincent on Camelback and Tarbell's) to taste bud-tantalizing newcomers (like SumoMaya and Virtu), here are 50 of our favorite restaurants in the Valley--plus a few out-of-towners that we can't get enough of.



Virtù

Even *Esquire* is a fan of this Scottsdale eatery. Small (both restaurant and menu size) but mighty, Virtù dishes up some of the Valley's most beautifully presented and inventive eats, thanks to the remarkable talents of Chef Gio Osso. On a sample night, diners might enjoy the prosciutto-wrapped pork rib chop or squid ink linguine. The cocktails are likewise delectable. virtuscottsdale.com/menu.



Binkley's Restaurant

Chef Kevin Binkley's flagship restaurant, Binkley's Restaurant in Cave Creek dishes up a large variety of amuse bouche, designed to give diners variety in their tasting adventure. Though four-, five- or six-course tasting menus are available, dishes can be ordered individually. Tell the babysitter you'll be out for a while; this is the sort of fine-dining, one-of-a-kind experience you'll want to linger over for a while. binkleysrestaurant.com.



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FnB

This Scottsdale restaurant is known for its farm-to-table approach, with a seasonal menu that boasts local food and wine from Arizona purveyors. FnB has been featured in such prestigious publications as *Food & Wine Magazine* and *The New York Times*, and has won numerous Critic's Pick awards since opening its doors in 2009. Be sure to try the current menu's pickled shrimp appetizer, or the mouth-watering California halibut with Colombian rice. fnbrestaurant.com.



Roka Akor

Branching away from its London predecessor, Roka Akor boasts an impressive steak and seafood menu at its chic Scottsdale location. Named one of the "top 10 sushi spots in the U.S." by *Bon Appetit*, Executive Chef German Segal's love of contemporary Japanese cuisine is recognized by every diner. The Scottsdale restaurant has a private dining room for parties, as well as an extensive Happy Hour menu including prime beef burgers with wasabi aioli, butterfish tataki, and a soft shell crab sandwich. rokaakor.com.



St. Francis

Nestled in an unassuming alcove of busy Camelback Road, St. Francis's merging of rustic interior woods and a cool, modern exterior bar area evokes tones of its seasonally rotating menu. This family-owned restaurant is known for its daily house-made baguettes—available to take home—and innovative takes on wood-fired flatbreads and sandwiches (the chicken salad with currants and pine nuts is spectacular). Further exemplifying its neighborhood nature, St. Francis offers children 10 and under a completely free kid's menu. stfrancisaz.com.



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Sushi Roku

With a prime location in the trendy Old Town Scottsdale area, Sushi Roku heightens the bar for fresh, artistic sushi with non-traditional influences from around the globe. The interior of the Scottsdale location is both breathtaking and understated, accented by the extensive menu of cold appetizers—edamame with truffle butter is a highlight—sashimi, and fish or steak entrees. Sushi Roku is a Valley place to see, be seen, and enjoy creative seafood in the desert. innovativedining.com/restaurants/sushiroku.



Crudo

At Phoenix-based Crudo, think sashimi with an Italian-style flair—a unique and memorable cuisine you won't find anywhere else in the Valley. Crudo's squid ink risotta is the stuff dreams are made of, while the restaurant's cocktail program is just as remarkable. Check the Web site to keep up to date on Crudo's many tasting and pairing events. crudoaz.com



Andreoli Italian Grocer

Though this combined store and restaurant are smack-dab in the Arizona desert, one sniff of Chef Giovanni Scorzo's changing daily menu will transport you straight to the streets of Italy. Reviewed by numerous prestigious publications, the votes are in: Andreoli Italian Grocer is *the* place for locals and ex-pats alike to enjoy a plate of authentic Italian cuisine. Check the Web site beforehand to see what the chef's special is for the day; past dishes include Pesce Misto with fresh swordfish, calamari, and shrimp, and Penne Bottarga, a mouthwatering pasta dish topped with caviar. andreoli-grocer.com.

