

American

FIGORELLA'S CAFE 45 French Market Place 528-9566 Navigating the crowds at the French Market can really make a person hungry. Take refuge at Fiorella's with some comfort food, including po-boys, gumbo and fried chicken. There are daily specials and the breakfast menu hits all the classics. And now, on Thursday nights, you can play a twisted version of bingo and take in live entertainment for only \$5. No reservations. Delivery available. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **HARD ROCK CAFE** 418 N. Peters St. 529-5617

Along with rock 'n' roll memorabilia and a balcony for Decatur Street people-watching, Hard Rock offers a slew of all-American comfort foods -- burgers, barbecue ribs and meatloaf among them. The Jumbo Combo is an appetizer platter of Santa Fe spring rolls, chicken tenders, potato skins, onion rings and chicken wings. Fajitas come in beef, chicken, shrimp or vegetarian. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

HOUSTON'S 1755 St. Charles Ave. 524-1578 Casual dining with great food and service is the motto for Houston's. A variety of burgers, steaks, and salads on the menu are served in generous portions. Barbecue ribs and crabcakes are also popular. For dessert, Houston's offers a five-nut brownie and an apple walnut-cobbler, heavenly treats for that sweet tooth. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **THE JIMANI** 141 Chartres St. 524-0493 For decades, The Jimani has been a local staple for hearty, down-home hamburgers, pizza, and sandwiches including the Reuben, chicken sandwich, and the 8-oz. filet mignon sandwich. No reservations. Delivery available at night. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **LA CHATELAINE** 800 Iberville St. (Chateau Sonesta Hotel) 586-0800 Start the day off well with the eggs Pontchartrain, two poached eggs on a toasted English muffin topped with sauteed shrimp, crab and spinach and finished with a Creole hollandaise sauce. Those with a sweet tooth will love Joe-Joe's stuffed French toast, a brioche loaf stuffed with strawberries or apples, batter-fried, dusted with cinnamon sugar and drizzled with strawberry or apple coulis. Reservations accepted. Breakfast daily. Credit cards.

LA PENICHE 1940 Dauphine St. 943-1460 You've gotta love a place that offers breakfast around the clock, especially when breakfast includes options such as waffles with peanut butter, sliced bananas and pecans. Lunch and dinner diners opt for the country-fried steak, battered and deep-fried and topped with mushrooms and white gravy, or the Katherine Burger loaded with ham, Swiss cheese and grilled onions. No reservations. Open 24 hours, except from 2 p.m. Tuesday to 9 a.m. Thursday. Credit cards. \$

MOTHER CLUCKER'S 132 Carondelet St., 558-0099 Mother Clucker's menu includes a number of healthy and robust salads, along with mainstays of chicken wings, chicken tenders and fried and grilled chicken sandwiches. Side items are macaroni and cheese, waffle fries or sweet potato fries. Cap off your meal with brownies or pralines. This Mardi Gras, stop in for some king cake. Free delivery. Lunch and dinner Monday through Friday. Credit cards and

checks. **POLYNESIAN JOE'S** 869 Magazine St. 525-9301 Customers love to crank up beach volleyball games in the sandpit and then satisfy their appetites from Joe's menu of local favorites like gumbo, jambalaya and red beans and rice. Dinner options include new appetizers debuting soon, or pair your beer with one of the many sandwiches, and platters heaped with pork chops or roast beef. The \$6 lunch buffet is a Wednesday mainstay. No reservations. Lunch and dinner Monday through Sunday. Visa/MC. **American Contemporary**

56 DEGREES 610 Poydras St. (Wyndham Hotel) 212-5658 The Asian-influenced menu at 56 degrees has recently expanded to offering 32 dishes. New specialties include the mixed grill of a lamb filet, a six-ounce filet, grilled vegetables, grilled jumbo shrimp and veal demi-glace, all flavored with ginger. A popular appetizer is the seafood gratin, featuring lump crabmeat, shrimp, oysters, crawfish and baby spinach with tomato veloute. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, breakfast and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

ANGELI ON DECATUR 1141 Decatur St. 566-0077 The devil on your left shoulder might coax you to order the Lucifer Special pizza, with marinara, mozzarella, pepperoni, Italian sausage, ham, caramelized onions, roasted red peppers and jalapenos. But the angel on the right would point you to the Gate to Heaven: garlic sauce, mozzarella, portobellos, roasted red peppers and garlic, red onions and goat cheese. No reservations. Delivery available from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and late-night daily; open 24 hours on Friday and Saturday. Credit cards.

AQUARIANS 2601 Royal St., balcony level 944-7770 With a name like Aquarians, is it any wonder that ultra-fresh seafood reigns supreme here? Grilled mahi mahi and tuna are two best bets, though there are plenty of steak and pasta dishes too. Barbara Ann's famous carrot cake is another winner. With an eclectic ambience and menu chock-full of unconventional ingredients, this is a place to explore. Reservations accepted. Dinner and late-night Tuesday through Sunday. Credit cards. \$

BELLA LUNA 914 N. Peters St. 529-1583 Bella Luna is forever making the lists of New Orleans' most romantic restaurants. Enjoy a view to the Mississippi river while you tuck into a mixed greens salad tossed with sun-dried cranberry vinaigrette, blue cheese, pears and candied pecans. Yellowfin tuna is served with wasabi mashed potatoes, capers and olives in lemon-butter sauce. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

BELLE FORCHE 1407 Decatur St. 940-0722 With a menu incorporating Louisiana's diverse influences from around the world, Belle Forche (a Caribbean term for 'bon appetit') boasts a distinctive ambience and menu. Chef-owner Matt Yohalem presents the Oysters In Tuxedo: flash-fried oysters with black and white truffles and watercress, and Callaloo, an eggplant, crabmeat and hot pepper gumbo with coconut and coriander. Reservations recommended. Dinner Tuesday through Sunday, late-night Thursday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$

THE BOMBAY CLUB 830 Conti St. 586-0972 Many Orleanians know The Bombay Club as a quietly jazzy spot perfect for grabbing a cocktail and possibly an earful of live music when the bustle of the Quarter gets tiresome. It's also a fine-dining venue, offering contemporary Louisiana dishes like marinated pork loin served with Creole-style white beans. The Beggar's Purse involves chicken, Boursin cheese and shiitake mushrooms wrapped in puff pastry and served with sweet soy sauce. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily, late-night Thursday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$

COBALT 333 St. Charles Ave. 565-5595 Chefs Susan Spicer and Brack May collaborate on the menu for this now-established CBD restaurant. Try seared tuna crusted with ancho chile powder; it's served with a goat cheese tamale, cilantro-marinated shrimp and black bean sauce. Venison grillades with poblano grits and pan gravy puts a unique twist on a regional dish. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, breakfast and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

COPELAND'S CHEESECAKE BISTRO 2001 St. Charles Ave. 593-9955 4517 Veterans Memorial Blvd., Metairie 887-3125 Copeland's inventive entrees are highlighted by the barbecued shrimp linguine: the jumbo shrimp are sauteed with green onions and lemon butter, then tossed with linguine and served over their original cheese pizza bowl. Most people hang around for dessert. After all, there are over 40 types of cheesecake to choose from, as well as sweet concoctions like the white chocolate bread pudding with Frangelico cream sauce and blanched almonds. Reservations accepted. Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Saturday and Sunday. Credit cards. \$

CRYSTAL ROOM 833 Poydras St. (Le Pavillon Hotel) 581-3111 The Victorian splendor of the Crystal Room is home to breakfast buffets of scrambled eggs, andouille sausage and housemade grits; but the morning highlights come when Chef Pat's bananas Foster waffles are flamed tableside, served with a scoop of homemade vanilla bean ice cream. For lunch go a la carte or try the expansive pasta and salad bar. Reservations recommended. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

KABBY'S ON THE RIVER 2 Poydras St. (Hilton Hotel) 584-3880 Kabby's keeps tourists and locals alike coming back for hearty entrees like the veal Porterhouse: Midwestern, milk-fed veal char-grilled and served with zucchini spears and fried sweet potatoes. Another popular choice is roast prime rib of black Angus beef on the bone. The Sunday champagne jazz brunch features an omelette station, a beef-carving station and a seafood station.

Reservations accepted. Lunch and dinner Tuesday through Saturday, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$
HERBSAINT BAR & RESTAURANT 701 St. Charles Ave. 524-4114 Chef Donald Link, with help from business partner Susan Spicer, has earned Herbsaint's food endless

accolades over the past couple of years. Small plates like shrimp with green chile grit cakes may be ordered at the bar with a selection from the well-chosen wine list, or as an appetizer to precede entrees such as Muscovy duck leg confit with dirty rice. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$

RED BIKE BAKERY & CAFE 746 Tchoupitoulas St. 529-2453 The Red Bike offers healthful cuisine in a light and airy Warehouse District setting. Try the popular curry turkey salad sandwich with chunks of slow-roasted turkey, spiced apples and honey in a savory curry or delightful gourmet pizzas with homemade dough. Delivery available. Check out Brazilian Night on Thursdays featuring free black beans and rice and two-for-one caipirihna and live music from Riccardo Crespo. Friday's Wine Lovers Night offers flamenco music with Franco and half-price on bottles of wine. Reservations accepted. Breakfast Saturday, lunch Monday through Friday, dinner Thursday through Saturday. Credit cards.

THE GRILL ROOM 300 Gravier St. (Windsor Court Hotel) 522-1992 Since a Thanksgiving arrival from Le Manor in his native England, new Grill Room Chef Jonathan Wright has introduced his own signatures to the acclaimed restaurant. One new entree is the shoulder of rabbit braised in red wine with roasted loin and rib potato puree, prepared with roasted parsnips and chanterelles mustard-seed tarragon jus. Another is the roasted rib of veal, coming with osso bucco and wild-mushroom ravioli. The Sunday brunch is three courses with a glass of Don Perignon for \$45. Reservations recommended. Breakfast and dinner daily, lunch Monday through Saturday, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$

LILETTE 3637 Magazine St. 895-1636 Lilette began featuring outdoor seating in October, though you may want to eat inside until things warm up. Chef-owner John Harris tempts the palate with delicate, gourmet cuisine, such as the white truffle oil parmigiana toast with crimini, shiitake and oyster mushrooms, marrow and veal glace appetizer. For dinner, try the sauteed shrimp with braised escarole, roasted fennel and edamame vinaigrette. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner Tuesday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$

NOLA 534 St. Louis St. 522-6652 If Emeril's is a tuxedo, NOLA is a sharkskin suit: hip, loud and sassy. This is where Lagasse, inside his second New Orleans restaurant, lets his hair down serving Creole classics and beyond. The Vietnamese-influenced appetizers include Ms. Hay's stuffed chicken wings with hoisin sauce and Rock Shrimp-Pepperjack Spring Rolls. For seafood options, check out the grilled prosciutto-wrapped salmon and a cedar plank-roasted redfish. For dessert, toss a coin between the banana pudding layer cake and the chicory coffee crème brulee. Reservations recommended. Lunch Monday through Saturday, dinner nightly. Credit cards. \$

ORLEANS GRAPEVINE 720 Orleans Ave. 523-1930 Before we talk wine, know that the Grapevine also provides a foundation for oenophiles with its eclectic menu of contemporary

dishes. Sampling and sharing among diners is highly encouraged. International cheeses, pates, petit filets and fresh fish all go wonderfully with a choice a variety of wines. From a wine menu featuring 250 bottles, you can choose from 60 different wines by the glass. Dinner nightly. Credit cards. **SPORTING HOUSE CAFE** 916 Lafayette St. 561-0605 Housed in one of Storyville's famed bordellos of the past, the Sporting House Cafe is a haven for many CBD workers with the weekly "Hump Day Happy Hour" on Wednesdays. Available for private parties, it's also a lunch spot with menu favorites like the Lulu White salad: grilled vegetables (including eggplant and zucchini) and a tomato vinaigrette over mixed greens. Reservations for parties of six or more. Delivery available. Lunch Monday through Friday, happy hour Wednesday. Credit cards.

VICTOR'S 921 Canal St. (*The Ritz-Carlton Hotel*) 524-1331 Victor's is putting on the Ritz this winter with delectable interpretations of intercontinental cuisine. Order the lobster wrapped in bacon with Chantrelle mushrooms and corn timbale, or the veal trio with mushroom lasagna and fried artichokes. Reservations recommended. Breakfast daily; dinner served Tuesday through Saturday. Credit cards. **LE BON TEMPS ROULE** 4801 Magazine St. 897-3448, 895-8117 The next time you pass by Le Bon Temps Roule for a drink or free live music, make sure to check out the late-night food menu, too. The house-favorite quesadillas are filled with cheddar and mozzarella cheeses, pico de gallo, fresh mushrooms, black olives and your choice of chicken, black beans or both. Be sure to also try the signature Bon Temps cheeseburger topped with mushrooms, bacon or chili. No reservations. Lunch and dinner late-night daily. Credit cards.

