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www.ckponline.com

Denver Restaurant Guide

While we have tried to make specific comments in the brief reviews, ratings, from ★ to ★★★★★, are overall ratings, most heavily influenced by the food, but also factor in ambiance, décor and service. Our cost estimates are based on one dinner with a cocktail & tip. \$ inexpensive, under \$20; \$\$ moderate, \$21 to \$30; \$\$\$ expensive, \$31 to \$50; \$\$\$\$ very expensive, over \$50.

Keep in mind that in Denver, as everywhere, restaurants and clubs can open and close, change hours, credit card policies, and even move with very short notice. Many restaurants are closed Sundays and Mondays, or even

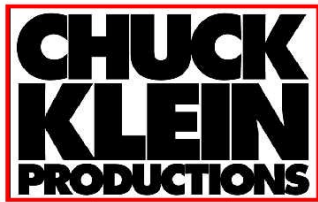
Tuesdays. We recommend calling ahead to address any special needs. Feel free to mention Chuck Klein Productions.

Barolo Grill - 3030 E. 6th Ave. (303-333-9240) \$\$\$ ★★+: Thanks to Starz' Robert Clasen for turning us on to this gem! This romantic, beautifully appointed room sets a romantic mood... with lights turned down low and a fireplace glowing softly in the background. The fare is California Italian... combining Northern Italian recipes with California ingredients. And this is the real deal... each June, the staff is flown to Italy for a month of study. Begin with a bowl of lightly battered calamari, scallops, and shrimp. The classic puttanesca, tossed with kalamata olives and grilled sardines, is killer. An excellent, pepper-crust and pan-seared rack of lamb arrives tender, succulent and perfectly pink. Impressive wines. Dessert lovers note: the crème brûlée is not to be missed.

Bistro Vendome – 1424 Larimer (303-825-3232) www.bistrovendome.com \$\$\$ ★★+: French and fabulous. Chef-owner Eric Roeder fondly describes his bill of fare as French Soul Food, and the local food press is prone to agree. Try the steak tartare... laced with onion, cumin, and sweet soy...it makes a grand appetizer. The mussels, prepared in 3 styles, are also terrific. Entrées like the trout almandine or the slow-roasted salmon with French lentils are house specialties, as is the wonderfully done Steak Frites. If the weather is fine, beg if you must, but try for a table on the patio.

Buckhorn Exchange – 1000 Osage St. (303-534-9505) www.buckhorn.com \$\$\$ ★★+: If you're not into taxidermy, stop reading now. Over 500 stuffed animal heads (elk, deer, and mountain sheep) adorn the walls of this enduring monument to the wild & wooly old west. Since its opening in 1895, when the likes of Teddy Roosevelt and Buffalo Bill Cody were among its famous customers, the Exchange has operated continuously...and by now is as much museum as restaurant. Steak, buffalo, salmon, and all manner of wild game are specialties, as well as the hearty black bean soup and a succulent pot roast sandwich. The upstairs bar is said to be one of Denver's friendliest.

Café Brazil – 4408 Lowell Blvd. (303-480-1877) \$\$\$ ★★+: Locals and tourists alike love the authentic Brazilian cuisine created here by chef-owners, Tony and Marla Zarlenga. You'll feel Rio in the air...literally. The pungent aroma of coconut and chili delicately scents the room and stirs the senses. Enjoy the rich, thick black bean soup, the wonderful calamari, and their famed



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feijoadas (a mix of beans, meat, fruit, and rice...Brazil's national dish!) should not be missed. Some lovely wines from Argentina and Chile add the perfect touch.

Brothers BBQ - 568 Washington St. (720-570-4227) www.brothers-bbq.com \$★★: Great ribs and brisket. The chicken and hot links are quite tasty, too. Their signature sauce is sweet and spicy, the beans have kick, and the coleslaw tastes crisp and fresh, with just enough bite. Quench the big thirst you can expect with their homemade sweet tea. Citysearch ranks it *Best BBQ* in town. (open Mon-Fri: 9am-5pm only)

Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steak House – 8100 E. Orchard Rd. Greenwood Village (303-796-0100) www.delfriscos.com/denver \$\$\$ ★★★: This local branch of the recognized National chain is a hang-out for local politicians and celebs doing their meat & martini thing. Lively scene, prime beef, and good drinks...you know the place. Menu offers a tasty 12 oz. filet, the traditional slab of prime rib, a hearty 24 oz Porterhouse, and their tangy peppercorn steak. Good sides...especially the potatoes. (Choose the creamy, buttery mashed, or the way-crunchy skillet-fried.) Sometimes it's so easy...steak, potatoes, martinis... We're IN!!!

