

Local Chef's 15 Favorite Restaurants in Greater New Orleans

According to one authority, there are 883 restaurants now open; 809 before Katrina. (For a complete list and great gourmet information go to www.nomenu.com.)

Over the years I have had the pleasure of dining in most of these restaurants, taking menus home to imitate an entree, making changes to fit my diabetic lifestyle and recently producing my efforts in my cookbook: [Healthy New Orleans Cuisine](#).

I hope that you will enjoy at least some of these restaurants which are listed by areas of New Orleans. A ´ voltre bonne sante ´! For my 40 favorite top picks, order my book and I will enclose this list with a signed copy of my book.

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French Quarter

1) Bayona. 430 Dauphine. 525-4455. Chef Susan Spicer has a new cookbook [Crescent City Cooking](#). Nationally acclaimed cuisine is featured in this 200 year-old cottage. Try for a table in the patio if the weather allows.

The review in Fodor's says:

“Susan Spicer applies to her cooking style, which results in such signature dishes as the goat cheese croustade with mushrooms in Madeira cream, and crispy, fried smoked quail on a salad with bourbon-molasses vinaigrette. Vegetarian options include a farmers' market medley with cheddar spoon bread. These and other imaginative dishes are served in an early-19th-century Creole cottage that fairly glows with flower arrangements, elegant photographs, and trompe l'oeil murals suggesting Mediterranean landscapes.”

City Park Area

2) Liuzza's. 3636 Bienville. 482-9120 A neighborhood cafe with great onion rings and cold schooners of draft beer.

3) Cafe Degas. 3127 Esplanade. 945-5635. French: pates, French Onion Soup. Sit on the porch, have a glass of wine and watch the world go by. O Cher...

4) Ralph's On The Park. 900 City Park Ave. 488-1000. Take a cab or your car with their valet parking. (Valet parking is important to me because I have two new knees.) Ralph's features up-to-date Creole dishes with great trained service from the Brennan family group. An appetizer? Go for “Gulf Shrimp Remoulade” which is spicy boiled Gulf shrimp served on a chiffonade of romaine hearts, radicchio, mirliton, and celeriac with remoulade sauce, chopped egg, red onion, and parsley. And they know how to make gumbo. Try “Country Gumbo” which is a golden gumbo with Lake Pontchartrain blue crabs, Gulf shrimp, bayou oysters, Creole country sausage, and green onion rice.

Lakeview Area - Take a cab or your car.

5) Tony Angello's. 6262 Fleur de Lis Dr. 488-0888. “Creole Italian.” This is a jewel of a restaurant which had to be completely rebuilt (9 feet of water) after hurricane Katrina. When you go be sure to order “Feed Me” which is a generous taste of their specials, and start off with the buster (small) fried soft-shell crabs. You will not be able to finish off the meal! And believe me, the price is right as is the service. Reservations? Yes. But there is always a wait at the bar.

Mid-City Area

6) Mona's Cafe. 3901 Banks. 482-7743. This is a Middle Eastern restaurant which once was a filling station. There's convenient parking and inside and outside tables. It has great lamb dishes, fresh hummus, and baba ghanoush. It also sports a small grocery with groceries and freshly baked pita.

Metairie Area

7) Byblos, 1501 Metairie Rd. 834-9773. Another Middle Eastern place with great service and affordable prices along with wonderful food. I really enjoy the “Vegetarian Platter” which offers you your choice of four of these favorites: Hummos, Moussaka, Spinach,, Baba Ghanouj, Rice Pilaf Mujadarah, Grape Leaves, Falafel, Brown Rice, Tabbouleh, Labneh, Yogurt Salad. The service is excellent even with a full house. Reservations are accepted.

8) Cypress. 4426 Transcontinental. 885-6885. Here’s a neighborhood restaurant that I really enjoy when I have the desire for two of my favorite appetizers such as the lightly fried calamari with a citrus beurre blanc sauce, which is much better than the typical marinara sauce along with the plate of six fried to perfection oysters.

9) Sun Ray Grill. 619 Pink. 837-0055. Great table-side prepared guacamole. A couple of my favorites are the “Ahi Tuna with Two Sasames” which is sushi grade tuna seared with black and white sesame seeds, served with steamed coconut rice, asian cucumber salad, sesame ponzu sauce, pickled ginger and wasabi. And the “Two Tails & Spicy Grits” comprised of grilled jumbo shrimp over a bed of spicy jalapeno cheese grits smothered in a crawfish and mushroom pan sauce. All at very affordable prices.

10) New City Grille. 2700 Metairie Rd. 828-8484. A favorite with locals. Friends of mine recommend the baked redfish served with asparagus and the pork tenderloin on a bed of sweet potato mash, and also the excellent shrimp crab salad.

Garden District Area

11) Commander’s Palace. 1403 Washington Ave. 899-8221. Contemporary Creole. (Make reservations well in advance.) This restaurant sets the standards having raised some of the top chefs in the world. For instance an appetizer featured is “Fresh Escargot and Creole Cream Cheese Gnocchi” Which is wild Burgundy snails sautéed with toasted garlic, tasso, roasted mushrooms, soft herbs and black truffle butter.” For an entrée there’s “Crispy Soft Shell Crab”: Jumbo lump Louisiana blue crabmeat, grilled sweet corn, tiny tomatoes, pinched herbs, shaved sweet onions and organic grits with charred chili-avocado emulsion. There’s always a full house, but I like lunch-time best.

Uptown Area - River Bend - Carrollton Area

12) Brigsten’s in a Riverbend cottage, 723 Dante St., 861-7610 A couple of favorite dishes are the “Softshell Crab with Roasted Pecans & Meunière Sauce”, and the “New Orleans BBQ Shrimp with Shrimp Calas” (Creole Rice Cake). Oh so good!

13) Clancy’s. 6100 Annunciation. 895-1111. To ensure a better meal, follow the advice of those same locals and order the night's specials rather than sticking to the menu (though the duck dish on the menu is as good as duck gets). You could try the fried oysters with brie appetizer or smoked fried soft-shell crab topped with crabmeat (smoke flavor not overpowering, crab perfectly fried without a drop of grease to taint the dish), and veal topped with crabmeat and béarnaise sauce. Food too heavy? What the heck; make it even more so with desserts such as lemon icebox pie. One local said it was even better than his grandma's! Parking is a challenge and I suggest reservations be made.

14) Franky & Johnny's. 321 Arabella. 899-9146. This is a neighborhood café and favorite “watering hole” where you can get a tray of hot crawfish, a dozen crabs, or a bowl of gumbo along with a lot of other tasty stuff.

15) Pascal's Manale. 1838 Napoleon Ave. 895-4877. Creole Italian, which means a great mixture of Italian and traditional New Orleans cooking. Try their BBQ shrimp with some French bread to soak up the juices. This is New Orleans staple and should not be missed.

Healthy New Orleans Cuisine is a great new cookbook which has just been published by Mark Gasquet, a chef with about 50 years of cooking experience.

Chef Mark is diabetic and this project, which has been in the works for about six years, has been evaluated by a registered dietitian, a nutritional analysis computer program, and is in accordance with the guidelines of the American Diabetic Association. One doesn’t need to be diabetic in order to eat tasty and healthy food.

How do I know what's on the menus? I almost always ask for a menu to take home and then try to adapt what I enjoyed to my style of cooking. A´ votre bonne sant  !

For copies of the cookbook which sell for \$22.00, tax and shipping included, call (504) 733-3796 or e-mail mgasquet@aol.com.

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