LUCKY'S BAR & GRILL 1625 St. Charles Ave. 523-6538 Laid-back lunchers and night owls with the munchies frequent Lucky's for marinated chicken sandwiches and thick burgers served fresh off the grill. During pleasant weather, a meal on the front porch comes with cool breezes and a view of the streetcar line. Karaoke 24 hours. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards.

PORT OF CALL 838 Esplanade Ave. 523-0120 It's downright amazing how a place so simple and steady can attract so much attention; is there ever not a line outside the Port? We always suspect it's the burgers, beef ground on-site, formed into patties two-hands thick and topped with mounds of grated cheddar encourages beef addiction. They come with baked potatoes stuffed with any combination of butter, sour cream, bacon bits, scallions and mushrooms. But the Port also serves steaks, pizzas and salads. Kids welcome. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards.

THE RED EYE GRILL 852 S. Peters St. 593-9393 Burgers and boogie, that's what the Red Eye, hailed as "The Last Place You Want to Be," is all about for night owls. Burgers are ground fresh on-site. The grilled tuna steak is another popular choice with regulars. A weekend DJ keeps the beats pumping well into the wee hours. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night Monday through Saturday, dinner and late-night Sunday. Credit cards.

RIVERHOUSE CAFE 5961 Magazine St. 894-0046 Customer favorites at Riverhouse Cafe include the penne pasta with feta and garlic butter, and the shrimp and crab claw gumbo. And some say that Riverhouse has the best burgers in town. The wide menu also includes po-boys and happy hour specials. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily, late-night Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$

SAMUEL'S OYSTER BAR & GRILLE 1628 St. Charles Ave. 581-3777 Formerly known as Samuel's Avenue Pub, this popular spot added a pizza oven, an oyster bar and plenty of new items to its menu last year. If you love pizza, go local with the Atchafalaya, which features crawfish, shrimp and crabmeat. Two-for-one mixed drinks are served at the weekday happy hour (4-7 p.m.), three-for-one on Wednesday. Eat your po-boy on the outdoor deck and watch the St. Charles crowd pass by, or sit indoors (closer to the bar). No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **STATIONHOUSE GRILLE** 329 Decatur St. 587-0079 With burgeoning jazz scene, a hidden courtyard and late-night dining, this French Quarter bar and grill has a few things working in its favor. Hamburgers are made with a mixture of sirloin and chuck. The management also recommends the grilled steak sandwich and the Shrimp Dip, a sandwich made with garlicky, New Orleans-style barbecue shrimp. Delivery available. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards.

YO MAMA'S BAR AND GRILL 727 St. Peter St. 522-1125 Your mama probably never told you to chase your hamburger with a shot of tequila, but then she never ran a grill in the French Quarter -- did she? Yo Mama's features 14 gourmet burgers and 50 varieties of tequilas. Grill alternates range from tuna fillets to filet mignon. Table dining and barroom drinking are available both upstairs and downstairs. A DJ and dance floor keeps the action moving. Delivery available. No reservations. Dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. \$

Barbecue

SILKY O'SULLIVAN'S 311 Decatur St. 525-1011 Barbecue is very distinctive, varying from city to city. And the barbecue ribs at Memphis-based Silky O'Sullivan's are dry-rubbed and apple-and-hickory smoked. The brisket po-boy and pulled pork po-boys both feature meats that have been smoked for 13 hours. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. **\$VOODOO BBQ** 1501 St. Charles Ave. 522-4647 One of the standout items on the menu at this dine-in/take-out barbecue favorite is the pulled pork and beef brisket, which takes 18 hours to prepare. All the barbecue meats are seasoned with a dry rub; customers add sauce to their liking, choosing from a crystal mango

sauce, mojo and one made with cane vinegar. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

Brew Pub

CRESCENT CITY BREWHOUSE *527 Decatur St. 522-0571* Chef Mark Latino does his best to create dishes to complement brewmaster Wolfram Koehler's Old World beers. Try pan-seared red snapper Tchoupitoulas topped with fried oysters and a barbecue sauce made with butter, black pepper and Worcestershire. The Grilled Seafood Rouille is made with a variety of seafood, spicy rouille and roasted eggplant and fennel chips. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily, late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. \$

Cafe

BLUEBIRD CAFE *3625 Prytania St. 895-7166* The Bluebird Cafe may be the most cheerful place in New Orleans at 7 a.m., when happy customers are eagerly devouring the first-come first-serve breakfast. Some old favorites are eggs with biscuits, banana-pecan pancakes, and huevos rancheros. At lunch, swing by for a kosher hot dog, a Philly cheese steak, or a classic Reuben. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch daily. Checks. **CAFE AU LAIT** *307 Chartres St. 528-9933* Omelettes and other breakfast offerings here complement the great coffees that give this cafe its name. Pastries and other delights are available, as are specialty sandwiches and hamburgers. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch daily. Credit cards and checks. **CAFE MARIGNY** *1913 Royal St. 945-2716* This coffeehouse offers an assortment of coffees, teas, juices, pastries and more to power all the reading, studying and keyboard-tapping that's going on here. Meals are offered in the form of quiches, salads and sandwiches. A standout is the New York Classic with smoked salmon, capers, red onions, tomatoes and cream cheese. Finish with the chocolate decadence layer cake with raspberry filling. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **COFFEE & COMPANY** *1515 Poydras St.*

522-3335 The various specialty coffees are not the only attraction at both Coffee & Company locations. In the morning, start your day with items such as New York-style bagels.

Housemade soups are a popular, healthy lunch break, along with salads such as the Southwest salad, which comes with lettuce, black beans and corn marinated in lemon, lime and cilantro and can be ordered with or without chicken. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch daily.

Credit cards and checks. **CYBER BAR & CAFE AT THE CAC** 900 *Camp St.*

(*Contemporary Arts Center*) 523-0900 The CAC's modern cafe is a great place visitors use for a quick stop before or after checking out shows or exhibitions. Visitors can check email with the free Internet access, as long as they don't get crumbs on the keyboards! Cookies, cinnamon rolls and scones are imported from bakeries around the city, as are a variety of salads, cold sandwiches and paninis. The bar offers wine, beer and drinks of the caffeinated variety. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch daily, dinner during CAC evening events.

Credit cards and checks. **LA MADELEINE** 1327 *St. Charles Ave.* 410-8500 Though gourmet coffee and fresh-baked pastries (including the popular blueberry muffins) are most patrons' reasons for stopping in at La Madeleine locations, they also offer a diverse, French-inspired food menu. Top choices include the French onion soup, simple baguettes or tempting desserts such as tiramisu, raspberry creme brulee and coconut flan. There are plentiful salads, sandwiches, pastas and pizzas as well. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards.

LA MARQUISE PASTRY SHOP 625 *Chartres St.* 524-0420 Signature croissants, pastries and a selection of coffees and teas are available here, plus lunch and dinner items such as soups, salads and sandwiches. The chef's salad, featuring a variety of meats, cheeses and eggs, is recommended. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Cash and checks.

PRESTO! ESPRESSO 1542 *Tulane Ave.* 581-9555 Follow the stream of medical workers to Presto! Espresso's morning offerings of gourmet, drip-brewed coffees and pastries. For lunch, sample any of a number of deli-style sandwiches or grilled panini sandwiches on focaccia bread. Vegetarian versions include the Greco Roman featuring Roma tomatoes, eggplant caponata, feta cheese, basil pesto, red onions and mozzarella. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch weekdays. AmEx and checks. **STILL PERKIN'** 2727 *Prytania St.* 899-0335 Still Perkin' offers hot coffee drinks and more. Try the frozen lemonade granita, iced coffee or iced mocha on a hot day. The pastry and sweet selection is perfect for a sweet tooth, especially the rich chocolate buttercream squares. And if you're REALLY hungry, there are even La Spiga sandwiches for lunch. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. Visa/MC and checks.

SURREY'S CAFE AND JUICE BAR 1418 *Magazine St.* 524-3828 Health-conscious eaters have flocked to Surrey's since its opening, swearing by breakfast items such as homemade bagels and banana pancakes, while bigger appetites go for specialty sandwiches such as smoked salmon on focaccia. Surrey's recently started dinner dining on Fridays and Saturdays, with favorites including seafood dishes and vegetarian fare. Try the crispy trout, almond-

crusted, pan-fried trout fillet served with fried plaintains, yucca or rice, and veggie of the day. Breakfast and lunch Wednesday through Sunday, dinner Thursday through Friday. Cash only. **SWEET OLIVE CAFE** 610 Tchoupitoulas St. 299-8188 Sweet Olive Café is no stranger to innovation; try the Bandit, featuring smoked turkey breast and apple-smoked bacon, topped with avocado and jalapeno puree, Monterey Jack cheese and sprouts. Salads are equally dazzling, as the baby spinach salad is topped with roasted eggplant, feta cheese, roasted pecans, and a balsamic Parmesan vinaigrette. Breakfast and lunch weekdays. Credit cards and checks.

Cajun

ALEX PATOUT'S LOUISIANA RESTAURANT 720 St. Louis St. 525-7788

The finest in Cajun food" is what Alex Patout is cooking. Case in point: the Cajun smothered roast duck is slow-roasted and served on oyster dressing, accompanied by a sweet potato praline casserole, Cajun rice and macque choux. The sauteed rabbit piquant is served in a traditional sauce piquant and served with fresh sauteed spinach and macque choux. Look for the re-opening of Patout's Northshore location later this year. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

THE ALPINE 620 Chartres St. 523-3005 Louisiana cuisine in an appealing ambience is what it's all about. Start with barbecue shrimp cooked with olive oil, bay leaves, rosemary and secret spices, topped with white wine and served with butter pepper sauce and French bread. Move on to the duck a la "Amer," slow-cooked and served with Southern Comfort and praline sauce. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily, late-night Saturday, breakfast and brunch Saturday and Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$

K-PAUL'S LOUISIANA KITCHEN 416 Chartres St. 524-7394 The menu here changes on a daily basis according to the availability of seafood, but a couple of the can't-miss menu mainstays include the spicy Cajun jambalaya, featuring onions, bell peppers, celery, tasso, sausage, chicken, tomatoes, jalapenos, garlic and sauce piquant; and the seasoned, blackened twin beef tenders in debris sauce. Reservations recommended. Dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

MICHAUL'S LIVE CAJUN MUSIC RESTAURANT 840 St. Charles Ave. 522-5517 Groove to live Cajun and jazz music nightly; between sets dig into Cajun and Creole dishes such as catfish pecan laced with lemon-butter sauce. Chicken Michele consists of seafood dressing on a boneless chicken breast with Swiss cheese baked over the topped. For extra oomph, try a deadly (and alcoholic) Alligator Bite. Reservations recommended. Dinner Monday through Saturday, late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$

MULATE'S THE ORIGINAL CAJUN RESTAURANT 201 *Julia St.* 522-1492 One of New Orleans' few, true Cajun restaurants, Mulate's is an original. The family-friendly atmosphere works its magic over seafood dishes that run the gamut from catfish Mulate's (topped with crawfish etouffee and served with a slew of sides), blackened redfish, and a seafood platter of fried shrimp, catfish, crawfish, stuffed crab and fried oysters. For dessert, try one of the traditional Louisiana favorites like Atchafalaya mud cake, bread pudding or pecan pie. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

PATOUT'S CAJUN BISTRO 501 *Bourbon St.* 529-4256 Smack-dab in the middle of Bourbon Street sits the double-punch of the Cajun Bistro and Cabin. The Bistro provides indoor and balcony dining from a menu of Cajun and New Orleans dishes like alligator sausage, barbecue shrimp and alligator sauce piquante. Live Cajun music nightly. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. \$\$

PATOUT'S CAJUN CABIN 503 *Bourbon St.* 529-4256 The same Cajun dishes and Cajun music are offered in this next-door sister to Patout's Cajun Bistro, although the vibe is a bit more casual with touches like checked tablecloths and signature drinks like "swamp water," a sweet combination of vodka and coconut rum. The Cajun Cabin also houses Shuck's Oyster Bar. Reservations recommended. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. \$\$