Denver Chop House and Brewery - 1735 19th St. (303-296-0800) www.rockbottom.com \$\$ ★★★: Classic meat and potatoes served amidst dark wood and the tang of 7 microbrews tickling your nose. Juicy steaks, cheese-stuffed pork chops, and herb-crusted rack of lamb go great with the house special potato ...a heart-stopping white cheddar mashed. Many patrons are content to hang at the bar, sampling the beers and the excellent bar food menu...which includes a lobster pot pie and enormous onion rings that come stacked on spindle. Crowded, congenial and fun.

Dozens - 236 W. 13th Ave., (303-572-0066) \$★★: Dozens is a cheery breakfast and brunch specialist, with fluffy omelettes taking center stage. These rich and delicious egg concoctions, named after local ski zones, are loaded with all manner of meats, cheese, and veggies. Congressman, local business folk, and families can be found shoulder to shoulder enjoying up the yumminess. An outside patio, decked with fresh flowers, is a perfect place to enjoy your meal. (open daily from 6:30am to 2:00pm)

Highlands Garden Café - 3927 W. 32nd Ave. (303-458-5920) www.highlandsgardencafe.com \$\$\$+ ★★★: One of those tucked-away in a converted house "finds," that you're either gonna love or hate. Devotées swear there is no place more romantic and charming; naysayers claim crowded quarters and overpriced fare. There seems to be no debate on the loveliness of the gardens where you can dine when weather permits. Very fresh fish dishes are the house specialty. Note: Not a good choice for anyone in a hurry; service here is described as gracious BUT slow.

India House - 1514 Blake St. (303-595-0680) \$\$\$★★: Open daily for lunch and dinner downtown, India House provides a wide range of tandoori dishes...including some unique Cornish Game Hen and quail offerings. The Murgh Tikka Saag (Chicken in Spinach Sauce,) is especially good. Lots of meatless dishes on the menu make this a good choice for vegetarians. For best bang for your buck, you can't beat the 22-item lunch buffet.

Jax Fish House - 1539 17th Street (303-292-5767) \$\$+★★+: A favorite after work hot spot for those craving a cool drink, a cool crowd, and a restorative infusion of chilled oysters and shrimp from the excellent raw bar. Enjoy what their menu bills as "damn good crab cakes," and if you round up a party of 4, check out the seafood platter for a nice sampling of Jax specialties. Regulars vie for tables on the small outdoor patio. Open daily at 4 PM.

L'Atelier - 1739 Pearl St., Boulder (303-442-7233) \$\$\$★★★: First impression: Great big white plates vividly painted with gorgeous food. You really do get a sense of the artist's studio in



the stunning colors, aromas, and flavors served up by local Celeb-Chef Radek Cerny in his latest, wildly successful venture. Only those who fear butter and cream should miss this culinary mountain high.

Apparently, even the color on the walls is a butter-y golden yellow.

(Accident??? We think NOT!) And what the man does with a potato could bring you to tears. Do try some of the following: The Foie Gras Mousse, the Sweetbreads, the Escargot, the specially prepared Maine Lobster, the Tournedos Ferdinand, and the molten center chocolate cake. Service is wonderfully obsequious. Only downside...a bit noisy in

the center of the room....try for seating around the perimeter. Bon appetit!

Le Central - 112 E. 8Th Ave (303-863-8084) (www.lecentral.com) \$\$ ★★★+: Lots of thanks to Shellie Rosser for this Provincial French winner. She says, and everyone agrees, that this homey, non pretentious bistro serves marvelous food at reasonable prices. You'll concur after setting foot in a comfortable dining room that transports guests to the French countryside. Among their specialties: beef bourguignon, salmon en croûte, and steak au poivre. A real find, you can depend on Le Central

Mataam Fez - 4609 E Colfax Ave, Cherry Creek (303.399.9282) www.mataamfez-denver.com \$\$ ★★★: Take a walk on the wild side here in the traditional Moroccan setting. Yes, sit on the floor, eat with your hands, enjoy the belly dancer, and the artfully poured mint tea. It's a great place to come with a crowd. The food is marvelous, the servings large, and the prices reasonable. Once again, you'll thank Shellie Rosser for this experience.

Mizuna – 225 E. 7th Ave. (303-832-4778) www.mizunadenver.com \$\$\$\$ ★★★★★: Cuisine is a combo of Contemporary French and American cuisine, with an emphasis on ultra-fresh, seasonal ingredients, and a menu that changes monthly. Exec Chef and Owner, Frank Bonanno, has racked up an impressive array of local and national awards for both food and service... maybe most important are the raves from Cable Industry execs including Paul Maxwell. Check out the yummy take on macaroni and cheese... al dente elbow noodles, succulent hunks of lobster, sauced with a creamy mascarpone. If that didn't get you, how do you feel about over-the-top rich desserts...like a carrot and golden raisin griddle cake served with a scoop of home-made rum raisin ice cream, drizzled with maple syrup. Bring it on.