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True Food Kitchen

This popular restaurant has burst onto the Phoenix restaurant scene with its message that healthy food can still be *delicious*. True Food Kitchen bases its menu off of an anti-inflammatory diet; offering healthful vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options that still tickle the taste buds of even the pickiest of diners. Choose from extensive food and drink menus that offer choices like the antioxidant-filled Medicine Man beverage, tzatziki-slathered quinoa burger and gluten-free flourless chocolate cake. Diners can also grab a fresh juice to go at the restaurant's new July True, located at the Scottsdale Quarter True Food outpost. truefoodkitchen.com.



La Grande Orange

Tucked among the boutiques of Phoenix's hip central area, La Grande Orange is not your average pizzeria. Executive Chef Shay Gau promises that the inventive menu contains only natural ingredients, many of them locally-sourced. Be sure to try the variety of cheeses, meats, and uniquely-topped pizzas offered, highlights among them being the avocado and prosciutto pizza and smoked salmon salad. Libations aplenty also entice many diners—La Grande Orange offers a wide variety of local beers as well as the tummy-healing elixir, Kombucha, on draft. lagrandeorangegrocery.com.



Fogo de Chao

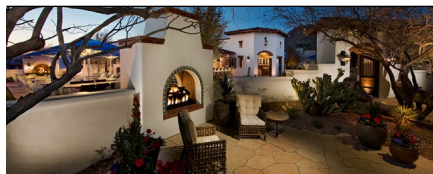
This world-renowned Brazilian steakhouse in the heart of Downtown Scottsdale is sure to turn heads not only with its exotic South American interior design, but the unique way of serving that Fogo de Chao is famous for. With a prix fixe menu for both lunch and dinner, diners are invited to partake in the 16 different meat choices that are brought to the table, sliced and served by gaucho chefs throughout the meal. A

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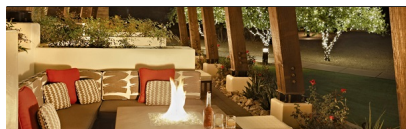
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palatable array of sides are offered at the salad bar including aged cheeses, meats, and fresh veggies, and be sure to finish the meal with Fogo De Chao's signature Papaya Cream dessert. fogodechao.com.



El Chorro

A staple of Paradise Valley since 1937, this upscale American-style restaurant and winner of the 2014 OpenTable Diner's Choice Award has been impressing diners for decades. The sumptuous white terra cotta buildings and alcove fireplaces give the restaurant a feeling of the great Southwest, and El Chorro's famous sticky buns can't be missed. A favorite for weddings and local events, the seasonal menu includes staples such as wild salmon with beurre blanc and pan-roasted duck. elchorro.com.



Bourbon Steak/La Hacienda at Fairmont Scottsdale Princess

The name of this North Scottsdale restaurant leaves nothing to the imagination because it doesn't have to—it's a contemporary steakhouse through and through. A part of the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess Resort, executive chef Michael Mina promises to tantalize hotel guests and Valley residents alike with the finest cuts of beef, poultry and fish available. Serving only American Kobe and certified all-natural Angus beef, the menu boasts such options as Maine lobster pot pie, five different cuts of steak poached in butter, and the sinfully scrumptious black truffle macaroni and cheese. At La Hacienda, expect to savor some of the Valley's best Mexican fare and 200-plus tequila options. Whether you settle in for chips, salsa and cocktails with friends or for tacos, enchiladas and an indulgent queso fundido, you're in for an amazing repast. scottsdaleprincess.com/dining/bourbon-steak; fairmont.com/scottsdale/dining/la-hacienda/.



Mastro's Ocean Club

The dark woods and chandeliered-ceilings of Mastro's Ocean Club evoke a feeling of sophistication and class rarely found anymore. Priding himself on offering some of the best seafood in the Valley, executive chef Roberto Caballero's menu leaves nothing to be desired: guests can start with escargot or chilled crab legs, enjoy sautéed sea scallops or Chilean sea bass for dinner, and choose from a variety of rich desserts like crème brûlée or Mastro's Signature Warm Butter Cake to finish with. A variety of creative cocktails make the lounge—open until one a.m.—a fun place to unwind and meet other Scottsdale foodies. mastrosrestaurants.com.