Coffee & Deserts

CAFE DU MONDE 800 *Decatur St.* 587-0833 It's one of those places that out-of-towners insist on heading as soon as they arrive in New Orleans. In a world of coffeehouses with a dizzying array of caffeine options, Cafe du Monde keeps it simple with potent chicory coffee, cafe au lait and those warm melt-in-your mouth beignets piled high with powdered sugar. Eat indoors or out, or take your goodies to go. No reservations. Open 24 hours. Cash only. \$ **CC'S COFFEE** 2 *Poydras St. (New Orleans Hilton Riverside)* 525-0024 650 *Poydras St. (Poydras Center)* 586-0278 941 *Royal St.* 581-6996 1452 *Louisiana Ave.* 899-1866 2917 *Magazine St.* 891-2115 The coffee CC's brings to each of its stores around town are from beans harvested across the globe. A variety of teas complement the coffee choices. The food menu consists of several types of croissants, pastries, muffins and sweets. The CBD location offers a light lunch menu. No reservations. Hours vary by location. Credit cards and checks. \$ **HAAGEN-DAZS** 1 *Poydras St. (Riverwalk)* 523-3566 621 *S. Peters St.* 523-4001 Haagen-Dazs' decadent take on ice cream has been in the United States for decades now, but the franchise keeps inventing new flavors to stay fresh. At any area location, sample the Bailey's Shaker, featuring Bailey's

Irish Cream-flavored ice cream with whipped cream and cookie crumbs. You can also take home pints such as the dulce de leche, caramel ice cream with caramel swirls. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Cash and checks at Hampson and St. Peters; credit cards accepted at Riverwalk location. \$ **HOUSE OF BREWS** 933 Royal St. 525-0333 From morning 'til evening, you can get a good cup of specialty coffee or tea. There's pastries, cakes, muffins and fruit breads to satisfy cravings from healthy to decadent. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and early dinner daily. Visa/MC. \$

PJ'S COFFEE & TEA 644 Camp St. 529-3658 945 Magazine St. (National D-Day Museum) 525-0255 3700 Orleans Ave. (American Can Co.) 934-1192 5300 Tchoupitoulas St. 895-2007 5432 Magazine St. 895-0273 The large number of PJ's franchises scattered across the area speak to the popularity of its coffee, teas and food offerings that are more robust than one might think, with some locations offering a variety of soups and salads. Muffins, pastries and cakes are available at all. No reservations. Hours vary by location. Credit cards and checks. \$ **RUE DE LA COURSE** 219 N. Peters St. 523-0206 401 Carondelet St. 586-0401 1500 Magazine St. 529-1455 3128 Magazine St. 899-0242 The "Rue" is a second home to many coffee-shop dwellers, with specialty coffees, including those topped with chocolate and whipped cream, teas and atmosphere all being top draws. A variety of fresh-made sandwiches are available at most locations. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and late-night daily (Carondelet Street location open until 6:30 p.m. weekdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and closed Sundays). Cash only. \$ **STARBUCKS COFFEE CO.** 500 Canal St. (Canal Place) 595-6258 2801 Magazine St. 879-4944 5800 Magazine St. 269-5113 The many choices offered at area Starbucks transcend those of a simple coffee shop. There are plenty of snacks, both healthy and sweet, to go with your java. Or you can try specialty coffees such as the vanilla cream hot steamed coffee, while neophytes will have plenty to choose from in Starbucks' lattes. Hours vary by location. Credit cards and checks. \$

TRUE BREW CAFE 200 Julia St. 524-8441 Before the play, grab the grilled chicken ranchero wrap; afterwards, finish off the evening with a slice of caramel pecan cheesecake. Not into theater? Then there's a full complement of a bar, coffee, and a list of soups, salads, pastries and an assortment of healthy sandwiches. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Visa/MC. \$

Creole

ALBERTINE'S TEA ROOM 3811 St. Charles Ave. (Columns Hotel) 899-9308 A true New Orleans landmark, The Columns is a great place to savor antiques from the Victorian era while dining on

New Orleans-style cuisine. The breakfasts and popular Sunday brunch are now under the care of a new chef; ask about the new offerings. Reservations recommended. Breakfast daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$ **ANTOINE'S** 713 St. Louis St. 581-4422 This Vieux Carré landmark still boasts a menu written in French, but fear not: The servers have been coaching non-French speakers since 1840. Among the culinary delights to which Antoine's boasts invention are the huitres Thermidor, fresh oysters baked on the half shell with bacon and tomato sauce; and the avocat crevette Garibaldi, a ripe avocado stuffed with shrimp ravigote. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

ARNAUD'S RESTAURANT 813 Bienville St. 523-5433 It's hardly necessary to mention that Arnaud's has been one of New Orleans' favorite restaurants since 1918, or that the atmosphere is Southern elegance. But, just in case you haven't yet, consider the shrimp Arnaud, which are marinated in Creole remoulade sauce. The gulf fish Pontchartrain, another signature, comes topped with lump crabmeat. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, Dinner daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

BAYOU BAR 2031 St. Charles Ave. (Pontchartrain Hotel) 524-0581 The Bayou Bar is mostly set up as a convenience for hotel guests who want a couple of drinks and a casual meal, but plenty of locals have taken a shine to it. The classic New Orleans fare is cooked in Lafitte's Restaurant, also in the hotel, and includes gumbo, shrimp and corn bisque, and an open-face prime rib po-boy. There's a fully stocked wine bar and top of the line vodkas and cognacs (the Louis XIV cognac goes for \$150 a shot). Don't miss the live entertainment on Friday and Saturday night. No reservations. Lunch Friday through Sunday, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. \$

BON TON CAFE 401 Magazine St. 524-3386/(888) 524-5611 Usher in crawfish season at Bon Ton, where their highly guarded secret sauce covers the fried crawfish dish. Crawfish and shrimp are found in the Bayou Etouffee. The redfish Bon Ton, pan-broiled with lemon butter and topped with lump crabmeat and onion rings, is another signature, similar to the style of the softshell crab entree, with the crabs fried and covered in crabmeat and onion rings. Reservations recommended for dinner. Lunch and dinner Monday through Friday. Credit cards. \$\$

BRENNAN'S 417 Royal St. 525-9713 Since 1946, Brennan's has provided a sublime start to the day with legendary breakfasts featuring standout dishes such as its original eggs Hussarde: poached eggs atop Holland rusks, Canadian bacon and Marchand de Vin sauce, topped in hollandaise. Of course, later in the day you can enjoy oyster soup Brennan or the grilled filet of salmon Audubon, a salmon filet topped with Creole mustard, hollandaise, shrimp and carrots. Reservations recommended. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$\$

BROUSSARD'S RESTAURANT 819 Conti St. 581-3866 Chef Gunter Preuss is a veteran wiz of Creole cooking, which you'll taste at his French Quarter restaurant in dishes like redfish Herbsaint and sirloin of veal Broussard. The former is a poached redfish fillet served with asparagus, braised fennel,

lemon risotto, crabmeat and Herbsaint sauce; the latter is presented with two sauces: beurre blanc and Port demi-glace. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$\$

CAFE GUMBOLAYA 1000 N. Peters St. 523-7418 For a true taste of New Orleans, come to Cafe Gumbolaya and indulge in the Taster Platter, which contains red beans, shrimp and okra gumbo, jambalaya and shrimp Creole. Other Louisiana specialties here include the barbecue shrimp, blackened catfish, and Southern Comfort crawfish and shrimp etouffee. Reservations accepted. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

CAFE MASPERO 601 Decatur St. 523-6250 The two most popular dishes here are the big muffaletta with housemade olive salad, and the hearty jambalaya. Cafe Maspero is also known for its down-home specialties including the homemade chili, pastrami and steak sandwiches and fried seafood platters. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Cash only. \$

CAFE PONTALBA 546 St. Peter St. 522-1180 Tourists and locals descend upon this eatery, housed in a historic building, for authentic Cajun and Creole food including the Softshell Crab Pontalba, served with a tangy lemon-butter sauce and your choice of jambalaya or French fries. No reservations. Breakfast Saturday and Sunday, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

CAFE SBISA 1011 Decatur St. 522-5565 *Along a strip of lower Decatur Street restaurants dedicated to local cuisine, Cafe Sbisas keeps the Creole-Cajun style going with its own take on New Orleans favorites. Try the trout Eugene, topped with shrimp, crawfish and crab fingers, then served with rice and asparagus. Then there's the barbecue shrimp, marinated and served in a tangy butter bath with fresh herbs. Private parties are welcome. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$*

CHRISTIAN'S 3835 Iberville St. 482-4924 Christian's serves up Creole and French cuisine in a beautiful renovated Lutheran church. The filet Farci "Bayou La Loutre" is stuffed with an oyster and garnished with oysters in a demi-glace sauce. Another specialty: lightly battered, then deep-fried softshell crab with meuniere sauce. For an appetizer, try the steamed mussels with shallots and white wine. Reservations recommended. Lunch Tuesday through Friday, dinner Tuesday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

COFFEE POT 714 St. Peters St. 524-3500 You might enjoy the hearty breakfasts so much at Coffee Pot that you'll want to stay for a lunch or dinner of classic Cajun and Creole meals. Jambalaya and shrimp Creole are two hot items, as is the blackened redfish and the seafood platter with fried oysters, shrimp, trout, softshell crab and fries. Reservations required for large parties. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

COMMANDER'S PALACE 1403 Washington Ave. 899-8221 Nobody does New Orleans food like Commander's, a fact that has not escaped gourmards from New York to Paris. With Executive Chef Tory McPhail in the kitchen, sample perennial favorites such as turtle soup, lamb chops and bread pudding souffle, or try more recent blockbusters such as the Creole-crusted rack of lamb or oysters in champagne jelee. There are bargain lunches for the budget conscious and jazz brunches on weekends. Reservations required. Lunch weekdays, dinner nightly, brunch Saturday and Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$

THE CORNER OYSTER BAR 500 St. Peter St. 522-2999 Freshly shucked oysters are the specialty here, but there's no reason you can't go over to the Crawfish Corner: crawfish sauteed with peppers and onions in a spicy cream sauce with penne pasta. There's also blackened catfish pasta, served over a bed of linguine mixed with veggies and topped with a white wine sauce. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$ **FEELINGS CAFE** 2600 Chartres St. 945-2222 *If the ambience doesn't get your pulse racing this Valentine's Day, the seafood baked eggplant will. It contains shrimp, crab and crawfish blended with a spicy casserole of dirty rice and sausage, served on fried eggplant and topped with a seafood butter sauce. Another good decision is the gulf fish Florentine, lightly battered and pan-fried, served with creamed spinach and hollandaise. Reservations recommended. Lunch Friday, dinner nightly, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$*

FRENCH MARKET RESTAURANT AND BAR 1001 Decatur St. 525-7879 This time of the year, the blackened redfish is the main event at the French Market Restaurant and Bar. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't stick with old favorites such as the Bayou Platter -- a combination dish of red beans, jambalaya and assorted seafood -- or the lobster etouffee, served over rice with shrimp and crawfish. Reservations accepted for five or more. Lunch and dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. \$\$

GALATOIRE'S RESTAURANT 209 Bourbon St. 525-2021 The name Galatoire's has become synonymous with consistency over the years. Such culinary treasures as escargots bordelaise, oyster-artichoke soup, crabmeat Sardou and banana bread pudding have proven that some things should never change. Jackets required for men after 5 p.m. and on Sundays; shorts prohibited. Reservations available upstairs. Lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

GUMBO SHOP 630 St. Peter St. 525-1486 The name of the game here is gumbo of all varieties, so it's no wonder that the masses consistently flock to the Gumbo Shop for a hearty bowl of the classic Louisiana dish. Other locally inspired menu options include fresh seasonal fish prepared in a variety of ways, filet mignon, and crawfish and pasta in tasso cream. Reservations accepted on weekdays only. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

LEE CIRCLE RESTAURANT 3 Lee Circle (Hotel Le Cirque) 962-0915 Scott Snodgrass, formerly of Clancy's, serves as executive chef for this "elegant Creole" spot. The atmosphere blends classic and postmodern styles, which the menu reinforces. Dig into the decadent braised veal chop, served with foie gras, asparagus, artichokes, mushrooms, and two sauces, truffle and bearnaise. Reservations recommended. Lunch Monday through Friday, dinner nightly. Credit cards. \$\$\$

MAGNOLIA CAFE 200 Chartres St. 524-4478 You've had jambalaya, but in an omelette? Magnolia Cafe smothers its jambalaya omelette with Creole sauce. The seafood platter includes catfish, popcorn shrimp, jumbo shrimp, oysters, stuffed crab, French fries, onion rings and cole slaw. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

