

on the

ROAD



FORKS



When you're at the Canyon, you eat at El Tovar. Everybody knows that. But where do you go when you're in Page or Payson or Patagonia? It's not always obvious, so we've put together a list of 25 of the state's best places to grab a bite to eat. There are plenty of others, of course, but this should fill you up for a while. Bon voyage and bon appetit. ☞ BY KELLY KRAMER



When measuring the quality of a restaurant, there are three key elements to consider: food, service and ambience. The best restaurants, of course, get high marks on all three. Most, however, hit one or two — if they're lucky. And that's OK. Think about it. If there's a place with unbelievable eggplant Parmesan and friendly servers, you'll probably overlook things like peeling paint and bad lighting. That's how it is. What follows are some of our favorite restaurants from around the state. Needless to say, this is only a sample of what's out there, but it's a worthy sample that we think will come in handy the next time you hit the road. By the way, if you have a favorite restaurant that's not on our list, we'd love to hear about it. We can be reached via e-mail at editor@arizonahighways.com.

A LA CARTE Diners can enjoy L'Auberge Restaurant's French-accented fare indoors on linen-napped tables or al fresco on the banks of beautiful Oak Creek. Photograph by Geoff Gourley





CAFÉ ROKA

Bisbee



Pressure-fired bricks were relatively new in 1907, when Bisbee's Costello Building was constructed. But thanks to those bricks, the Costello Building was spared from a fire that leveled much of the mining town in 1908. Now, 100 years later, the building houses Café Roka, a three-level, internationally inspired restaurant that's been serving up some of Bisbee's finest fare since chef-owner Rod Kass moved into the Costello in 1993. Whether you're a sucker for sweet-potato strudel or have a hankering for New Zealand rack of lamb, the café has something for everyone, including history buffs. 35 Main Street, Bisbee, 520-432-5153 or caferoka.com.

BINKLEY'S

Cave Creek



Although the tiny township of Cave Creek is known mostly for being cowboy chic and chock-full of Old West honky-tonks, there's at least one restaurant where you might want to wear your dress boots. Under the guidance of chef-owner Kevin Binkley, Binkley's offers contemporary American cuisine that changes frequently — based on the availability of fresh, local ingredients and the seasonality of items that the chef must order in. So while one evening's cold appetizers might be hickory-smoked halibut with three-beet salad or

FUNKY, FANCY, FOODIE Café Roka's creative, vegetarian-leaning menu and historic building (left) embody Bisbee's artsy, old-meets-new vibe. Photograph by Edward McCain

NORTHERN EXPOSURE Ingredients fresh from Northern Arizona's farms and ranches shine in the cuisine (right) at Flagstaff's Brix, named one of *Condé Nast Traveler's* Top 95 New Restaurants in the World. Photograph by Geoff Gourley

Wellfleet oysters with marinated fingerling potatoes, the next week's entrees might include blue cheese-crusted rib-eye or bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin. 6920 E. Cave Creek Road, Cave Creek, 480-437-1072 or binkleysrestaurant.com.

PIÑON BISTRO

Cottonwood



With only a handful of linen-topped tables and a menu that incorporates market-fresh ingredients and homemade creations, Piñon Bistro is a favorite among Cottonwood locals and

tourists alike. Owned and operated by pals Terri Clements and Donna Fulton, the bistro is two parts funky and one part swanky. Decorated with fresh flowers and the works of local artists, the restaurant offers a menu that self-taught chef Fulton creates based on the season and the availability of fresh produce, meats and cheeses. And don't forget to explore the wine and dessert menus. They're loaded with delightful options, from blanc-de-blanc to Cabernet and homemade ice cream to decadent mud pie. 1075 S. State Route 260, Cottonwood, 928-649-0234.







