

85 BEST PHOENIX RESTAURANTS

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Photos by Richard Maack, David Moore, LAura Moss & Nicole Roegner

Talavera at Four Seasons - Wagyu flat-iron steak with roasted bone marrow and charred bread 'bordelaise'

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FROM BELLY-BUSTING BURGERS TO LIGHT LUNCHESES, WONDERFUL WINES AND DELECTABLE DESSERTS, THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF GREAT FOOD IN THE VALLEY. WE'VE ROUNDED UP 85 OF OUR FAVORITE RESTAURANTS - FOR A SMALL TASTE OF OUR FAVORITES - ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS DIG IN. BON APPÉTIT!

AL FRESCO

Elements Restaurant

5700 E. McDonald Dr. (Sanctuary Resort on Camelback Mountain), Paradise Valley, 480-607-2300, elementsrestaurant.com

Even if you aren't seated in the Praying Monk room - with its retractable walls and skylights - it almost feels like dining outside throughout the restaurant, thanks to the floor-to-ceiling windows and drop-dead gorgeous views. Iron Chef America winner and TV host Chef Beau MacMillan might be at home under the spotlight, but he has chops in the kitchen, too. Some dishes show an Asian flair, such as

the sweet and spicy shishito peppers or the grilled pork chop with honey five-spice drizzle, but guests also love classics like the raw bar, bacon-wrapped filet and slow-braised short ribs. Breakfast, 7-10:30 a.m. M-Sa; lunch, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. M-Sa; dinner, 5:30-9:30 p.m. Su-Th, 5:30-10 p.m. F-Sa; brunch, 7 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Su. **\$\$\$\$**

El Zócalo Mexican Grille

28 S. San Marcos Place, Chandler, 480-722-0303, elzocalo.com

You wouldn't know it from the front, but this old town Chandler favorite sneakily houses a lush, tree-ringed courtyard behind its suavely rustic main dining room (which itself dates to 1912). A tiered fountain, mural and ample vegetation make for one of the most romantic settings in town for the price. The de la Cruz family serves sumptuous Sonoran staples like nachos, tacos, burritos, enchiladas and their specialty, chile rellenos. Everything with machaca beef is delicioso, but shrimp and fish dishes are tasty as well. Catch live music outside from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Fridays and inside both weekend nights from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Lunch specials, 11 a.m.- 2 p.m. M-Th; lunch and dinner, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. M-Th, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. F-Sa, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Su. **\$\$**

House of Tricks

114 E. Seventh St., Tempe, 480-968-1114, houseoftricks.com

First you'll be smitten with the expansive, verdant garden setting, lovingly tended to by Mary Trick, mother of Robert Trick. He and wife Robin opened this bucolic spot in 1987, and it's grown to encompass two bungalows and a tree-canopied outdoor bar. Next you'll swoon over the seasonal menu expertly executed by Chef Kelly Fletcher and his talented staff. Finally, the cocktails and drink list will knock your socks off. It's quite simply one of the Valley's treasures. Lunch, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. M-Sa; dinner, 4 p.m.-10 p.m. M-Sa.

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Quiessence

6106 S. 32nd St., Phoenix, 602-276-0601, quiessencerestaurant.com

What's better than eating local, seasonal food? Eating it right next to one of the farms that grows it, to see your dinner in all its naked, native splendor. That's what you get here when you dine out front next to the rows of vegetables at Maya's Garden at the Farm at South Mountain. There's also a secluded open-air back room. Chef/owner Greg LaPrad is a master of turning produce into edible artwork, but he's no slouch with house-made charcuterie, either. And while others do seasonal menus, his is daily, depending on what he rounds up from growers and artisans. Dinner, 5-10 p.m. Tu-Sa. **\$\$\$\$**



Talavera at Four Seasons

10600 E. Crescent Moon Dr. (Four Seasons), Scottsdale, 480-513-5085, talaverarestaurant.com
This resort line is known for luxury, and it doesn't skimp when it comes to its fine-dining digs. Perched on the patio, diners enjoy expansive views of the Valley below - it's lovely at sunset, but if you have a late reservation, the sparkling city lights are nearly as stunning. The beauty can be eclipsed by the cuisine, though: A 20-ounce prime bone-in rib eye, the house specialty, rivals any cut of meat at any local steakhouse; the lobster also is exquisite. The views and food combined with a spectacular wine selection and spot-on service make this one of the most special dining rooms in town.
Dinner, 6-10 p.m. daily. **\$\$\$\$**