MR. B'S BISTRO 201 Royal St. 523-2078 Chef Michelle McRaney has been a major part of Mr. B's two-decade string of success serving locals and visitors alike with contemporary Creole cuisine that uses regional ingredients. For classic Louisiana comfort food in the cold, warm up to the country-style Gumbo YaYa with chicken and sausage. The barbecued pork chop is grilled over a wood fire, slow smoked and glazed with a honey ginger sauce. The boneless barbecue chicken salad served with chunky blue cheese dressing is a light lunchtime choice. Live piano music nightly. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday, jazz brunch and dinner Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **NELLIE'S** 91 French Market Place 568-1777 In just a short three years, Nellie's has become a reliable pit stop for French Market shoppers who want to sample local favorites. Nellie's serves up many of the standbys, including seafood, red beans and rice, jambalaya and gumbo. Finish off that pit stop with one of Nellie's Bloody Marys or margaritas. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$ **OLDE NAWLINS COOKERY** 729 Conti St. 529-3663 Olde Nawlins' menu is chock-full of flavors that Orleanians know and love. The kitchen folds redfish into beignet dough; after deep-frying, the beignets are served with a garlicky mustard sauce. Blackened redfish is topped with sauteed crawfish and "Love" sauce (a fish veloute flavored with white wine, lemon and green onions). No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$ **OLIVIER'S CREOLE RESTAURANT** 204 Decatur St. 525-7734 Olivier's opts for a classic Creole cooking vibe with a classic dining atmosphere the exudes French Quarter charm. The gumbo sampler serves three demitasse cups filled with okra, Creole and file gumbos. One of the great old Creole dishes, the fork-tender braised rabbit is served with a rich oyster dressing seasoned with sage. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$ **ORLEANS CAFE** 137 Decatur St. 581-1136 Just a stone's throw from Canal Street, the Orleans Cafe offers daily specials including red snapper and trout. The regular menu provides an assortment of dishes like veal Marsala served with angel hair pasta and rotisserie lamb served with garlic potatoes, salad and crabmeat au gratin. Reservations accepted. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$\$

PALACE CAFE 605 Canal St. 523-1661 Another popular Brennan offering, the Palace Cafe has a wide range of innovative dishes such as the crabmeat cheesecake: the quiche-like appetizer is served with marinated crab claws in a Creole meuniere sauce with pecan crust and sauteed wild mushrooms on top. Waiting on the other end is the famous white chocolate bread pudding. Both recipes are included in the cafe's 2002 cookbook available in the restaurant and bookstores. The Palace's Web site is under reconstruction and should be back up soon. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, dinner nightly, brunch Saturday and Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$ **PAMPY'S** 2005 N. Broad St. 949-7970 A new favorite haunt for New Orleans' political elite, owner Stan Barre invites his growing constituency of

diners to sample the barbecue shrimp, huge crustaceans prepared with butter and a beer seasoning. Meat lovers should try the double-cut pork chop, served with turnip greens and a garlic au jus sauce. Pampy's also has an oyster bar, a selection of signature martinis and extensive wine list, and private rooms for parties of up to 28. Fridays bring live piano sets. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, dinner Monday through Saturdays. Dark Sundays. Credit cards. \$\$ **THE PEARL RESTAURANT AND OYSTER BAR** 119 St. Charles Ave. 525-2901 You can hang out at The Pearl for drinks and raw oysters as many like to do, or kick off a long dinner with the turtle duck that along with the gumbo and etouffees are a house specialty. Baked turkeys and hams are carved in front of you for a number of uses including the triple-decker club sandwich, which can also consist of corned beef, roast beef and bacon. For dessert, try the turtle cheesecake. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$ **PERE ANTOINE** 741 Royal St. 581-4478 The corner of Royal and St. Ann streets is as deep into the heart of the French Quarter as it gets, and Pere Antoine's menu reflects the culinary spirit of the city. Snapper Nona is broiled and topped with mushrooms, crab and herbs in a buttery mornay sauce. The Rajun Cajun Omelette is filled with smoked sausage, ham and bell peppers, then topped with Creole sauce. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. \$\$

PETUNIA'S RESTAURANT 817 St. Louis St. 522-6440 No shrinking violet, Petunia's is confident enough to boast "The World's Largest Crepes," the selection including the St. Louis dessert flambe: golden vanilla ice cream with bananas, cherries and pecans presented flaming at the table. Reservations recommended for dinner. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

REMOULADE 309 Bourbon St. 523-0377 Executive Chef Tommy DiGiovanni authors "the casual side of Creole cooking," with such local specialties as jambalaya, Jazz Fest meat pies, crayfish bisque, red beans and rice, and barbecue shrimp served with French bread. American fare includes hamburgers and gourmet pizzas to red beans. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$ **ROYAL CAFE** 700 Royal St. 528-9086 In the heart of the French Quarter, Royal Cafe Chef Michelle Matlock recommends balcony dining with her trout LaBranche, speckled trout, lightly floured, seasoned and pan seared and topped with crawfish tails, red peppers, garlic and parsley swimming in a light cream sauce and sprinkled with roasted pecans. For a special appetizer treat, order the Lamb chop lollipops, truffled mashed potatoes with a pistachio bacon vinaigrette. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$ **SAZERAC BAR & GRILL** 123 Baronne St. (Fairmont Hotel) 529-4733 While known for its signature namesake drink to many, Sazerac's kitchen offers a chef's special for dinner. Regular menu favorites include the shrimp stuffed with blue crab meat for an appetizer. One top entree is the Bourbon Street strip pork loin, blackened and served with peppercorn and fried onions. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$\$

THE TRICOU HOUSE 711 Bourbon St. 525-8379 Located in the equivalent of "Party Central," The Tricou House offers all-you-can-eat boiled shrimp daily and barbecue ribs on Wednesdays and Sundays. On Thursdays, go for the all-you-can-eat fish for \$8.95 and a free drink per entree. Zydeco, jazz and Cajun music from the 711 Bar complement the dining experience. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$ **TUJAGUE'S** 823 Decatur St. 525-8676 French immigrants Guillaume and Marie Abadie Tujague established Tujague's Restaurant in 1856. Located across from the historic French Market, this time-honored eatery serves traditional Creole cuisine. Order the prix fixe menu: choose between four entrees, each of which is served with shrimp remoulade, Tujague's own traditional

beef brisket with Creole sauce, soup, dessert and coffee. A favorite is the chicken Bonne Femme, served with cottage fries. The bread pudding and pecan pie are among the delectable desserts. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$\$

UPPERLINE 1413 *Upperline St.* 891-9822 Come join JoAnn Clevenger and celebrate Upperline's 20th anniversary this year. Diners get cozy inside the colorful dining room filled with art and enjoy the roast duck, a seasoned half duck that's slow roasted until crisp; or the Cane River County Shrimp with sauteed shrimp, tons of garlic, mushrooms, Tabasco and bacon finished with a shrimp stock and cream reduction sauce, served on top of fried grit cakes. Reservations recommended. Dinner Wednesday through Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **ZACHARY'S** 8400 *Oak St.* 865-1559 The Creole offerings at Zachary's are as traditional as the restaurant itself. Daily specials constantly change, but you can always count on favorites of seafood gumbo, fried chicken and bread pudding being always available. The Sunday brunch is their signature meal, with a buffet offering grillades and grits, an omelette station, eggs, bacon and more. Delivery available. Reservations accepted. Lunch Monday through Saturday, dinner Wednesday through Saturday, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$

Deli

MARTIN WINE CELLAR 3827 *Baronne St.* 896-7380 With a wine collection of 2,500 labels, one can surely find an ideal glass to go with lunch or dinner. Martin's has an exquisite deli that offers an array of sandwiches and salads including the popular Sena salad: oven-roasted chicken with golden raisins, crumbled blue cheese, toasted pecans and mixed greens with a pepper jelly vinaigrette. Dinners to-go are available, anything from fish and meats, to a clam, mussel and shrimp pasta dish served with a white wine cream sauce. Delivery available. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily, Brunch Sundays. Credit cards and checks. \$

LOUIS XVI RESTAURANT FRANCAIS 730 *Bienville St., St. Louis Hotel* 581-7000 Lavish French cuisine and a European ambience has been the standard here for more than three decades. Among the Creole and classic French dishes are the filet de bouef Wellington, with perigourdine sauce and roast fingerling potatoes; and the salade de homard du Maine, a salad featuring chilled Maine lobster with avocado, tomato confit and tarragon vinaigrette. Reservations recommended. Breakfast and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **MIDI SOUTH OF FRANCE** 614 *Canal St. (The Grande Hotel*

of New Orleans) 527-6712 Signature French country dishes at this downtown restaurant include the newly added braised Colorado lamb shank, the crusty basil salmon (served with green lentils in a beurre rouge sauce), and the honey lavender roasted Muscovy duck. Catch lunch specials six days a week and a weekday lunch buffet, with a Friday emphasis on seafood; Sunday champagne-jazz brunches offer more than six food stations. Midi can accommodate private parties of up to 50 people. Reservations recommended. Lunch Monday through Saturday, dinner daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **RENE BISTROT** 817 Common St. 412-2580 Bringing both the cutting edge and classic to his dishes, Chef Rene Bajeux creates such inventive combinations as the sage-roasted pork loin with mashed, julienned and souffled potatoes on the side. The sauteed skate with an artichoke and green bean salad, plus caper emulsion, is also a house specialty. The extensive and accessible wine list is another attraction and includes many low-budget, high-quality selections. Reservations recommended. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$ **ZOE BISTROT** 333 Poydras St. (W Hotel) 207-5018 The sleek W Hotel is home to Zoe Bistrot's cuisine that is difficult to categorize. Besides the popular Sunday brunches, the restaurant is known for such inventive dishes as braised sea bass, prepared in a basil champagne and served with sea beans, horseradish potato pancake and pan sauce. Another top choice is the steak au poivre, featuring a 12-oz. strip steak in a brandy peppercorn sauce with roasted garlic puree, vegetables and pommes frites. Reservations recommended. Breakfast and dinner daily, lunch Monday through Saturday, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

Gourmet- to-Go

CHEZ NOUS CHARCUTERIE 5701 Magazine St. 899-7303 Chez Nous has been saving dinner parties for years with its prepared meals and catering menu. To sample the fare, stop by the Charcuterie for a bowl of seafood gumbo or homemade tomato basil soup. Sunday brunch features dishes that will stick to your ribs, such as the traditional New Orleans grillades and grits and the South Carolina-style shrimp and grits, where the grits are thickened with cream cheese, tasso ham, juicy gulf shrimp, heavy cream and butter. No reservations. Lunch and early dinner Monday through Saturday, brunch on Sunday. Credit cards and checks. \$

FOODIES KITCHEN 7457 St. Charles Ave. 865-8646 You can go to either location to pick up a prepared meal such as buttermilk pecan chicken or an appetizer, soup or pizza from the Express Case, but if you want the Hotline dine-in option you have to go to Metairie. There, you can sit down to a bowl of turtle soup or the grilled gulf fish du jour. Both stores offer a wide variety of cheeses, wines, pastries, and breads: the bleu cheese walnut bread is specially recommended. Check out the catering menu to make your next dinner party a breeze. Continental breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards and checks. \$

Greek

FORTUNA'S DIXIE GYROS *110 Carondelet St. 523-6614.* Along with the New Orleans influence found in the highly touted beignets, the Greek and Middle Eastern flavors at Fortuna's are seen in the top-selling gyros, served either as a sandwich or plate, which come with rice or French fries. Gyros options include beef, lamb, chicken or falafel. The hummus is a favorite side or starter. Delivery available. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

Indian

NIRVANA INDIAN CUISINE *4308 Magazine St. 894-9797* Nirvana, Uptown's only Indian restaurant, offers a plentiful lunch buffet, or, if you prefer, order off the menu. Hearty entrees include the lamb Sikander (thinly sliced and sauteed with tomatoes and garlic) and the Malai kebab (chicken breasts crusted with cashews and spices, then roasted over hot coals). Reservations recommended for parties of more than five. Lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$