BRIX Flagstaff

Northern Arizona is a mecca for family farms and ranches. And so, Northern Arizona restaurants are turning to those farms and ranches to add the freshest produce, poultry and beef to their menus. Brix, located in the historic Carriage House in Flagstaff, is no exception. With a dinner menu that features such selections as braised Fox Fire Farm lamb shank, grilled Cedar River Farms rib-eye, a variety of artisan cheeses and a wine list that rivals any big-city eatery, Brix is to Flagstaff what

a place like Lon's is to Paradise Valley: the go-to spot for a delicious meal in an intimate, relaxing setting. 413 N. San Francisco Street, Flagstaff, 928-213-1021 or brixflagstaff.com.

KELLY'S BROAD STREET BREWERY Globe

No one would be foolish enough to consider a J.C. Penney store a "hot spot." But that's not to say that bars and restaurants housed in former J.C. Penney stores can't be. That's the case with Kelly's Broad Street Brewery. Located,

naturally, on Globe's historic Broad Street, which is home to buildings constructed in the early 20th century, Kelly's is a favorite among the locals. What's more, it serves up some pretty good food, albeit of the bar variety, and a handful of drink specials, along with a healthy helping of dancing and karaoke. 190 N. Broad Street, Globe, 928-425-0379.

EL TOVAR DINING ROOM South Rim, Grand Canyon

Built from native stone and Oregon pine, El Tovar Dining Room at the El Tovar Hotel on the Grand Canyon's South Rim is one of the state's most famously historic restaurants. Although the dress code is casual, dining at El Tovar is often a more elegant experience than dining at a five-star eatery, primarily be-

cause several tables look directly out across the Canyon itself. That might explain why reservations are recommended as much as six months in advance. Well, that and a menu including dishes like wild Alaska salmon tostadas, natural lamb chops with roasted portobello demi-glace, and mesquite-smoked natural pork chops with Pinot Noir glaze. Grand Canyon National Park, 928-638-2631, ext. 6432.

RENDEZVOUS DINER Greer

There's something particularly rustic about life in the White Mountains, and it's a characteristic that translates well into the local cuisine. Take, for instance, Greer's Rendezvous Diner. Built in 1909, the quaint little restaurant, which has been in business for a little more than 30

OFF THE EATIN' PATH Tucked away in tiny Cottonwood but worth the trip for any foodie, Piñon Bistro (left) serves haute food in a homey, funky setting. Photograph by Geoff Gourley

NARROW ESCAPE Shaped like and named after Manhattan's slim Flatiron Building, the Flatiron Café in Jerome (above) makes an ideal retreat for a homemade pastry and a coffee klatch. Photograph by Kerrick James



RAILWAY REDUX The Turquoise Room at La Posada Hotel (above) retains many of the original touches from its former railroad-car origin. Photograph by Nick Berezenko

years, is in one of the town's oldest buildings, and prides itself on down-home, homemade cooking. The simple menu features soups, sandwiches and a slew of just-like-mom-used-to-make desserts, along with chef-owner Pauline Merrill's famous sweet rolls, meatloaf, and biscuits and gravy. 117 N. Main Street, Greer, 928-735-7483.

FLATIRON CAFÉ

Jerome



Shaped like an upended shirt box, Jerome's Flatiron Café might be named for New York's famous building, but there's nothing flat about its assortment of breakfast and lunch entrees. Small and simple, Flatiron serves a variety of inexpensively priced plates, from omelets and fresh-baked pastries to original sandwiches, wraps, soups and salads. There are several innovative dishes on the menu, too, including smoked-salmon quesadillas and black-bean hummus. And although the food is

good, the coffee's even better. Whether you are a fan of flavored lattes or regular old joe, pick up a cup for your exploration of Jerome's other attractions — the former mining town is known for its art shops and "haunted" hotels. 416 Main Street, Jerome, 928-634-2733.

MATTINA'S RISTORANTE ITALIANO

Kingman



To the casual observer, Kingman might appear to be little more than a stopping point on the long and winding road to Las

Vegas. But this town, known as the "heart of Route 66," is home to more than 60 buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although Mattina's Ristorante Italiano isn't one of them, its building is old. In fact, the 106-year-old house recently underwent a major renovation. Despite the dust, chef Carlo Peddycoat still managed to whip up his signature fare following the restaurant's Mafia theme, including prime "Al Capone" cuts of beef, sinful shrimp-and-mascarpone ravioli and fresh, butter-drenched escargots. 318 E. Oak Street, Kingman, 928-753-7504.