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House of Tricks

For more than 25 years, House of Tricks has maintained a loyal clientele not only for its delectable contemporary American cuisine, but because the renovated farmhouse and flowered-patio are simply too romantic to pass up. This green oasis in the desert offers a seasonal menu, with current items including lavender honey-grilled quail, sumac-crust rack of lamb, and lobster tail medallions in mango salsa.

www.houseoftricks.com



LON's at the Hermosa

The culinary team at LON's at the Hermosa prides itself on a number of things, among them being culinary creativity and supporting organic produce. Apart from the traditional lunch and dinner menus, a new chef's tasting menu is offered weekly to showcase these talents, and newly-promoted executive chef James Ducas demonstrates his knowledge of European cooking techniques to every guest. Possibly the best part of LON'S at the Hermosa is the one-acre organic garden the chefs use to cook from; finding inspiration for dishes such as root vegetable bisque, or the foie gras dumpling with garden basil, from what's ripest this time of year. hermosainn.com



The Parlor

Voted Arizona's top pizza parlor by Food Network, The Parlor in trendy central Phoenix lives up to its namesake. The clean lines and low-lit interior create an understatedly-romantic atmosphere, while the extensive wine list and cocktail menu appeal to any palate. Guests are encouraged to try the Funghi, with goat cheese and truffle oil, and the pie that won them the Food Network prize—the Salsiccia, topped with sausage, radicchio and sage. theparlor.us

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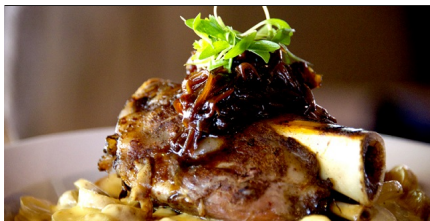
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Cibo

Tucked in the neighborhood skirting Downtown Phoenix, this urban pizzeria may blend in amongst the nearby homes, but its food certainly stands out. A quaint patio in the front filled with trees and twinkling lights gives Cibo a romantic feel not found elsewhere, and the menu is exceptional. Side up to the bar inside for a homemade limoncello, and be sure to try one of the handmade pasta specials—changed monthly—and memorable pizza choices including the Tartufata, a hand-tossed pie with prosciutto and white mushrooms, and the Procida, with Asian pears and goat cheese. cibophoenix.com.



Cowboy Ciao

This bustling restaurant in Scottsdale prides itself on presenting a menu that evokes flavors that the title suggests—Modern American with a Southwestern flair and global influences. With a wine list that boasts nearly 1,800 choices, the food isn't the only impressive facet of Cowboy Ciao. The delectable brunch on Sundays also cannot be missed—inventive Bloody Marys and items like bacon doughnuts and “pig ‘n grits” are sure to impress. cowboyciao.com.



Citizen Public House

The stainless-steel bar, dark wood accents and leather booths of this Old Town Scottsdale restaurant suggest to every diner its simple motto: “new-fashioned fun.” A gastropub that prides itself on contemporary cocktails, craft beers and innovative cuisine, Citizen Public House is so popular with locals that a Saturday night table is impossible to get without a reservation. The tender belly pork chop and truffle grilled cheese are luscious choices, but for some lighter fare, the “Original Chopped Salad” (the item has its own Facebook page!) is divine. citizenpublichouse.com.

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Beckett's Table

Chef Justin Beckett of Beckett's Table is a Best Chefs America 2013 winner, and once you try the bacon cheddar biscuits with homemade apple butter, you'll know exactly why. This restaurant in Phoenix is styled to look like a traditional farmhouse, with wooden accents, exposed ceilings and fresh sprigs of herbs atop each table. A supporter of local farmers and produce, Beckett's Table offers a seasonal menu that combines rich cuts of meat and fish with fresh vegetables and sauces like béarnaise or pickled blackberries. Chocolate-dipped bacon s'mores are just one of the mouthwatering ways to end the evening. Also, check out Chef Beckett's newly opened Southern Rail. beckettstable.com.



Los Sombreros

This Mexican restaurant in Scottsdale boasts an authentic menu not found in many other places of the Valley. Housed in a renovated cantina-style building with an impressive patio, owner Azucena Tovar finds inspiration from her own family's recipes and skillfully translates them to the plate. The chicken enmoladas with mole poblano sauce are revered by diners, as is the snapper, with chipotle cream and balsamic honey. Come Christmastime, locals line up for a box of Los Sombreros' tamales. lossombreros.com.