Intercontinental

BAYONA *430 Dauphine St. 525-4455* You can't go wrong with the "signature dishes" that make award-winning Chef Susan Spicer proud, such as the sauteed sweetbreads with sherry-mustard or lemon-caper butter. Every night there's a vegetarian entree of the day, and a grilled or sauteed fish in season. Accompany your selections with a bottle from the 250-plus wine list. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$ **DOMINIQUE'S** *1001 Toulouse St. 522-8800* Chef Dominique Macquet's roots are on Mauritius; you can read his passion for this island's culture, and many others, on his menu. Kobe beef short ribs, for example, are served with kobe beef "shepherd's pie," watercress salad and red wine jus. Or try whole Maine lobster

with spaghetti squash fricassee, oven-dried tomato ravioli and lobster nage. Reservations recommended. Breakfast and dinner daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards and checks. \$\$\$

PANASIA 500 St. Charles Ave., 299-8004 The unique philosophy of Panasia's kitchen produces such favorites as the fish of the day, which comes topped with jumbo shrimp and green curry and sides of steamed jasmine rice and bok choy. The Creole-spiced half-chicken comes with a papaya salad and coconut rice. A variety of salads are offered as entrees, such as the somtom salad, which mixes papaya, Thai spices, chile peppers and a lemon vinaigrette. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

THE PELICAN CLUB RESTAURANT & BAR 615 Bienville St./312 Exchange Alley 523-1504 *Pelican Club's eclectic menu offers a variety of sophisticated fare for winter diners. The seafood fricassee is served with saffron risotto, sauteed vegetables and a garlic black bean sauce, while the Pelican Club Baked Oysters are served on the half-shell with apple-smoked bacon, roasted red peppers, Parmesan cheese and garlic herb butter. Reservations recommended. Dinner nightly. Credit cards. \$\$\$*

SUN RAY GRILL 1051 Annunciation St. 566-0021 The menus at these sunny eateries feature dishes such as a Chinese spiced duck, sesame-crust Tokyo tuna, and Baja skillet: warm tortillas and grilled peppers and onions with chicken, steak, tuna, crawfish, shrimp or a combination of any or all. The Garden District and Old Metairie menus are alike, while the Gretna location offers a slightly smaller menu. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

VERANDA RESTAURANT 444 St. Charles Ave. (Hotel Inter-Continental) 585-4383 A number of influences mark Chef Willy Coln's offerings, from his native Germany to Cajun and Creole cuisine to an effort to present a menu that is healthy and robust. Lunch is done buffet-style, with a number of salads and soups offered; the Sunday brunch is also a buffet but with champagne and a nod to local favorites. Top dinner entrees include filet mignon, veal and shrimp Barataria. Reservations recommended. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$

VIC'S KANGAROO CAFE 636 Tchoupitoulas St. 524-4329 It's always a g'day at Vic's, which carves out a slice of Down Under in the Warehouse District. Hop on down to the Down Under Library while sampling a Guinness-enhanced shepherd's pie. No reservations. Lunch Monday through Friday, dinner daily, late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. \$

Italian

BACCO 310 Chartres St. 522-2426 Ralph Brennan and Chef Haley Gabel keep the seats filled in this 10-year-old French Quarter restaurant by offering a style of Italian cuisine that's rare in this area -- not to mention free valet parking. This is not your typical red-sauce Italian; instead you'll find housemade lobster-filled ravioli with Champagne butter sauce, and housemade fettuccine tossed with black truffle sauce and Parmesan cheese. And when the kitchen tosses pizzas into the wood-burning oven ... Mama mia! Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **\$BRAVO! ITALIAN KITCHEN** 1711 St. Charles Ave. 525-5515 Bravo! is best known for its pastas and wood-fired pizzas -- and, of course, its famous lasagna. But the menu doesn't stop there. The sea bass is deep-fried and served in a lobster butter sauce. The shrimp Diablo is served on paneed pasta with a spicy tomato cream sauce. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **\$CAFE GIOVANNI** 117 Decatur St. 529-2154 Chef Duke LoCicero wears many hats, including radio personality, chef and coordinator of the opera singers that entertain in Cafe Giovanni's dining room a few times per week. To taste his talent, order veal LoCicero, served with shrimp in a sauce made with lemon, capers, artichoke hearts and asparagus. Pasta Gambino features rock shrimp, sun-dried tomatoes, and peppers in a three-cheese cream sauce. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily. Credit cards. **\$\$\$ FRANK'S RESTAURANT** 933 Decatur St. 525-1602 This old-school Sicilian-American restaurant has been family-owned and operated for decades, and its classic Italian dishes are a testament to longevity. Try the Snapper Jack, a deep-fried filet smothered in shrimp, crawfish, and softshell crab topping over pasta. Frank's also serves a hefty 1-lb. ribeye cooked how you like it. Reservations accepted. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **GIACOMINO'S CAFE** 808 Common St. 524-3419 Here's a love story: Ted and Martay Nusenow came from L.A. for a romantic visit and couldn't leave. So they set up shop in the CBD with this upscale Italian cafe in mid-November and started serving up paninis and fresh daily soups including the minestrone. They also serve fresh, homemade pastas daily and are proud of making their lasagna not with mozzarella cheese but with bechamel sauce (classic French white sauce) - - "How it's *really* supposed to be done," Ted says. Martay designed the warm interior. Finish off the meal with either imported desserts like the torta bella nonna or sip from the top-of-the-line Illy coffees. Delivery available. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. **IRENE'S CUISINE** 539 St. Philip St. 529-8811 There's a line for a reason: Irene's regulars swear by the duck St. Philip, roasted crispy and glazed with raspberry demi-glace. Another house special this time of the year is the softshell crab, served with linguine and tossed with a reggiano-crawfish sauce. Meal-ending options such as the chocolate hazelnut truffle or bananas Foster bread pudding make it tough not to start with dessert. No reservations. Dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

MAXIMO'S ITALIAN GRILL 1117 Decatur St. 586-8883 Maximo's has made a name for itself down on lower Decatur Street for its steady menu of Italian dining. As they say in *The Godfather*, try the veal, or make that veals: the veal Cattoche is pan-roasted with garlic and fresh herbs, while the veal Noci is prepared with pine nuts, mushrooms, sherry and cream. Another favorite is the tender rack of lamb, and the pasta accompanied lots of side options: butternut squash, four cheeses, spinach and tomato ensure. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

RISTORANTE CARMELO 541 Decatur St. 586-1414 An authentic Italian restaurant in the French

Quarter, Carmelo beckons to adventurous diners with two new winter dishes. Try the antipasto, a delight of Italian meats and cheeses and antipasto, served daily. Seafood lovers are invited to order the Lobster Fra Diavolo, a whole Maine lobster with spicy marinara sauce served over linguine and garnished with clams, mussels, shrimp and calamari. The wine list is entirely Italian. No delivery. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

TONY ANGELLO'S RISTORANTE 6262 *Fleur de Lis Drive* 488-0888 **Tony Angello's is a haven for Italian mainstays glistening in traditional red sauces. The eggplant Trina is fried eggplant layered marinara sauce and cheese, and the Feed Me dinner is a multiple-course feast of house favorites. Reservations recommended. Dinner Tuesday through Saturday.**

Credit cards. TONY MORAN'S 240 *Bourbon St.* 523-3181 A self-described "oasis on Bourbon Street" and located on the second floor of the Old Absinthe House, Tony Moran's serves classic northern Italian cuisine and prepares its homemade pasta tableside to your liking. Two standard dishes beckon to discriminating diners: Seafood lovers are invited to try the stuffed prawns diavolo, filled with a crabmeat stuffing and served over a spicy tomato sauce and vegetables. Meat-eaters should try the bistecca alla funghi, a prime-aged New York strip steak broiled and then flamed in a peppercorn cream grappa sauce. The classic bananas Foster is recommended for dessert. Reservations recommended.

Dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. **\$TORTORICI'S** 441 *Royal St.* 522-4295 Tortorici's has served a blend of traditional Italian and Creole food in the French Quarter for more than a century. For one signature dish, redfish is rolled up with seafood stuffing, breaded, pan-sauteed and topped with shrimp cream sauce. Tortorici's Trio features beef tenderloin with mushroom sauce, chicken breast with crawfish sauce and shrimp scampi with pasta. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

VENEZIA 134 *N. Carrollton Ave.* 488-7991 One of the few old-style Italian restaurants in Mid-City does its part with classic Italian dishes prepared for hearty appetites. Consider the eggplant Vatican, a hollowed-out, batter-fried eggplant stuffed with a seafood cream sauce. The family vibe seeps into other favorites including the traditional veal parmigiana and Venezia's pizza. Reservations for weekdays only. Lunch weekdays, dinner nightly. Credit cards. \$\$

VINCENT'S 7839 *St. Charles Ave.* 866-9313 The menu stocked with Italian delights changes regularly, so always ask your server for the daily specials. Menu staples include Vincent's housemade cannelloni stuffed with baby ground veal, pureed spinach and Parmesan, and the sauteed redfish topped with crabmeat cream. Reservations accepted; recommended for large parties and on weekends in Mandeville. Lunch Tuesday through Friday and dinner daily Uptown; lunch Tuesday through Friday and dinner Monday through Saturday in Metairie; lunch Tuesday through Friday and Sunday, and dinner Tuesday through Sunday in Mandeville. Credit cards. \$\$

Latin American

COUNTRY FLAME 620 *Iberville St.* 522-1138 This little taste of Latin America offers big Spanish and Cuban-inspired flavors with such dishes as the Puerco Frito, marinated pork that's fried and served with yucca or tostones. Enchiladas, tacos and fajitas featuring smoked meats are always popular, and

for dessert there's the flan, a custard cream with caramel. Reservations accepted. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

LIBORIO CUBAN RESTAURANT 321 Magazine St. 581-9680 Liborio's authentic Cuban fare brings to you a paella that, depending on what's fresh and available, any combination of shrimp, scallop, squid, or pork. All dishes come with beans and rice, so try that with a pork loin stuffed with ham and cheese. Their stuffed Cuban steak is also a favorite choice. Reservations recommended. Lunch Monday through Saturday, dinner Tuesday through Saturday. Credit cards and checks. \$

Louisiana Contemporary

201 RESTAURANT AND BAR 201 Decatur St. 561-0007 This lower French Quarter bistro is loaded with ambience and the menu is loaded with Chef Thaddeus Palmese's novel twists on classic Louisiana dishes. A great starter is the cream cheese crabcake, served atop a crispy sweet onion nest with a sweet and spicy sauce. Move onto the Caribbean bouillabaisse: shrimp, mussels and scallops simmered in a lightly curried shellfish fumée with onion, sweet peppers and mango. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily, late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **ALLEGRO BISTRO** 1100 Poydras St. 582-2350 Get ready to cheer on the Hornets while dining at Allegro Bistro, which extends its usually lunch-only hours to dinner when the team plays a home game at the nearby Arena. The prime filets are a specialty of the kitchen, as are soup choices of seafood gumbo and roasted garlic. Seafood dominates most of the menu, with barbecued shrimp a popular choice along with a grilled Gulf fish entree special. Reservations accepted. Lunch weekdays. Credit cards. \$\$ **BEGUE'S** 300 Bourbon St. (Royal Sonesta Hotel) 553-2278 Begue's is known for Louisiana seafood and Creole delicacies such as the seared foie gras sandwich with Brie, truffles and a pear brandy sauce. Other favorites include lobster and scallops in red curry, and a trio of lamb chops with wilted spinach, goat cheese, pine nuts and rosemary-roasted potatoes with shiraz-black pepper lamb juice. Reservations recommended. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **THE BISTRO AT MAISON DE VILLE** 733 Toulouse St. 528-9206 This charming little bistro benefits from the imprint of six sterling chefs over its 15 years, including Susan Spicer and Dominique Macquet. Now starring in the kitchen: Chef Greg Picolo, who keeps the bistro's reputation impeccable with bowls of mussels served with French fries and mayonnaise, and a creme brulee that's poetry on a plate. Reservations recommended. Lunch Monday through Saturday, dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$\$

EMERIL'S 800 Tchoupitoulas St. 528-9393 Come see why Chef-owner Emeril Lagasse is more than a "celebrity chef," starting with the nightly six-course degustation menu. Appetizers include

homemade andouille and Creole boudin sausages, and Emeril's signature New Orleans-style barbecue shrimp served with a petite rosemary biscuit. Once a seasonal specialty, a regular favorite is the citrus- and tea-glazed Maple Leaf Farms duck, served with savory caramelized onion bread pudding and haricots vert. The banana cream pie is a dessert favorite. Reservations required. Lunch weekdays, dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