Talavera at Four Seasons - Maine lobster with vegetables

**ASIAN
Asian
Café**

Express

1911 W. Main St., Mesa, 480-668-5910, [facebook.com/AsianCafeExpress](https://www.facebook.com/AsianCafeExpress)

The Facebook page is in Chinese, which should give you an idea of how authentic and darling this place from the former owner of Gourmet House of Hong Kong is. Regulars don't even look at the menu; they just go straight for daily specials. The ambience is bare bones, but focus on the flavors, which bring an entire Asian country to the table in "Drink Cold Iced Red Bean," chile salt chicken wings, or braised whole fish over rice. For a bit of Hawaii, try sliced roast pork with sweet sauce, while Portugal is channeled in strikingly seasoned chicken wings. Lunch and dinner, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. M-Th, 11 a.m.-9:30 p.m. F-Sa, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Su. \$



Asian Café Express - Singapore-style fried noodles

China Magic Noodle House

2015 N. Dobson Rd., Chandler, 480-786-8002, chinamagicnoodle.com

Have you ever seen hand-pulled noodles actually being hand-pulled? Chef Zhang Qiang does it every day in the kitchen separated from the dining room by a wall of glass. It looks like he's weaving aimlessly in the air, until the starchy strands emerge as la mian (Chinese noodles), in various thicknesses and even one made of vegetables. Savor them in lamb-pickled greens-noodle soup, or under spicy XO sauce with beef. Other intriguing bites tempt with chile oil-splashed pig ear and excellent, crunchy-edged egg foo young. Lunch and dinner, 11 a.m.-9:30 p.m. M-Th, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. F-Sa, 11 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Su. \$

Fresh Mint

13802 N. Scottsdale Rd., Scottsdale, 480-443-2556

It might be enough that there is a rainbow of creative Vietnamese, Chinese and Thai food shining forth in this small, colorfully decorated joint. But Chef/owner Mai Ly makes it all vegetarian, all from scratch, and decorated in flavor-packed fresh herbs and fruit alongside veggies and soy-based chicken, fish or beef. A few favorites: surprisingly "meaty" soy spare ribs in bright citrus ginger sauce, soy fish in a clay pot, tomatoes stuffed with shiitake mushrooms in sesame ginger sauce, or a ravishing curry of green apple, raisins, tomatoes, pine nuts, tofu and onion simmered in gutsy turmeric curry. Lunch and dinner, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. M-Sa. \$

Nobuo at Teeter House

622 E. Adams St., Phoenix, 602-254-0600, nobuofukuda.com

James Beard Award winner Chef/owner Nobuo Fukuda has converted a tiny, historic Victorian-style brick home in Downtown's Heritage Square into an exciting izakaya (small plates pub). Offerings range from happy hour-style snacks to intricate omakase prepared for four diners at a time. Fish often comes from the coveted Tokyo Tsukiji fish market, and recipes are fanciful fusion, like silky yellowtail sashimi decorated in grapefruit, avocado and white truffle ponzu oil. Pair them with Japanese microbrews, omakase-matched wines and culinary cocktails. Lunch, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tu-Su; dinner, 5:30 p.m.-close Tu-Su; closed M. \$\$

Roka Akor

7299 N. Scottsdale Rd., Scottsdale, 480-306-8800, rokaakor.com

The super stylish gather here for the fashionable setting and sublime food. An authentic robata grill sends out char-edged meats, fish and vegetables, while sushi goes beyond the typical roll (Wagyu caviar, thank you). Layered flavors and textures bring a wow factor, in creations such as striped bass nigiri with yuzu kosho and Murray River salt. Don't miss artistic desserts, like crêpes topped in sautéed Asian pear, fig and sparkling sake ice cream. Lunch, 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. M-F; dinner, 5 p.m.-10 p.m. Su-Th, 5 p.m.-11 p.m. F-Sa. \$\$\$

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