Petite Maison

A modern French restaurant in the heart of the desert, Petite Maison and Chef James Porter pride themselves on creating genuine French cuisine with an emphasis on sophistication. The seasonally-changing menu currently offers such traditional choices as crispy frog legs with deviled duck yolks, foie gras, and Mediterranean bouillabaisse. Happy Hour is Tuesday through Sunday from 3 to 6 p.m., with a variety of delicious cocktails and small plates include lobster poutine and aged cheeses to munch on. petitemaisonaz.com.



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deseo

Meaning “desire” in Spanish, deseo is a restaurant within the Westin Kierland Resort that showcases a flavorful take on Latin cuisine. Colorful wall murals, red upholstery and rich mahogany punctuate this space with a warm, inviting atmosphere. deseo is known for its “muddle bar,” where a variety of cocktails are created with skillful hands, and can be accompanied by the extensive list of ceviches offered, including lobster escabeche and yellow fin tuna with mango. kierlandresort.com/fine-dining-at-scottsdale-restaurants/deseo-nuevo-latino-cuisine.



Zinc Bistro

Named one of *Food and Wine Magazine's* Top 10 Bistros in North America, Zinc Bistro in North Scottsdale exudes classicism from another time. The wrap-around patio and Old World atmosphere transport each diner to a European café, complete with white tablecloths, intimate seating, and a formidable Eiffel Tower in the middle of the dining room. The menu—with titles in French—offers guests such items as fromage and charcuterie, roasted filet mignon with foie gras, or the dinner for two option: a three-course meal finished off with a hazelnut mocha soufflé. zincbistroaz.com.



Nobuo at Teeter House

James Beard Award winner and Phoenix chef Nobuo Fukuda opened this Asian-style teahouse to encourage guests to forget their preconceived notions of what sushi and teriyaki taste like. Innovative preparation and a seasonal menu keep Nobuo at Teeter House's menu fresh and exciting; Tako and Tomato (grilled octopus and mozzarella) is a standout item, as is the sake-steamed clams. Schedule a reservation for the weekend tasting menu; a four-course celebration of Asian cuisine including vegetable antipasto, sashimi and a choice of entrée. nobuofukuda.com.



Shinbay

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A Japanese restaurant that promises to transport diners through a culinary journey, Shinbay in Scottsdale is unlike anywhere you've eaten before. Executive chef Shinji Kurita prides himself on the Chef's tasting option; a five-course meal that changes daily, but has included such items as white fish carpaccio, washugyu beef with asparagus, and steamed Asari clams. The décor radiates minimalism and traditional Japanese architecture, with cool blue lighting, gray stone walls, and a maple wooden bar top; perfect for focusing attention on the delightful cuisine. shinbay.com.



Pizzeria Bianco

For years, pizza lovers have waited outside the Downtown Phoenix restaurant for hours for one of James Beard Foundation Award-winning Chef Chris Bianco's amazing pies. Now, the restaurant boasts three restaurants (in Phoenix's Town & Country and Tucson) and has even introduced pasta to its delicious lineup (at the Town & Country outpost). Order up the Wiseguy and taste why Pizzeria Bianco has been a Valley favorite for 25 years. pizzeriabianco.com.



Quiescence

Few restaurants offer a farm-to-table experience quite like Quiescence at the Farm at South Mountain. Though the menu changes often to keep up with what's most seasonal, diners can't go wrong with the fromage board or charcuterie platter. The atmosphere is just as remarkable as the fare, thanks to tall trees, twinkling café lights and a cozy, old-house ambience. thefarmatsouthmountain.com/quiescence-restaurant.



SumoMaya

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Though it has only been open for a few months, SumoMaya in Scottsdale had made a really good impression very early on. The Mexican-Asian fusion restaurant might look super-hip, but it doesn't rely solely on its good looks. After perusing the amazing cocktail list, order up any or all of these delectable dishes: hamachi ceviche, Chilean sea bass and miso eggplant. sumomaya.com.



Pomo Pizzeria

Using a 905-degree oven, Pomo Pizzeria creates earth-shatteringly-good pizza in just about a minute. The charismatic Chef Matteo Schiavone uses the same pizza-making techniques that have been used in Napoli for hundreds of years. Though you can't go wrong with any of the "wet" pizza selections, don't miss out on some of Pomo's amazing apps, like the potato croquettes. pomopizzeria.com.