EMERIL'S DELMONICO RESTAURANT 1300 St. Charles Ave. 525-4937 Chef Emeril Lagasse is one of New Orleans' brightest culinary stars, and his Delmonico restaurant shows off his extensive talents. The restaurant's contemporary Creole cuisine in a fine dining atmosphere is sure to impress your date or client, and live piano music on Friday and Saturday adds to the atmosphere. The veal Marcelle serves veal medallions with hollandaise sauce and a saute of crabmeat and field mushrooms. At the Sunday jazz brunch, try Emeril's version of eggs Benedict or pain perdu. Reservations recommended for lunch, required for dinner. Lunch weekdays, dinner nightly, jazz brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

FQB 921 Canal St. (*The Ritz-Carlton Hotel*) 524-1331 Start a meal here with heavenly appetizers such as the artichoke-mushroom-Goyere cheese fondue. Salads include a warm duck confit salad and a favorite entree is the pecan-crust chicken. Daily lunch specials are a rotating list of great meals at great prices. Live music comes courtesy of Ingrid Lucia (Tues.-Wed.), Jeremy Davenport (Thurs.-Sat.) and a jazz quartet for Sunday brunch. Reservations recommended Thursday through Saturday. Lunch Monday through Saturday, dinner and late-night daily, brunch Sunday. \$\$ **GAMAY BISTRO AND BAR** 320 Decatur St. (*Bienville House Hotel*) 299-8800 Chef-owner Matt Caldwell keeps the menu at this stylish bistro stocked with inspired choices, such as an appetizer of homemade chicken, andouille and boudin sausages served with three salsas; a spinach salad with warm Brie dressing, and pan-seared sweet corn-encrusted mahi. Reservations recommended. Lunch Monday through Friday, dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

GAUTREAU'S 1728 Soniat St. 899-7397 Chef Mathias Wolf always creates a stir with his fresh, seasonal menu served in a classy, old-fashioned dining room. Current offerings include a sauteed grouper with a field pea, asparagus and braised fennel ragout, and steamed mussels with pancetta and leeks in a cider cream. Choose from the excellent wine list to complete your experience. Reservations recommended. Dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards and checks. \$\$\$ **GIROD'S BISTRO** 500 Chartres St. 524-9752 Girod's Bistro's menu is more elaborate than the one offering muffalettas and po-boys in another area of the Napoleon House. The chef's signature is a Louisiana Bounty Experience featuring Gulf fish, shrimp, andouille, saffron rice and spicy bouillabaisse essence. There's also lump crab, mango and avocado ceviche, and duck breast with Creole mustard gravy. No reservations. Lunch daily, dinner Tuesday through Sunday, late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$

HILLERY'S ON TOULOUSE 827 *Toulouse St. (Hotel St. Marie)* 571-2888 Hillery's is formerly 827 1/2 Toulouse the Restaurant; the name might have changed, but the character of this fine-dining portion of the Hotel St. Marie remains outstanding. Recommended is the double-cut pork chop with andouille corn pudding and a honey-port wine glaze; the gulf fish Beoudoin is wrapped in a paper-thin potato crust and served with a crawfish-Tabasco butter sauce and spinach salad with blueberry vinaigrette. Reservations recommended. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

IGOR'S GARLIC CLOVE 2137 *St. Charles Ave.* 522-6602 A full-service Cajun-Creole restaurant that offers outdoor seating on St. Charles Ave., the Garlic Clove pampers seafood lovers. The Super Fruit Di Mata is a boatload of clams, shrimp, crawfish and crab legs over pasta. Or try the chef's specialty, baked redfish with crawfish sauce. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

JOHNNY RYAN'S 600 *St. Charles Ave. (Lafayette Hotel)* 586-9411 Ron Ryan, former vice president of Semolina, and Chef Sean Daigle, formerly of Gabrielle and Mr. B's, opened this new restaurant in December in the former location of Mike Ditka's. The renovated lounge area now features a raw bar; dinner entrees run the likes of almond-crusting baby drum, and twin blackened filets with garlic demi-glace and blue cheese. Reservations recommended. Breakfast Sunday, lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$

KELSEY'S RESTAURANT 3923 *Magazine St.* 897-6722 Chef-owner Daniel Benn serves up "progressive Louisiana cuisine" six days a week at this Uptown restaurant. Start with the traditional New Orleans-style barbecued shrimp, or the salad with fresh mesclun greens, toasted pecans and Stilton cheese. For the main event, check out the filet mignon with port mushroom demi-glace or the seafood-stuffed eggplant Kelsey. Eat inside or out on the patio deck. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner Tuesday through Saturday, brunch Sunday. Credit cards and checks. \$\$

MURIEL'S JACKSON SQUARE 801 *Chartres St.* 568-1885 With a couple of years under its belt, this eclectic French Quarter restaurant seems to have hit its stride. Chef Erik Veney leads the kitchen in the preparation of New Orleans-style dishes such as pecan-crusting puppy drum with pecan-crabmeat relish and lemon-butter sauce. His rack of lamb is crusted with goat cheese and herbs, then served alongside basmati rice and eggplant confit. Reservations recommended. Lunch Wednesday through Sunday, dinner daily. Credit cards and checks. \$\$

NAPOLEON HOUSE BAR & CAFE 500 *Chartres St.* 524-9752 The Napoleon House will likely never live down its reputation for serving top-notch muffalettas and Pimms Cups. The former is served warm with housemade olive salad; the latter is a concoction of British, gin-based liquor, lemonade, a splash of lemon-lime soda and a cucumber slice. No reservations. Lunch daily, dinner Tuesday through Sunday, late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$

PERISTYLE 1041 *Dumaine St.* 593-9535 Chef Anne Kearney welcomes the winter months at her jamming French Quarter restaurant with pan-seared squab served over dirty rice dressing with a sauce made of foie gras and Port wine; mussels prepared in a saffron-shellfish broth compose another warming dish. And if you're like the legions of her fans who can't resist this lusty salad, order lump crabmeat in a horseradish dressing served over roasted beets. Reservations recommended. Lunch Friday, dinner Tuesday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

QUARTER SCENE RESTAURANT

900 Dumaine St. 522-6533 "QSR" is all exposed brick walls, warm lighting and intimacy, a French Quarter spot that serves up modest Creole dishes and a little bit of sass on the side. Check out the wide selection of sandwiches, breakfast items, appetizers such as crabcakes with cocktail or tartar sauce, and entrees including the popular pecan-encrusted fish topped with a crawfish cream sauce. Ask for a juicy Tennessee Williams anecdote for flavoring. Reservations recommended for parties of six or more. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

RESTAURANT AUGUST 301 Tchoupitoulas St. 299-9777 Award-winning Chef John Besh moved from Abita Springs to the CBD in the fall 2001, and brought his worldly, contemporary French cuisine with him. The hip furnishings of the inside don't gloss over the tempting Besh offerings such as the Gulf oysters topped with ginger-lavender sorbet, or foie gras prepared three ways on one plate. This winter, try housemade gnocchi with blue crab, Parmesan and shaved black truffles. Private dining facilities and cocktail receptions available. Reservations required. Lunch weekdays, dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

RESTAURANT CUVÉE 322 Magazine St. 587-9001 The inventive menu at Restaurant Cuvee showcases dishes such as the sugar-cane smoked duck breast with a crispy confit leg with Cashel blue cheese and walnut risotto, also served with a seared Hudson Valley foie gras and pear glace. And don't miss the impressive wine list. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **STELLA!** 1032 Chartres St. 587-0091 Louisiana native Chef Scott Boswell this winter invites you to this intimate, 17-table, smoke-free eatery three blocks down from Jackson Square for two new menu attractions: Dine on the seared Hudson Valley foie gras, with quenelles of Granny Smith apples, toasted brioche, huckleberry jam and burgundy reduction. Or try the peppercorn-crusting veal ribeye in crisp veal sweetbread with jumbo lump crab, truffled with potatoes and paragon caper butter. Reservations recommended. Dinner nightly, except Tuesday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

SUGAR HOUSE 315 Julia St. (Embassy Suites Hotel) 525-1993 The Embassy Suites' in-house restaurant serves up local fare, starting with an appetizer of crabmeat-stuffed shrimp baked and topped with coconut sprinkles. That sets up the Sugar House Pork Medallions, which are grilled and served with an orange coulis. Lunch buffet Monday through Friday, dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$ **SUGAR MAGNOLIA** 1910 Magazine St. 529-1110 This attractive Uptown restaurant was voted one of the "Best New Restaurants" of 2002 in *Gambit Weekly's* Best of New Orleans readers' poll and features both indoor and outdoor seating. Sugar Magnolia serves up a hickory wood-grilled pork chop with andouille stuffing and root beer sauce or, if seafood is your thing, there's always a fresh new catch of the day. The cream cheese-stuffed French toast with seasonal berries is a breakfast favorite. Catering and takeout available. Reservations accepted for six or more. Brunch Saturday and Sunday, lunch Monday through Sunday, dinner Tuesday through Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$

UNCLE BUCKS CAJUN & CREOLE GRILL 811 Conti St. 299-8496 Uncle Bucks, a yearling French Quarter restaurant, serves a roster of Cajun and Creole favorites. Alligator legs ("Gator Wings") are boiled with seafood boil seasonings, baked and drenched in secret sauce. Louisiana -- only Louisiana -- crawfish are boiled daily and served with corn and potatoes. Uncle Bucks also ships Louisiana seafood and prepared dishes nationwide. Delivery available. No reservations. Lunch Friday through Sunday, dinner and late-night daily. Cash only. \$ **WOLFE'S OF NEW ORLEANS** 7224 Pontchartrain Blvd. 284-6004 After being named a "Chef to Watch" in 2001 by *Esquire* magazine,

Chef Tom Wolfe isn't resting on his laurels. Sure, you can still get his signature roasted duck stuffed with foie gras and served with a Calvados reduction, but adventuresome diners can now try the five-course degustation menu for \$40, and early birds can fly in for a \$14.95 three-course tasting. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner weekdays, dinner Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

Mexican & Southwest

LUCY'S RETIRED SURFER'S BAR AND RESTAURANT 701 Tchoupitoulas St. 523-8995

For a place camped out in the concrete jungle of the Warehouse District, Lucy's sure has people thinking of sand. The California surfer vibe inspires such West Coast classics as the "Dinner with Elvis" combo: a chicken enchilada in fajita sauce, a cheese enchilada with salsa verde and a hand-rolled beef burrito topped with salsa and sour cream. On Taco Tuesdays, \$1 tacos are offered and on Wednesdays, \$2.50 nachos. Happy hour drink specials are available weekdays. No reservations.

Lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday, brunch weekends. Credit cards. \$ **NACHO MAMA'S MEXICAN GRILL** 721 Common St. 558-0830 The friendly staff at Nacho Mama's invites you to kick off your weekend with a bang with a Friday happy hour offering two-for-one tequila shots. The bustling lunch scene offers burritos, nachos and quesadillas. The shrimp tacos and burritos are popular, as are a variety of hard-shell tacos. Lunch Monday through Friday, dinner Thursday and Friday. Credit cards and checks. \$

SANTE FE

801 Frenchmen St. 944-6854

The hours are limited, but the food is worth arranging your schedule. The time of year, the chilled gazapacho with a topshelf margarita is a smart start. Follow up with the chicken Maximillian, rolled in an Anaheim pepper, stuffed with chorizo and asadero cheese and served with pepper sauce. The chef also recommends his portobello bisque, crawfish tamales and chocolate mouse cake. No reservations. Diner Wednesday through Saturday. Credit Cards. \$\$

SUPERIOR GRILL 3636 St. Charles Ave. 899-4200 Superior Grill takes full advantage of its prime Uptown location for a full dining/viewing/chill-out experience, offering daily lunch specials, Mexican specialties, a vast tequila selection and year-round patio dining with a view of the Avenue. Lunch options include Mexican combination plates, taco salads and mesquite-grilled fish. Dinner provides a

variety of Southwestern specialties, burgers or the Uptown enchilada platter with shrimp, crawfish, and spinach and cheese enchiladas. Reservations recommended for parties of eight or more. Breakfast Saturday, lunch and dinner daily, late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$

TAQUERIA CORONA 5932 Magazine St. 897-3974 If Mexican food is a New Orleans tradition, Taqueria Corona is largely responsible for its popularity. All tacos are made to order, including the carne asada, which involves ribeye steak marinated in chimichurri sauce and grilled. Numero Tres, the taqueria's most beloved combination platter, includes three tacos, one flauta, one burrito, rice, beans and a house salad. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

VAQUEROS 4923 Prytania St. 891-6441 With its unique interpretations of Southwestern cuisine, Vaqueros has remained an Uptown favorite after a recent management change. Sample the shrimp quesadillas and try one of their famous margaritas as you peruse the menu. The New York strip steak is topped with chimichurri and served with grilled vegetables and sauteed skillet potatoes with leeks in a Spanish blue cheese demi-sauce. Reservations recommended for parties over six. Breakfast and brunch Sunday, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

