

Orlando's Food Scene – Top U.S. Foodie City

The Main Attraction



Discovering Orlando's Exciting Food Scene

Celebrity-run eateries. Local diners. Food trucks. Neighborhood markets.

Orlando, once the home of predictable theme-park fare, has become a true foodie destination where exceptional culinary achievement is an adventure all its own.

Perhaps that's why WalletHub named the destination the "Top Foodie City in the U.S." In fact, just this year, two local chefs were named James Beard Awards Semifinalist Nominees for the "Best Chefs in the South" category. Kathleen Blake of The Rusty Spoon and Luma on Park's Brandon McGlamery are among a growing contingent of young chefs responsible for a food renaissance here in the shadow of the mouse.

Alongside this talented crew are A-list chefs who've chosen the destination for their signature restaurants. In the newly opened Disney Springs, visitors can enjoy the typical tourist must-sees as well as star-studded dining experiences at Art Smith's Homecomin' or chef Masaharu Morimoto's famed Morimoto Asia. Not far away are Norman Van Aken's self-named establishment at the Ritz-Carlton Orlando Grande Lakes and Emeril's by Emeril Lagasse at Universal CityWalk.

For something a bit more low-key, Orlando offers as many tasty casual venues as it does high-end establishments. In fact, when Diners, Drive-ins and Dives arrived in town, the popular Food Network program discovered six hidden Orlando restaurants worth a visit:

- **Se7en Bites**, a Southern breakfast/lunch eatery and bakery in the Downtown Milk District that dishes up mouthwatering brunch favorites as well as treats such as Salted Caramel Bacon Cinnamon Rolls on Sundays.

- **The Meatball Stoppe**, which specializes in all types and combinations of the Italian-inspired protein.

- **International dining** destinations such as Puerto Rican sandwiches at Willie's Pinchos, Brazilian spud creations at Mrs. Potato Restaurant, Vietnamese cuisine at Saigon Noodle and Grill and New York City delicatessen fare at The Pastrami Project food truck.

- Finally, foodies will want to check out Orlando's exciting market scene. The fun begins in the Audubon Park neighborhood at the popular **East End Market**. This trendy food hall is inspired by what local farmers and artisans are producing, an eclectic mixed-use space and some tempting treats that include Gideon's Bakehouse, TravelPulse's vote for "Earth's Best Cookie." A short drive away you'll find the Winter Park Farmer's Market, an Orlando tradition held every Saturday morning at the old train depot, and, west of downtown, the Winter Garden Farmer's Market, which offers local produce, artisanal foods and specialty crafts in a hometown, historic setting.

So, while you may find yourself headed to Orlando for the heart-pounding theme park rides, picture-perfect poolside afternoons, the thrill of the annual Gay Days celebration or Orlando United Day, the new crop of all-star restaurants and impressive chefs will prove to you that dinner in this tourist town may just be the real attraction.

Exploring the destination's culinary scene is easy with a sporty rental car from Advantage Rent a Car. Pick up a Ford Mustang or Chevrolet Camaro at the airport counter and you'll quickly be on your way to discovering all the secret foodie joints and local hot spots you're craving.

Top Foodie Spots in Orlando

From a Who's Who of famous chefs to local favorites that put fresh, local fare front and center, Orlando is a city where you'll want to eat again and again. Here are Orlando's Best Restaurants, according to USA Today's 10 Best:

1. **K Restaurant** – This favorite foodie hangout has been a College Park standout for years with locally sourced food in a comfortable and elegant location. Unexpected creations pair with comfort food – try a burger and mac and cheese for one of the best meals you'll ever enjoy.

2. **Scratch** – Drop by for a drink or a small plate at this Winter Park locale that offers a romantic vibe, a well-informed wait staff and a seasonal rotating menu of great food.

3. **Mamak Asian Street Food** – China comes to town with dishes inspired by food stalls such as curries, spring rolls and street tacos. Another not-to-be-missed item is the Mamak roti canai.

4. **The Ravenous Pig** – The city's favorite gastropub has been generating a buzz since it opened in its former location in Winter Park. Today, the updated digs just down the road serve up a rotating menu of locally based cuisine and craft cocktails.

5. **Shish.Co Mezze & Grill** – OK, so a drive-up food stand may not be the most posh setting for a restaurant, but the mouthwatering doner bowls and rich Turkish coffee will transport you straight to Istanbul. It's a great stop off before heading across the street to the area's independent film house, the Enzian Theater.

6. **Kabooki Sushi** – Don't let its location in a strip mall mislead you. Inside you'll find a sleek interior, creative rolls and Orlando's best sushi and Asian-fusion dishes.

7. **Pig Floyd's Urban Barbakoa** — With origins as a food truck, Pig Floyd's is a mash-up of Caribbean, Latin and Asian barbecue. Don't miss the tender brisket, the char-grilled chicken and the butter chicken tacos, which were named one of the must-eat foods in Orlando.

8. **Bull & Bear** – Just like the New York namesake, Orlando's Bull and Bear is a premium steakhouse that offers superior quality in a plush, upscale atmosphere.

9. **Se7en Bites** – From handmade moon pies to just-like-grandma-made chicken pot pies, we can't say enough about this new Southern comfort classic.

10. **Norman's** – Whether you enjoy the spectacular lake views outside the Ritz-Carlton or inside in the magnificent white-tablecloth setting, you'll swoon at Norman Van Aken's creamy cracked-conch chowder and other imaginative culinary creations that are not to be missed.

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