T. Cook's

While you can't go wrong with the everyday menu at T. Cook's, located at Royal Palms Resort & Spa, it is the restaurant's new-ish PM31 that truly make it a culinary hot shot. Reserve your exclusive spot for PM31, and Chef Paul McCabe whips up a multi-course menu (around 10 or 12 courses) based on what is fresh and tasty. While you have to be a little daring (you won't know what you'll be feasting on until it is in front of you), the experience is one to remember. royalpalmshotel.com.

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Joe's Farm Grill

Though just recently restaurateurs have been making their way to Gilbert, Joe Johnston has seen the culinary potential in the town for many years. Joe's Farm Grill, as well as Liberty Market and Joe's Real BBQ, are longtime favorites of East Valley dwellers, especially those with tots in tow. Settle into a picnic bench at Joe's Farm Grill and dig into an amazing burger, a decadent shake and some of the restaurant's top-notch sweet potato fries. joesfarmgrill.com.



Postino Winecafe

Bruschetta, bruschetta, bruschetta. Though any and all of the Postino locales (East, Central and, the original, Winecafe) boast a great menu of fresh salads and yummy sandwiches, the dynamite bruschetta is what bring hoards of people to its doors. (The brunch menu is solid, too.) Though the design and servers are uber-hip, the atmosphere is very comfortable and casual. postinowinecafe.com.



The Mission

The Valley doesn't suffer from a shortage of great tacos and margaritas. However, somehow the eats and drinks at Chef Matt Carter's The Mission are still something special. The Mission, in Old Town, dishes up Modern Latin cuisine and everything from the pozole to the pork shoulder tacos are utterly divine. Wash them down with a blood orange margarita. themissionaz.com.



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Noca

Though there have a handful of chef changes over the past few years, the quality of Noca never waned; the Phoenix restaurant has always consistently provided one of the most top-notch dining experiences in the Valley (which is why it'll be packed any night of the week). Noca's seafood is always a favorite, and Sunday Simple Suppers are always a lot of fun for the whole family. restaurantnoca.com.



POSH

One of the Valley's most unique dining experiences comes courtesy of POSH Improvisational Cuisine. At this choose-your-own-adventure Scottsdale restaurant, Chef Joshua Hebert and his team whip on an amazing meal for their diners—and you don't know what you're getting until it is sitting in front of you. Diners are asked to simply fill out a questionnaire to find out their likes, dislikes and allergies, and Chef Hebert gets to work creating a multi-course meal masterpiece that can include everything from foie gras to frog legs. poshscottsdale.com.



elements

Celebrity chef? Check. Amazing views? Check. Outstanding eats? For sure. Chef Beau Macmillan uses fresh and unique ingredients to create an impressive menu that can include Korean-style beef barbecue ribs, barbecue oysters and foie gras benedict. To keep things more casual, head next-door to jade bar for amazing cocktails and comforting eats, like truffle mac and cheese. sanctuaryoncamelback.com.

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Christopher's Restaurant and Crush Lounge

James Beard Foundation Award winner Chef Christopher Gross is a bit of a legend in the local culinary scene—and you can taste his talent for yourself at his Biltmore Fashion Park restaurant, Christopher's Restaurant and Crush Lounge. While the restaurant is gorgeous, the food impresses even more thanks to eats like Gross's amazing truffle fries, wild mushroom soup with foie gras, wood-oven pizzas and much more. christophersaz.com.



Barrio Café

Silvana Salcido Esparza, of Barrio Café, is not only a James Beard Foundation Award winner but also a former *Arizona Foothills Magazine's* Woman Who Moves the Valley. Barrio Café's Cochinita Pibil is legendary in the Valley; and be sure to save room for the acclaimed churros. For amazing tacos and horchata, try the restaurant's sister space, Barrio Queen in Old Town (and soon to open in Gilbert). barriocafe.com.