Middle Eastern

BYBLOS

3218 Magazine St. 894-1233 All three Byblos locations feature a graceful setting and authentic Middle Eastern dishes on the menu. Try the lamb kebab, chunks of lamb strip loin marinated overnight and skewered with vegetables and char-broiled; or the chicken shawarma, a boneless breast marinated overnight in olive oil, lemon juice and Lebanese spices, broiled and then thinly sliced. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

CAFE BEIRUT 3242 Magazine St. 269-2900 If you're maxed out on cream sauces and red sauces, come to Cafe Beirut for something different: spicy, subtle Middle Eastern dishes in a cheerful atmosphere. Uptown residents flock to the cafe for its specialty chicken, lamb or kafta kebabs. Other favorites are moussaka, lentil soup, beef shawarma and kibbeh. Those with a sweet tooth won't want to miss the homemade pastries, including baklava and ashta. Reservations accepted for parties of 10 or more. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

MONA'S CAFE 4126 Magazine St. 894-9800 You can't go wrong with simple but delicious traditional Middle Eastern standards such as the hummus, falafel wrap and stuffed grape leaves. For more hearty appetites, there are gyros, featuring marinated lamb and beef, or chicken, beef and lamb kebabs. Another popular dish is the vegetarian plate featuring baba ghanoush, tabouleh and falafel. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

Music & Food

FUNKY BUTT 714 N. Rampart St. 558-0872 It's such a great place to go see live jazz and funk bands, you'd never know there's a happening kitchen downstairs cooking up some great meals and desserts. Try the crawfish cakes or the chicken Marsala: roasted chicken in a Marsala wine and mushroom sauce with rosemary, served over rice. For dessert, try bread pudding or the Creole brownie sundae. No reservations. Dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. \$

HOUSE OF BLUES

225 Decatur St. 529-BLUE (2583) Dig into the Southern-inspired menu here for choices that include slow-smoked baby back ribs with Jack Daniel's BBQ sauce, a Cajun catfish tortilla wrap and "The Elwood" blackened chicken sandwich. Save room for dessert: the Florida key lime pie and vanilla-scented two-tone cheesecake are two winners. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. **\$HOWL AT THE MOON**

135 Bourbon St. 410-9000 The Howl's piano bar features dueling pianos, sing- (or howl-) alongs, and party tunes seven nights a week. When you work up an appetite with all that fun, order up some New Orleans bar food including chicken wings and fingers, jambalaya, barbecue shrimp etouffee or a po-boy. No reservations. Lunch Saturday and Sunday, dinner daily and late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. **LOUNGE LIZARDS**

200 Decatur St. 598-1500 There's more than great live music most nights at this fairly new club and eatery. Dishes flying out of the kitchen here include the barbecue beef brisket, yellowfin tuna steak sandwich, baked macaroni and cheese, and the ever-popular crispy crawfish spring rolls. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. **PALM COURT JAZZ CAFE**

1204 Decatur St. 525-0200 It's not easy to find fine dining and live music under one roof in the French Quarter, unless you find Palm Court. Entrees include crawfish tails in brandy cream sauce over rice (crawfish Nantua) and shrimp sauteed with sesame seeds and ginger. You may choose the Traditional Creole menu instead, which features gumbo, bread pudding and your choice of shrimp Creole, jambalaya, red beans or garlic chicken. Reservations recommended. Dinner Wednesday through Sunday. Credit cards. \$

SNUG HARBOR JAZZ BISTRO

626 Frenchmen St. 949-0696 The menu here contains all the standard New Orleans favorites appropriate to the live jazz performances for which Snug Harbor is known. The Snug Harbor Gumbo is a classic version containing shrimp, chicken, sausage, okra and rice, and the spicy barbecued shrimp are sauteed with butter, garlic, rosemary and cayenne. Reservations recommended. Dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

Pizza

CAFE ROMA 1119 Decatur St. 566-1800 For Italian comfort food at its best, stop by any one of Cafe Roma's six locations any day of the week. Vegetarians love the meatless specials such as the

spinach pizza or artichoke pizza, and seafood lovers go for the shrimp pizza and the shrimp pasta: angel hair pasta topped with shrimp and cream sauce. Reservations accepted. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards and checks. \$

ITALIAN PIE 417 S. Rampart St. 522-7552 5538 Magazine St. 894-0005 The varied offerings of pizzas, salads, calzones, sandwiches and more at Italian Pie are available through delivery, pick-up or dine-in in seemingly every part of the metro area. With calzones and pizzas, you can build your own or opt for a house specialty, such as the shrimp Florentine calzone with seasoned shrimp, spinach, artichoke hearts, cheese and garlic sauce. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Delivery available. Credit cards. \$ **LORENZO'S PIZZERIA** 3162 Dauphine St. 944-4445 The wood-fired ovens at Lorenzo's produce a variety of gourmet and made-to-order pizzas, with house specialties such as the barbecue pizza -- topped with shredded pork or chicken, red onions, jalapenos and mozzarella. The diverse kitchen also offers non-pizza items such as lasagna and manicotti, with both having meat or vegetarian options. Limited delivery. Breakfast Monday through Friday, lunch and dinner daily, weekend brunch.

LOUISIANA PIZZA KITCHEN 95 French Market Place 522-9500 Louisiana Pizza Kitchen is known for inventive, wood-fired pizzas. Create your own pizza or opt for house specialties such as the roasted garlic and barbecue chicken versions. A number of non-pizza daily specials are also offered. The French Market location has a wine bar which offers many of its wines by the half glass, and the Carrollton location serves its own fresh-baked breads daily. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

Sandwiches & PoBoys

DOMILISE'S PO-BOYS 5240 Annunciation St. 899-9126 For 75 years, Domilise's has been serving up mouth-watering po-boys. Once you've tasted one of their home-cooked roast beef po-boys, drenched in gravy and dressed with homemade yellow and Creole mustard sauces, you won't be the same again. Their oyster po-boys have a similar transcendental effect, dressed with mayonnaise, lettuce, pickles, and the house "special sauce." No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday. Cash only. **JOHNNY'S PO-BOYS** 827 Perdido St. 523-9883 You can stick with such Johnny's favorites as the roast beef, ham or turkey po-boys, but you can also opt for daily specials like the fried seafood on Fridays, the meatballs and spaghetti on Tuesday, and Thursday's fried chicken with butter beans. Breakfast choices include the one- or two-egg plate, completed with toast or biscuit, ham or sausage, hash browns or grits. Cheese omelettes are also popular. Breakfast and lunch Monday

through Friday. No reservations. Credit cards. **LUIGI'S** 915 Decatur St. 529-4975 This old-school Italian New Orleans grocery and eatery offers affordable local and Italian items including lasagna, muffalettas and po-boys. After your lunch, stop by the grocery to stock up on imported Italian items such as olive oil, pasta and cheeses, and local spices and hot sauces too. No reservations. Lunch daily. Credit cards. **MIKE SERIO'S PO-BOYS & DELI** 133 St. Charles Ave. 523-2668 Mike Serio's invites you to start your day with breakfast items like pancakes, omelettes. The 50-plus sandwiches offerings include favorites of the Cuban and muffaletta, or you can the feed the whole gang with the 8-foot "Super Boy" party sandwich. Lunch specials include red beans and rice and shrimp etouffee. Free delivery available. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. **MOTHER'S** 401 Poydras St. 523-9656

The lines at Mother's start earlier, with people packing it in for the legendary po-boys and such legendary dishes as the shrimp Creole omelettes, though the breakfast menu is available throughout the day. Anything made with debris (the extra pieces and juices that fall from the beef during cooking) as an ingredient is popular. A private room with a bar is available for parties. No reservations. Limited delivery available. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

PARASOL'S RESTAURANT & BAR 2533 Constance St. 899-2054 Parasol's celebrated its 50th anniversary this past year, continuing to serve up the po-boys (try the roast beef) for which the Uptown landmark is best known. Parasol's also offers seafood platters, including shrimp and oysters. Buffalo wings and gravy cheese fries from the appetizer menu are tasty ways to stave off the munchies, as well. Takeout available. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards.

Seafood

AFT DECK OYSTER BAR 214 Royal St. (Hotel Monteleone) 523-3341 Belly up to this oyster bar for a dozen raw sliders, or sit back and enjoy a po-boy piled high with shrimp, oyster, catfish or a combination. Other traditional New Orleans dishes on the bill are crawfish salad, gumbo, seafood platters and crawfish etouffee. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **\$BOURBON HOUSE** 144 Bourbon St. 522-0111 Dickie Brennan is at it again, this time capturing the flavor of some of New Orleans' favorite (and not as well-known) seafood dishes. Sample two different versions of hefty Plateaux de Fruits de Mer, a chilled seafood platter set off by oysters, shrimp, mussels, lobster and more. Or keep it simple and belly up to the oyster bar -- or the bar itself. (Yes, the space is vast, the interior warm and comfy with a view of Bourbon Street revelers). Reservations recommended. Dinner daily, breakfast and lunch weekdays, brunch Saturday and Sunday. Credit cards. **\$\$BUBBA GUMP SHRIMP CO.** 429 Decatur St. 522-5800 www.bubbagump.com Anyone who's seen the movie can predict this restaurant would boast a long list of shrimp specials. Forrest's Shrimp Net Catch features the crustaceans steamed in beer with potatoes and fresh vegetables and either Bubba's Garlic

Spice or Secret Recipe Cajun Spice. Smoothies, sandwiches, appetizers, desserts and specialty drinks round out the credits. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **\$DESIRE OYSTER BAR** 300 Bourbon St. (Royal Sonesta Hotel) 586-0300 All your favorite New Orleans menu items can be found here, under the bright neon sign. Start off with the crawfish and corn cake appetizer, move onto the spicy sauteed New Orleans BBQ Shrimp as your entree, and finish it off with bread pudding in whiskey sauce. Wash it all down with plenty of Dixie beers. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards. **FELIX'S RESTAURANT AND OYSTER BAR** 739 Iberville St. (another entrance at 210 Bourbon St.) 522-4440 Felix's has oysters aplenty, any way you want them. Take down a dozen or two raw on the half-shell at the antique bar, or sample the wide menu, which includes fresh seafood (of course), steaks, salads and po-boys. There are even dishes for the vegetarian. Tables are available in the rear dining area. Reservations recommended for eight or more. Late breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, late-night dining Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. **\$GW FINS** 808 Bienville St. 581-3467 If you can't tell by the name, GW Fins is a seafood lover's haven. The menu changes daily depending on the season. This time of year, you can expect such heavenly choices as the wood-grilled mahi with creamed leeks and grilled portobello mushrooms, or horseradish-crusted drum served on truffled potato sauce with crispy parsnips. Beef lovers get their due with USDA prime cuts. Reservations recommended. Dinner nightly. Credit cards. **\$JACK DEMPSEY'S** 738 Poland Ave. 943-9914 Jack Dempsey's offers a solution to diners facing indecision: try the J.D. Platter, which brings you two cups of gumbo, two stuffed crabs, two crawfish pies, fried shrimp, oysters, catfish and redfish plus a choice of fries or baked macaroni. Other top choices include the steak-and-lobster special at \$17.95, and the J.D. broiled redfish, served topped with crabmeat au gratin. No reservations. Lunch Tuesday through Friday, dinner Wednesday through Saturday. Credit cards. **\$KING ROGER'S SEAFOOD** 1724 N. Rampart St. 944-6150 "Everything from soup to nuts" is on the menu at this casual eatery. Fresh seafood, po-boys and soul food items at reasonable prices abound, and the "buffet pizza" option lets you order a 12-inch pizza with your choice of nine toppings including ground beef, sausage, pepperoni, olives and mushrooms. Cajun and soul food options include shrimp Creole, etouffee, smothered okra and gumbo. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Cash only. **LANDRY'S** 789 Harrison Ave. 488-6496, 488-9156 Lakeview families love Landry's for its affordability and wide range of sandwiches, salads and seafood. The stocked gumbo will keep you warm on these cold winter days, and you can load up on carbs, dairy and protein with the seafood pasta complete with shrimp, crawfish and oysters in a cream sauce over angel hair pasta served with one side order. No reservations. Breakfast Saturday; lunch Monday through Saturday; dinner Thursday through Saturday. Cash only.