CHA-BONES Lake Havasu City

When it came to naming their steakhouse, Tom and Laurie Moses stayed close to home. A tribute to their college-aged son's nickname, Cha-Bones is a welcome departure from the typical bar/grill establishments that pepper Lake Havasu City. Here, inspired pastas, pizzas and chicken dishes prove the perfect complement to the restaurant's signature steaks and, of course, bones — five selections of mesquite-charcoal-broiled ribs, served with fresh vegetables and a savory starch.

And, naturally, where there's steak, there's wine. Cha-Bones' list includes plenty of inexpensively priced bottles, as well as a few "special occasion" reds, if you're so inclined. 112 London Bridge Road, Lake Havasu City, 928-854-5554 or chabones.com.

THE DAM BAR & GRILLE Page

If a trip to Glen Canyon Dam is on your to-do list, prepare with a visit to the Dam Bar & Grille in Page. Here, a 30-foot etched-glass wall and a scaled-down version of the dam will wet your whistle until you can witness the real thing. So, too, will the Grille's selection of pastas, salads, sandwiches and steaks. The menu features standard bar fare as well as items for more sophisticated palates. Try the surf 'n' turf, a combination of bacon-wrapped filet mignon and snow crab legs, or the slow-roasted half-chicken in balsamic glaze. 644 N. Navajo Street, Page, 928-645-2161 or damplaza.com/dambar.html.

LON'S AT THE HERMOSA Paradise Valley

Although they once dotted the Arizona landscape, authentic haciendas are few and far between in the state. Lon's at the Hermosa is one of the few. Once the home of famed artist Lon Megargee, Lon's is now one of the metro-Phoenix area's most intimate and beautiful restaurants, capable of accommodating 12 to 150 people. For a romantic dining experience, sit on Lon's patio, nestled perfectly in the shadow of Camelback Mountain, and sample chef Michael Rusconi's inspired creations. Typical appetizers include soups, seared ahi and braised beef short ribs, while entrees encompass the best of Southwestern cuisine, from roasted Fulton Valley free-range chicken breast with goat cheese

gnocchi to rack of lamb cased in sun-dried tomatoes and served with goat cheese herb grits, smoked peppers and Queen Creek olive jus. 5532 N. Palo Cristi Road, Paradise Valley, 602-955-7878 or lons.com.

VELVET ELVIS PIZZA COMPANY Patagonia

Cecilia San Miguel has one mission and one mission only: to "introduce customers to delicious and healthy dining alternatives." And in the striking Southern Arizona town of Patagonia, that task is becoming less daunting, as more and more restaurateurs and chefs are turning to locally grown and organic produce, meats and cheeses. Consider, for example, the menu at Velvet Elvis, where San Miguel has combined the vibrant flavors of the Southwest with a dose of vintage kitsch to create such items as the "Panchito Villa" pizza, a combination of homemade beef chorizo, fresh tomatoes, yellow onions, cilantro, fresh jalapeños, and Asiago and mozzarella cheeses. The soups, salads and calzones are equally delightful — and the King would not have it any other way. 292 Naugle Avenue, Patagonia, 520-394-2102 or velvetelvispizza.com.

EL RANCHO Payson

Arizona is known for its Sonoran-style Mexican food, and in that vein, this list would be incomplete without a couple of real Mexican restaurants. For more than 30 years, El Rancho has been plating some of the Southwest's finest fare — a fact that's been noted by the *Payson Roundup*, which consistently honors the restaurant as having the "best margarita in town" and as being the town's "best Mexican restaurant." And it's no wonder. El Rancho's menu is stocked with the requisite tacos,

chimis and burritos, along with a fine sampling of signature fare, including a bowl of piping hot green chile stew. 200 S. Beeline Highway, Payson, 928-474-3111 or elranchorestaurant.net.

