



Top 25 Restaurants

Over the last decade, Tampa Bay's chefs and restaurant owners have created a vibrant dining environment that has turned the urban heart of Florida's Gulf Coast into a veritable culinary destination. Every day, visitors and discerning foodies discover an eclectic array of eclectic, authentic food experiences.

Downtown

Anise Global Gastrobar – Tampa's trendy residents have been lining up for Anise's perfect handcrafted craft cocktail and small plates ever since this chic lounge operated as a foodtruck. A hip vibe with music that ranges from house to trance to jazz will keep you on tasting Anise's signature Stinky Bunz and Truffled Tater Tots late into the night.

Boca – Hard to believe that this farm-to-table gem was once Tampa's second gas station. Housed in the original 1928 garage building in Tampa's historic Hyde Park district, the "locavore" restaurant with its own front market boasts a meticulously inventive, freshly sourced menu that caters to the most demanding palates. Locals swear by the savory sweet grilled shishito peppers and red pepper rouille combo – though the OMG Prime Burger may be your thing.

Café Dufrain – This award-winning waterfront bistro on swanky Harbour Island has passionately embraced a "new American comfort food cuisine" approach: top notch dining that focuses on local, organic and sustainable ingredients combined in recipes that are changed seasonally. Recently named "Best Waterfront Café" by Tampa Bay Metro Magazine, Café Dufrain is all about good, slow food.

Edison Food + Drink Lab – Mix and match is the order of the day at this hip industrial gastropub that opened to rave reviews during the Republican National Convention in 2012. Edison explores and consistently advances contemporary trends and ingredients to engineer the most imaginative and flavorful dishes and craft drinks.

Fly Bar & Restaurant – Tampa's iconic urban bar is a necessary stop for happy hour on any itinerary or a destination on its own. The setting alone is stunning: a rooftop deck featuring sunset views over downtown Tampa, vibrant murals downstairs showcasing a funky décor and daily live entertainment. The food and drinks are equally distinctive. Choose from an extensive craft beer and cocktail list and tasty menu without missing "bourbon & branch" or the braised rabbit tacos.

Mise en Place – This Modern American institution across from University of Tampa has been a cherished local staple for nearly 30 years. Lovingly run by Tampa's powerhouse restaurateur Maryann Ferenc, Mise offers a dynamic and bold seasonal menu and regional flavors reflecting the award-winning chef's

insatiable love of food. A bite into the sous vide venison and Amish cheddar chili grits, and you'll be willingly locked into a long-lasting love affair with this place.

Oxford Exchange – Around the corner from Mise en Place, three-year-old Oxford Exchange has quickly become Tampa's power breakfast and lunch hub. Formerly a livery for the Plant Hotel that became University of Tampa, Oxford Exchange is has been restored and reinvented into a posh London-inspired combination of restaurant, bookstore, coffee shop, and home décor space. Savor the grilled chicken paillard and arugula over crispy fries while gazing at the intricate details of this New World eatery adorned with Italian marble, reclaimed white oak, leather panels and brass fittings.

Seminole Heights

Ella's Americana Folk Art Café – Part of the most exciting dining district in Tampa Bay over the last decade, Ella's elevates the Americana hipster vibe to the highest levels. The restaurant and owner's devotion to "folk art" is matched by an exciting menu that fuses American classics, Tex-Mex, Asian, and vegan elements. It's first come, first serve at Soul Food Sundays, where the Bloody Ella (Mary) is seasoned with a slab of barbeque rib, and desert includes double chocolate-covered bacon.

The Refinery – The pioneer of Tampa's farm-to-table scene in Seminole Heights, The Refinery has earned several James Beard nominations for its executive chef/co-owner Greg Baker. It has earned Zagat's "Best Restaurant" accolade three years in a row. The owners are passionate about fresh, locally sourced ingredients, sophisticated craft beers and thoughtfully curated boutique wines.

Fodder & Shine – The second restaurant from the husband and wife owners of award-winning Refinery, Fodder caters to Florida's Cracker heritage (named for the cracking whips used to herd cattle). Ingredients and cooking methods echo the state's cattle pioneers, who had to make the most of limited ingredients in a lush yet rugged land between the Civil War to the Great Depression. Expect the best of Old Florida, which means fresh classics food and drinks as well as some of the unexpected: pot likker-poached shrimp, smoked mullet spread, frogs' legs and sofkee, a native porridge.

Rooster & The Till – Another Seminole Heights standout, Rooster & The Till is the passionate creation of owners Ferrell Alvarez and Ty Rodriguez who worked together at Mise en Place and Café Dufrain. Their creative, farm-driven approach to freshness and local provenance has worked its magic quickly with a local crowd that appreciates avant-guard cuisine. The two-year-old establishment just underwent an expansion that doubled its size.