MIKE ANDERSON'S SEAFOOD RESTAURANT 1 Poydras St. (Riverwalk Mall food court) 522-7727 215 Bourbon St. 524-3884 www.mikeandersons.com While both local locations of this Baton Rouge-based franchise stick mostly to seafood, the Bourbon Street kitchen offers more complexity in dishes such as the oysters Bienville, made with shrimp and crabmeat dressing and Parmesan cheese. At the Riverwalk, try the South Louisiana Combo: boiled shrimp, fried shrimp, catfish, crawfish etouffee, cole slaw, French fries and hush puppies. No reservations. Lunch and dinner

daily. Credit cards. \$

OCEANAIRE 739 Conti St. 525-6002 Take up the newly opened Oceanaire's suggestion: "If you dine in the bottom of the ocean with fish and jellyfish, you may dine with us." Fair enough. While down there, try the grilled sea bass with champagne and peach sauce, grilled over hardwood with fresh vegetables, or the bronzed mahi mahi cooked with smoked tomato beurre blanc and rosemary pepper. Reservations recommended. Breakfast Saturday and Sunday, lunch and dinner daily, late-night Saturday. **\$RED FISH GRILL** 115 Bourbon St. 598-1200 Located in a corner of the former D.H. Holmes department store, Red Fish Grill specializes in, well ... guess. The signature hickory-grilled redfish is served with potatoes and crabmeat in a lemon-butter sauce. An adventurer might prefer the Bourbon Street Sampler: coconut shrimp, alligator sausage, crabmeat au gratin and barbecued oysters. Oysters are, in fact, a big deal here, too; order them raw, barbecued, fried or baked. Reservations recommended. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. **\$RIOMAR** 800 S. Peters St. 525-FISH www.riomarseafood.com Try a sampler platter of the four ceviches Chef Adolfo Garcia makes regularly: Panamanian-style fish with onions and habanero chiles, Peruvian-style fish with onions and jalapenos, Ecuadorian-style shrimp with citrus and tomatoes, and Spanish-style octopus with olive oil, paprika and potatoes. Yellowfin tuna wrapped in Spanish ham and served with chick pea puree and Romesco sauce is another fine example of RioMar's unique cuisine. Reservations recommended. Lunch weekdays, dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$

Soul

JACQUESIMOS

8324 Oak St., 861-0886

You Haven't seen a pre-dinner cocktail party until you've seen the bar at Jacques-Imo's on Friday or Saturday night. The festive toasting abates the sometimes lengthy waits, until finally your turn to walk the narrow hallway past the steamy kitchen into a dining room walled in wild, forest-like murals. Jacques-Imo's house salad arrives soon thereafter, decorated with a plumply fried oyster, along with homemade buttery corn bread. The smothered paniced rabbit with corn bread dressing and hollandaise sauce is a standout favorite, but try to save room for dessert. Bread pudding with whiskey sauce is a favorite. Dinner Monday through Saturday. Major credit cards. \$\$

THE PRALINE CONNECTION GOSPEL & BLUES HALL 907 S. Peters St., 523-3973 The Warehouse District location of the Praline Connection offers weekday all-you-can-eat lunch buffets at \$10.95 -- featuring the same soulful cooking that the Praline Connection is known for -- and a gospel brunch on the weekends. Don't forget to check out the gift shop. Reservations recommended for large parties and gospel brunch. Lunch weekdays, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. **\$TWO SISTER'S RESTAURANT** 223 N. Derbigny St. 524-0056 In addition to a long menu filled with down-home

classics, Two Sister's offers daily specials such as breaded pork chops with white beans or mustard greens on Tuesday; the requisite red beans with smoked or hot sausage on Mondays; meatballs and spaghetti and their famed seafood gumbo on Fridays. Their cornbread, served hot and with a slab of butter, is always available. The \$5 breakfast deal includes two eggs, grits, your choice of meat and toast or a biscuit. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch Monday through Saturday. Cash only. \$

Steakhouse

DICKIE BRENNAN'S STEAKHOUSE 716 Iberville St. 522-CHOP (2467) Beef, beef and more beef is the main focus here. One favorite is the bacon-wrapped tournedos of beef served on smoked gouda with garlic mashed potatoes. Featured cuts include the prime 8-oz. filet and 24-oz. porterhouse. If you're not in a meaty mood, there are plenty of salad, soup and seafood options, including hearty Maine lobster. Reservations recommended. Lunch Monday through Friday, dinner nightly. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **THE EMBERS** 700 Bourbon St. 523-1485 When you want steak and your date wants seafood, hit on a compromise at Embers. The Embers Bourbon House Special is an 8-oz. filet mignon slicked with demi-glace and served with barbecue shrimp and mashed potatoes. Your date may have trout topped with crawfish etouffee. Reservations recommended. Lunch Saturday and Sunday, dinner daily, late-night Friday and Saturday. Credit cards. \$ **MORTON'S OF CHICAGO** 365 Canal St. (Canal Place) 566-0221 Morton's was in on the recent cattle drive of upscale beef franchises into New Orleans, steaking its claim to Canal Place with a selection of prime USDA steaks, fresh seafood and lobster. Specialties have remained consistent, like the steak au poivre with New York strip sirloin, filet Oskar with crabmeat and bearnaise, sliced strip sirloin with roasted garlic sauce, and filet Diane with mushrooms and demi-glace sauce. Reservations recommended. Dinner nightly. Credit cards. \$\$ **THE RIB ROOM** 621 St. Louis St. (Omni Royal Orleans Hotel) 529-7046 A local's favorite, specializing in prime rib, fresh seafood and -- the management swears -- "the best grilled steaks in the city," The Rib Room is renown for its elegant service and slow-roasted prime rib, served with a baked potato and salad topped with housemade croutons and blue cheese dressing. Rated "award-winning" in the 2003 issue of the *Zagat Survey* of New Orleans restaurants. Reservations recommended. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sunday. Credit cards. \$\$\$ **RUTH'S CHRIS STEAK HOUSE** 711 N. Broad St. 486-0810 Whether in Mid-City or Metairie, Ruth's Chris maintains the warm, traditional steakhouse atmosphere that has become a national favorite. Before things get meaty, diners sink into an appetizer of lump crab-stuffed mushroom caps. The steaks are from the the

highest grade beef. Other options include the veal chop, which is marinated overnight in a blend of pepper vinegar, garlic and onions, then broiled and served sizzling with hot and sweet peppers. Reservations recommended. Lunch Monday through Friday and Sunday, dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$

SMITH & WOLLENSKY 1009 Poydras St. 561-0770 Smith & Wollensky now incorporates more local influences in its cuisine, as noted in new offerings such as turtle soup, blackened redfish and crabmeat au gratin. The steakhouse's traditional winners remain, so try the New Orleans spicy filet, either a 12- or 16-oz. filet crusted with cayenne and black pepper, topped with herb butter and served over spinach. Reservations recommended. Lunch, dinner, late night daily. Credit cards. \$\$

STAR STEAK & LOBSTER 237 Decatur St. 525-6151 A favorite dining spot for French Quarter entertainers, co-owners "Star Joey "and Billy Spain offers a lobster special for two for \$39.95, which includes soup, salad, baked potato and bread pudding. A 16 oz. prime rib with baked potato, soup or salad goes for \$16.95. Also try the filet mignon filled with shrimp, crawfish, crabmeat and lobster stuffing, then topped with red wine mushroom sauce. Reservations required. Dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

STEAK KNIFE 888 Harrison Ave. 488-8981 If their juicy broiled 6- or 9-oz. filets are all that come to mind when you think of the Steak Knife, get acquainted with menu items such as osso bucco in brown gravy, or seafood specialties such as Fish Robert, pan-sauteed fish of the day topped with lump crabmeat, mushrooms and lemon butter. Live jazz in the bar on weekends. Reservations recommended. Dinner nightly. Credit cards. \$

THE STEAK PIT 609 Bourbon St. 525-3406 In the heart of the French Quarter and the epicenter of Bourbon Street, The Steak Pit teases locals and visitors alike with a menu of 20 beers and racks of Jim Beam Bourbon BBQ Baby Back Ribs. The Steak Pit also offers a variety of po-boys, sides (eggplant French fries, onion soup, onion rings or sweet potato fries) and a juicy 8-oz. New York strip steak. The Jumbo Combo with piles of shrimp, catfish and oysters is served with fries. Delivery available in the French Quarter. No reservations. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily. Credit cards.

TOP OF THE DOME STEAKHOUSE 500 Poydras Plaza (Hyatt Regency New Orleans) 599-4826 Visitors to New Orleans' only rotating rooftop restaurant often acclimate at the plush bar, which opens nightly for cocktails at 6 p.m. The Cajun surf 'n' turf, a lobster tail stuffed with crabmeat dressing atop a blackened filet mignon, highlights the steak-heavy menu. Other favorites include barbecue shrimp, roasted prime rib, ribs and a decadent Chocoholic Bar featured nightly. Reservations recommended. Dinner Tuesday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$\$\$

Thai

BANGKOK THAI 513 S. Carrollton Ave. 861-3932 Many diners at Bangkok Thai opt to share their meal with the Happiness Tray, which combines six different appetizers, including the popular spring rolls and chicken wings. Other menu favorites include the pad Thai with your choice of tofu or shrimp. Several types of curries are also available. Reservations accepted. Lunch weekdays, dinner daily. Credit cards. **BASIL LEAF** 1438 S. Carrollton Ave. 862-9001 The formally dressed servers and white linen offer the very accurate first impression: this is upscale Thai cuisine along a row of popular Carrollton neighborhood restaurants. The menu continues the vibe; herbs, especially mint and basil, and seafood dominate the menu. For starters, consider the hot and sour soup, spring rolls and seared scallop dumplings. The sesame-coated red snapper entree is another attraction, along with grilled beef or chicken salads. Reservations accepted. Lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday. Credit cards. \$

Vegetarian & Health Food

THE APPLE SEED SHOPPE INC. 336 Camp St. 529-3442 The healthy diet alternatives found at the Apple Seed include a number of fruit smoothies, sandwiches and green salads. The fruit salad is piled high with apples, bananas, pears, grapes, kiwi, oranges, melon, pineapples and strawberries, with topping options of raisins, coconut or granola honey. Delivery available. No reservations. Lunch weekdays. Checks and cash. **BACK TO THE GARDEN** 833 Howard Ave. 299-8792 Back to the Garden's practice of using turkey meat as a healthy substitute is found throughout the day. At breakfast, it replaces pork bacon and sausage on plates that include eggs, grits and hash browns. Croissants and omelettes are popular breakfast items. During lunch, find turkey sausage in the red beans and rice special on Mondays. No reservations. Breakfast and lunch Monday through Saturday. Credit cards and checks. **OLD DOG NEW TRICK CAFE** 517 Frenchmen St. 943-6368 Old Dog New Trick is safe harbor for vegetarians, vegans and diners looking for some respite from heavy sauces and fried seafood. Try Tofu Rancheros, which is made with a chile tortilla, black beans, tofu, grilled vegetables, cheddar cheese and tomatillo salsa. Fresh-squeezed watermelon mimosas will tame the chile heat. No reservations. Lunch and dinner daily. Credit cards. \$

Vietnamese

LEMON GRASS RESTAURANT 217 Camp St. (International House Hotel) 523-1200 Chef Minh Bui's creative blend on Louisiana and his native Vietnam appears in signature entrees like the Laque Duck: roasted five-spice duck breast with sweet rice, baby bok choy and natural duck sauce. The Viet Bird Nest is sauteed scallops and shrimps with fresh oriental vegetables on crispy noodles. Reservations recommended. Breakfast and lunch weekdays, dinner daily. Credit cards. \$\$\$

PHO TAU BAY *1565 Tulane Ave. 524-4669* A longtime fixture for Vietnamese food in the New Orleans area, Pho Tau Bay now has a third location in the CBD, across Tulane Avenue from Charity Hospital. Order pho bo (beef noodle soup) at any location, or goi cuon: spring rolls that contain shrimp, pork, fresh herbs, bean sprouts and rice noodles. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday at all locations; breakfast, lunch and dinner Sunday at the Gretna location. Credit cards.

PURPLE ROSES *1116 Tulane Ave. 566-0950* Throughout Lent, Purple Roses will be offering a seafood platter special at lunch. Also new is the crawfish fried rice. Breakfast still carries the basics such as eggs, grits, hash browns and pancakes. Lunch features entrees such as Kung Pao chicken or shrimp with broccoli, plus rice, chow mein and a drink. The pho, or soup, choices include a rice noodle sauce, fresh herbs and vegetables. No reservations. Delivery available. Lunch Monday through Friday. Cash only. \$