Talavera/Proof at Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North

Love comfort food, craft beer and endless desserts? Head to Proof for all of that—and some more. Proof is super-cool and super-casual, and its menu fits it perfectly with favorite like pretzel knots and a knock-out lobster roll. For dessert, check out one of the Valley's biggest dessert menus (hello, milkshakes, sundaes, floats, cakes, cookies and more). Views, vino and very, very good food; Talavera has it all. Though high-end, Talavera is far from stuffy. It has a colorful, inviting environment with stylish, oversize seating and a large patio. Expect to stay a while and sample a dish from a few of the Talavera's menu categories. The white asparagus salad and the Hawaiian octopus are great starts to your repast while the Chilean sea bass and veal are sure to satisfy a hearty appetite. proofcafeen.com/talaverarestaurant.com.

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Different Pointe of View

Few restaurants in the Valley offer a dining experience more romantic than that at Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs' Different Pointe of View. Take in the jaw-dropping Valley views—whether from the patio or while seated inside, courtesy of the floor-to-ceiling windows—and savor the Valley's best bowl of lobster bisque. For a real treat, sign up for one of the restaurant's Insider's View Wine & Dinner events. tapatiocliffshilton.com.



The House Brasserie

Another winner from Chef Matt Carter, Old Town's The House Brasserie serves up high-end Modern American fare in a super-charming old house, complete with a patio that'll make you forget you're in the desert. Sit down with friends and order a slew of the restaurant's starters (you can't go wrong) or stop brunch for weekend brunch. thehousebrasserie.com.



Kai

Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa hosts Kai restaurant, one of the Valley's most celebrated culinary experiences and a Forbes Five Star Award winner and AAA Five Diamond Award Signature Restaurant. What makes the Southwest/American cuisine at Kai, in Chandler, so memorable is that the ingredients are sourced locally from the Gila River Indian Community. wildhorsepassresort.com.

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Tarbell's

Tarbell's in Phoenix will instantly make you feel at home. It dishes up a friendly, warm atmosphere with comforting fare (though decidedly high-end—there are white tablecloths after all). Savor Mark's Mom's Mac and Cheese, Mark's Famous Spaghetti and Meatballs and Tar's Scotch Beef for an indulgent and divine dinner. tarbells.com.



Vincent on Camelback

Longevity is the name of the game at Vincent on Camelback. Since 1986, Vincent Guerithault has been one of the Valley's most respected names in the culinary world. The James Beard Foundation Award winner has a background in classic French technique, which he combines elegantly with the flavors of the Southwest. For a casual weekend activity, visit Vincent's Saturday Market October through May and order up one of Chef Guerithault's wood-fired thin-crust pizzas. vincentsoncamelback.com.



Marcellino Ristorante

Few chefs will make you feel as welcome and excited to get eatin' as Chef Marcellino Verzino at Scottsdale's Marcellino Ristorante. Settle in for authentic, lovingly cooked Italian fare while enjoying live entertainment and a romantic setting. Savor handmade pastas and sauces and one of Chef's favorites, the imported branzino. marcellinoristorante.com.

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J&G Steakhouse

At The Phoenician's J&G Steakhouse, expect steakhouse classics—that have definitely been kicked up a notch. While taking in the views (either of the city lights and mountains that surround the restaurant or its own chic interior), put a fork in a selection of mighty meats and seafood dishes and pair them with starters like the ultra-cooling watermelon gazpacho and sides like the salt and pepper baked potato.

jgsteakhousescottsdale.com.



Isabella's Kitchen

For traditional Italian cooking, Isabella's Kitchen dishes up rustic-style dishes that Grandma would have made. Try any of the yummy hand-stretched pizzas, the pork Milanese or the lasagna for a comforting, delicious feast. Come fall, grab a seat outside by the firepit and golf course views. grayhawkgolf.com/isabellaskitchen/.



SASSI

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Looking for romance? SASSI in Scottsdale has that and oh so much more--it does happen to be a popular wedding destination, after all. Dine of fresh fish, fine meats and handcrafted pasta all while feeling as if you have been transported to an Italian villa. Wine lovers also flock to SASSI for an amazing selection of sips. sassi.biz.



And a few Southern and Northern Arizona standouts to check out on your next road trip.

Flagstaff: [Coppa Café](#) (pictured); [Criollo Latin Kitchen](#)

Sedona: [The Restaurant at L'Auberge](#)

Tucson: [CORE Kitchen + Wine Bar](#); [Downtown Kitchen + Cocktails](#)