PIZZERIA BIANCO Phoenix

Chris Bianco is the king of pizza. Although contenders might dispute the claim, they'd be hard-pressed to prove it wrong, especially considering that Bianco is a 2003 James Beard Award winner and that his downtown Phoenix bistro was given an amazing 29 out of 30 points by the *Zagat Dining Guide*. In fact, the only person who disputes the claim is Bianco himself, who contends that it's not about him — it's about the pizza. That's a truth evident in every pie that leaves the wood-fired oven at Pizzeria Bianco, where most guests wait hours just to be seated. Although the menu is small, it's mighty, featuring a handful of decadent pizzas, handcrafted country bread and a selection of fresh, flavorful salads. 623 E. Adams Street, Phoenix, 602-258-8300 or pizzeriabianco.com.

CHARLIE CLARK'S STEAKHOUSE Pinetop

Charlie Clark's is old — not in the Grand Canyon sense of the word, but old nonetheless. In fact, the two log cabins that currently house this steakhouse were built long before Prohibition. After the nation's liquor began flowing freely again in the early 1930s, Jake Renfro added on to the original structures and began operating his very own "Famous Log Cabin Café." Renfro sold the property to Charlie Clark in 1938, and ever since, hand-cut steaks, ribs and prime rib have become staples. 1701 E. White Mountain Boulevard, Pinetop, 928-367-4900 or charlieclarks.com.



BIN 239 Prescott

When it comes to wine cafés, Bin 239 ranks right up there among the state's best. Located on charming Marina Street in Prescott, this quaint café offers an amazing selection of wines at reasonable prices, from Oakville Cabernets to Argentinian Malbecs. What's more, the Bin's food menu features fresh selections of soups, salads, cheeses and bruschetta, and the friendly staff is always happy to offer its recommendations for food and wine pairings. For the ultimate Bin 239 experience, sample from the tasting menu. At four wines for \$12, it's a bargain and a blast. 239 N. Marina Street, Prescott, 928-445-3855 or bin239.com.

L'AUBERGE RESTAURANT ON OAK CREEK Sedona

Chances are plenty of pretty things come to mind when you're thinking about Sedona, like red rocks and sunsets and all of the other clichés. But L'Auberge Restaurant is just as pretty — not only because it sits on a prime piece of real estate on the banks of Oak Creek, but also because of its stunning menu. The chef keeps things interesting, mixing up the menu daily to reflect changing themes and changing seasons. It's a method that works, having garnered the restaurant a "Best of Award of Excellence" designation from *Wine Spectator* for 14 consecutive years. 301 L'Auberge

Lane, Sedona, 928-282-1667 or lauberge.com/dining.

HOUSE OF TRICKS Tempe

Just a block or two away from busy Mill Avenue in downtown Tempe, House of Tricks has been letting the good times roll for more than 20 years. Here, chef Kelly Fletcher tackles French and Southwestern cuisine, wrapping the two styles up into a unique fusion of flavors. At the same time, wine manager Ryan Brown selects some of the finest bottles available, creating a list that rivals that of restaurants three times Tricks' size. And although this tiny restaurant is well endowed in the good-food department, dinner is as much about the experience as it is about the eats. Mature trees and a variety of colorful plants surround the patio, so book a table and enjoy the scenery. 114 E. Seventh Street, Tempe, 480-968-1114 or houseoftricks.com.

FEAST Tucson

There's nothing fancy about Feast. It's just a regular building in a regular old neighborhood in Tucson. What's special about the place is that it's a restaurant and a catering business — everything chef-owner Doug Levy creates is available for eating-in or taking out. With a menu that rotates twice monthly, Levy creates eclectic offerings perfect for constructing a made-to-order meal. Try a parsnip salad paired with seared opah, served over rice with yellow vegetable curry salad and fried garlic. Or, get

adventurous and taste any of Levy's other clever creations. For an after-dinner treat, or while you're waiting for your order, splurge on one of his home-made desserts, like a triple chocolate terrine or chocolate truffle cookies. 4122 E. Speedway Boulevard, Tucson, 520-326-9363 or eataatfeast.com.