South Tampa

Ava – One of the newest additions to Tampa's trendy SoHo neighborhood from prolific restaurateur Michael Stewart, Ava has quickly earned a place at the top of this competitively chic district. Former Tampa Bay Rays and current Chicago Cubs Manager Joe Maddon co-owns Ava, which earned *Tampa Bay Times* critic's only 4-star rating. With windows imported from an Alabama schoolhouse, a rare-edition

Acunto oven and a private room made of all brick with a buzzer under the table to summon a server, Ava delivers exquisite Italian cuisine in impeccable style.

Bern's Steak House – After nearly 60 years, Bern's Tampa's iconic house is still packed several months in advance. With the largest collection of wine in the world and 60-ounce strip sirloins, Bern's was recently featured on the Travel Channel's "Greatest Steaks of America." Don't miss the "Goodfellas" tour of the kitchen and wine cellar, where some of Bern's 500,000 bottles are stored, or a trip upstairs to the Harry Waugh Dessert room.

Daily Eats – Tampa's contemporary take on the diner offers breakfast all day, every day. This small South Tampa hot spot in the middle of the SoHo scene is known for service, shredder bowls, and creative menu names such as "The Kong," "The Smitty" and "The Laura."

Datz – This hip, casual South Tampa spot offers comfort food with artisanal flair. What started as a deli is now a combination gastropub, gourmet food market, and restaurant that keeps reinventing itself. Its newly opened bakery, Dough is a pastry-themed restaurant on its own.

Haven – Open in early 2015, Haven has become the new favorite for modern Mediterranean cuisine in the capable hands of James Beard nominee Chad Johnson as executive chef and Courtney Orwig, chef de cuisine. This younger sibling of the venerable Bern's Steak House, Heaven offers a selection of inventive, shareable plates, 300 bourbons, 40 wines by the glass, 100-item cheese cave and a variety of charcuteries.

Pane Rustica Bakery & Cafe– One of South Tampa's most favorite lunch spots, Pane Rustica rates among Zagat's best Italian eateries in the Tampa Bay area. Local diners love its casual, European-style comfort: breads made from scratch using all-natural bread starters, fresh salads and pizzas and large, open space that makes dining here at once communal and enjoyable.

Restaurant BT – Located in the heart of South Tampa, Restaurant BT celebrates and reinvents the colonial-era marriage of classic French technique and traditional cuisine. Chef and owner BT Nguyen draws upon her Vietnamese roots and fashion design background to create a unique fare that pays close attention to presentation and décor.

717 South – Across the street from Ava, Michael Stewart's original restaurant is one of the best people watching spots in South Tampa. Originally a combination of Italian and Pacific Rim cooking, 717 South has perfected the modern Italian fare. The lively bar scene regularly hosts celebrity bartender events with players from the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Lightning and Rays, and attracts the young and the hip.

Westshore/Airport

Armani's – Romance on the water awaits at Armani's, an upscale Northern Italian restaurant nestled atop the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay. Jackets and reservations are required in this elegant setting framed by floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Tampa Bay. Indulge in a decadent pasta dish and a bowl of lobster bisque with a glass of wine from its extensive cellar before selecting one of Armani's fine cigars.

Donatello – A Tampa Bay institution in Westshore for over thirty years, Donatello consistently delivers classic northern Italian cuisine in Old World style. Expect your pasta handmade and your servers authentically dressed in tuxedos, with real Italian accents. Ladies are invited to accept their rose.

Pelagia Trattoria – Pelagia, in the Marriott Renaissance Tampa International Plaza Hotel, offers a delicious take on modern Italian cuisine with Mediterranean flare. The menu is driven by seasonality, and the freshest ingredients sourced locally. The four-time winner of Florida Trend’s Golden Spoon Award offers outstanding desserts, especially the limoncello crème brûlée and Godiva chocolate pyramid.

Ybor City

Carne Chophouse – Located in the historic El Centro Español building, Carne Chophouse makes for a memorable dining experience in the heart of Ybor City. There is something singularly special about enjoying juicy cuts of Cuban steak in the 1912 French Renaissance Revival/Spanish-style that originally served as a social center for Spanish immigrants working in the cigar industry. Among its other attractions are live entertainment, outdoor seating and \$2 Martinis until 7 pm.

Columbia Restaurant – The oldest dining establishment in Florida and the largest Spanish restaurant in the world, Columbia is Tampa’s landmark eatery and an All-American Icon. With room for 1,700 diners, the family-owned 110-year-old anchor of the Ybor City neighborhood still packs them in with authentic servings of paella, its signature 1905 Salad and nightly *flamenco* shows.