Palace Arms - Brown Palace Hotel, 321 17th St., (321-297-3111) www.brownpalace.com \$\$\$ ★★★★★: Recipient of Wine Spectator's "Best of" Award. Consider as a starter, the Sherry Braised Rabbit Loin or the fabulous Caesar Salad, prepared tableside. For your main course, the Horseradish-cruste d Veal Loin or the Roasted Rack of Colorado Lamb are both winners. Urban cowboys may wish to try the much-lauded Bison Steak. Décor is a dramatic nod to all things Napoleon... including a 1670 dispatch case and ancient dueling pistols said to belong to the man himself.

The Palm - 1201 16th St. (303-825-7256) www.thepalm.com \$\$\$\$ ★★★★★: Home of the Denver power lunch since its opening atop the Westin Hotel in '96, the Palm delivers dry-aged beef, luscious and large lobsters, and martinis in bulk...just the way you like it. Lots of shiny wood trappings throughout are set off nicely by walls full of colorful caricatures of local politicians and celebs. Open for lunch and dinner...reservations are recommended.

Panzano - Hotel Monaco, 909 17th St., (303-296-3525) www.panzano-denver.com \$\$\$ ★★★★★+: This little bit of Tuscany heaven is located just four blocks from the Convention Center and is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The contemporary Northern Italian cuisine garnered Panzano a place among Denver's top 5 eateries in the *Rocky Mountain News*, a 4 star rating in *5280 Magazine*, and *Citysearch's Best Italian*. Try their prize-winning Caesar Salad...it's truly memorable. Featured dishes include the Tonna Tartare (ahi tuna with avocado, white truffle oil, balsamic vinegar and crostini,) and the Agnello Griglia (grilled lamb T-bones seasoned with mint,



rosemary & wine, served with borlotti beans and Savoy Cabbage.) Fresh pastas are created in-house daily. The 'don't miss' dessert: a sinfully creamy tiramisu.

Sushi Den - 1487 S Pearl St., (303-777-0827) www.sushiden.net \$\$\$

★★★: A little on the expensive side, but worth it! Sushi Den has received numerous awards and accolades for its exceptional sushi. The menu also includes a substantial number of cooked dishes for the squeamish. Wonderful, high-quality dishes are sure to please, and fresh fish is flown in daily - a practice that makes for a slightly pricier, but more than worthy bill of fare.

Reservations recommended!

Sweet Basil - 193 Gore Creek Dr., Vail (970-476-0125) www.sweetbasil-vail.com \$\$\$\$ ★★★★★:

A real foodie's paradise and a personal favorite of our good pal, Paul Maxwell. Should you feel like splurging, and you make it to Vail, here's a wonderful (albeit pricey,) spot for lunch. It's open for dinner, but lunch seems to be the big event here.) Try the grilled duck breast sandwich or the chili with corn sticks. Desserts are homemade and addictive. Service is quick and the food is top notch....the *Denver Post* rates Sweet Basil a 4 star mega-winner.

Tamayo - 1400 Larimer St. (720-946-1433) www.modernmexican.com/tamayode \$\$\$ ★★★★★:

Susan Greene, of the Cable Center, gave us the low-down on this high-end gourmet Mexican. Chef-owner Richard Sandoval brought his popular concept of modern, upscale Mexican from New York to Denver. Check out the yummy Ceviche to start. Great entrées include the sliced filet mignon in molée sauce or the pork tenderloin. Margaritas are icy and pricey, but those on a budget find a cold beer works just fine with the spicy fare. Can't say enough about this special desserts, including the Fried Banana, Empanadas, and Chocolate Tamales. Olé!

Tom Tom Room - 1432 Market St. (303-534-5050) \$\$\$\$ ★★★★★: Way trendy Japanese hot spot, the Tom Tom Room is one of the few places in the country that specializes in Robata: skewers of meat, seafood, and veggies grilled over binchotan coal. Also notable: excellent sushi and sashimi, spicy calamari, and Kobe beef that you grill yourself as an appetizer. A TV with constant marine life videos playing and a video wall that looks like flowing water are trippy and cool. Seating options include private rooms, communal tables, or private tables adorned with canopies. An extensive sake list insures a total mind-blow.

Wazee Supper Club- 1600 15th St. (303-623-9518) www.wazeesupperclub.com \$\$ ★★★★★: Said to be the "Cheers" of downtown Denver, this long-time local favorite (circa 1974,) serves the "baddest" pizza in town. The bar itself is a masterpiece...a classic, 1930's art deco original. The black & white tiled floor and naugahyde chairs are a saucy nod to the 50's, but the pizza....oh, the pizza...now that is timeless! Students, professionals, singles and families....all flock to Wazee to get their fix. More good news: The burgers are to die for... and the beer is icy cold. According to Wazee, "they taste like what a burger tastes like in your mind when you decide you want one."