RANCHO DE LOS CABALLEROS Wickenburg

There are plenty of resorts in Arizona, but not many of them are "ranch" resorts, like Wickenburg's Rancho de los Caballeros. You'll find plenty to do at this splendid retreat — from horseback riding and golf to hitting the spa or the pool — but when you're done, you'll want to try the ranch's restaurant. Featuring plenty of meat-and-potatoes-type meals, as well as signature dishes that highlight the flavors of the Southwest, this isn't your typical beans-and-franks cowboy restaurant, and that's a good thing. Among other things, try the Southern quail. It's pan-fried and served over fingerling potatoes with green beans and lavender butter. 1551 S. Vulture Mine Road, Wickenburg, 928-684-5484 or sunc.com.

PLAZA RESTAURANT Willcox

Stepping into Willcox is a little like stepping onto a Wild West movie set. It's in the heart of Apache country, which means it's a bit rugged. It's also smack dab in between Phoenix and El Paso. But that's not to say the area is a wasteland of good eats.

WELL RED Co-owners Rozan and David Haines (above) dish up a warm welcome at Red Raven, an epicurean outpost in the railway town of Williams. Photograph by Geoff Gourley

FEAST, NOT FAMINE Tucson's Feast (right) redefines ho-hum takeout with its imaginative fare, which you can order online, pick up to go or savor in the restaurant's cozy confines. Photograph by Edward McCain

For casual family dining in Willcox, try Plaza Restaurant. It's open 24 hours a day and features Mexican food and American fare, from burgers and fries to a Friday night fish buffet that's popular with the locals. Plaza also offers takeout service, banquet facilities and an ultra-friendly service staff. 1190 W. Rex Allen Drive, Willcox, 520-384-3819.

RED RAVEN RESTAURANT Williams

Beyond its red front door, Williams' Red Raven Restaurant is a charming, intimate space, loaded with local artwork and plenty of charm. And beyond the kitchen doors, you'll find chef David Haines whipping up some of the finest meals in the area. His focus is on comfort food — the kind of food you'd want to eat snuggled up on a Sunday afternoon — but with a

decidedly fresh twist. Take, for example, Haines' basil-butter salmon served with cranberry-pine nut couscous, or his tenderloin of pork scaloppini. Add fine service to the great menu and the aforementioned ambience, and the Red Raven is one restaurant you'll want to visit again and again. 135 W. Route 66, Williams, 928-635-4980 or redravenrestaurant.com.

THE TURQUOISE ROOM Winslow

The Turquoise Room at La Posada Hotel and Gardens has its origins in a railroad car. In 1935, Mary Jane Colter designed the private dining car for the *Super Chief*, a train that ran from Chicago to L.A. She dubbed the dining car The Turquoise Room, and the modern version of the restaurant, opened in 2000, replicated many of the original accents — green brocade booths

and leather-and-wood chairs, to name a few. Just as elegant is The Turquoise Room's menu. It features a variety of entrees that incorporate fresh ingredients flown in from as far away as Ninilchik, Alaska, as well as plenty of homegrown items, among them piki bread made by local Hopi women. 303 E. Second Street, Winslow, 928-289-2888 or theturquoiseroom.net.

LUTES CASINO Yuma

Although Lutes Casino is currently one of Yuma's most beloved restaurants, it wasn't always like that. In fact, the building that houses the restaurant — which serves up popular diner-esque lunches and dinners — was once a pool hall where the patrons were notorious for illegal gambling and other bad behavior. Today, however, crowds line up outside

during the winter months when the weather's cool and sunny, and many of them order the special, a \$4.50 cheeseburger topped with an unusual condiment — a hot dog. 221 S. Main Street, Yuma, 928-782-2192.

BONUS: DOT'S DINER

In case you missed it, Dot's Diner is featured on the cover of this month's issue. Like the other 25 restaurants in the story you've just read, Dot's is one of the state's best. The 10-stool eatery, which is named in honor of Dot Bozeman, the restaurant's first cook and bottle washer, is a blast from the past if ever there was one. The next time you're in Bisbee, check it out. Old Douglas Road, Bisbee, 520-432-3567 or theshadydell.com. **AH**

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