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Chais Renea Gentner/Kid Sister

DESTINATIONS

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It's often said that deserts breed creativity—and the best restaurants in Phoenix and Scottsdale, Arizona, are certainly proof. The Phoenix metro area (which includes Scottsdale) stretches through a sunny basin of the Sonoran Desert, and here, creativity has led to inventive dishes in unexpected spaces. It's no wonder that restaurants in Phoenix and Scottsdale have been garnering national buzz: These days, the top cut of Phoenix area restaurants can hang with the best of many American cities. Better still, these Arizona standouts have the propensity to truly surprise—to make you see the Old West anew. There's world-class pizza, but also bison steak sweetened with cactus syrup, hand-pounded Thai sausage, abstract tasting menus under purple sunset vistas, and cocktails that use ancient desert ingredients to breathe wild new life into familiar classics. You can, and will, eat well on your next Phoenix trip.

For the very best dining in Phoenix and Scottsdale, the below restaurants will have you covered. Visit these spots to experience the kind of gastronomic heat that the Valley's best culinary talents can bring.

Every restaurant on this list has been selected independently by Condé Nast Traveler editors and reviewed by a local contributor who has visited that restaurant. Our editors consider both high-end and affordable eateries, and weigh stand-out dishes, location, and service—as well as inclusivity and sustainability credentials. We update this list as new restaurants open and existing ones evolve.

Read [our full Phoenix guide here](#), which includes:

Valentine is a warm restaurant-cafe-bar-bakery hybrid that presents a bold vision of Arizonan food. Co-owner Blaise Faber has dubbed its style New Southwestern. The kitchen delivers in spades on the promise of innovative dishes tapping into regional traditions. They take specific desert ingredients—tepary bean, i'itoi onions, cactus fruits—and creatively deploy them to give his food intrigue and soul. That prickly pear? It goes into gochujang for beef heart ssam. The mighty tepary bean? The fragrant, faintly smoky sidekick to ribeye with huitlacoche butter. Valentine's coffee program is similarly inspired, and cocktail maestro Faber has devised unique tipples inspired by Arizona's biomes. Oh, and Crystal Kass's unique program has won national accolades. Valentine feels about as unique as a seven-armed saguaro.

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Courtesy Hai Noon

Hai Noon

In an unassuming motel tucked away in South Scottsdale, the latest chapter of storied chef Nobuo Fukuda's career has begun at Hai Noon. Fukuda is locally renowned for his skill giving American touches to Japanese dishes with, above all, brightness and originality. At Hai Noon, he reprises past hits from earlier restaurants (one of which, Welcome Diner, scored him a James Beard Award) and plates entirely new creations. Some go light (cucumbers with wasabi-plum vinaigrette). Others go big and heavy (baked eggplant with bacon miso). Fukuda's raw fish dishes, like salmon slips charged with lime zest, mint, and basil oil, are perhaps his creative specialty. Plates are small so order many. Snack on a porkbelly bun with pickled mustard greens or softshell crab noodles while you sip around enjoying the sake, soju, and cocktail selection.



Courtesy Pizzeria Bianco



Chris Bianco is a giant in the pizza world and his handiwork hasn't slipped an inch over the decades. Famously, he says he doesn't do much, delegating praise to the farmers, ranchers, and other producers. But he truly excels at giving premier local ingredients—flour, pistachios, cheeses, herbs, citrus—the exact touches they need to express themselves as ideally as pizza, salad, and pasta dishes can. Bianco's pizza defies category, embracing hard-way methods like blending select local flours. The Rosa, a white pie crowned with pistachios, red onion, rosemary, and Parmigiano Reggiano, is his Mona Lisa. His simple marinara is a dark horse that showcases his technique. Too many people often overlook the pasta specials at the Town & Country location, so be sure to consider them when you make your inevitable pilgrimage.



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Kid Sister

This cozy, funky, tiny wine bar in Central Phoenix might be the banner eatery of Phoenix's very newest restaurant generation. Kid Sister is designed for food and wine geeks, for people who love the interplay between unlikely bite-and-sip combinations, for people who live to seek new flavors. The wines are exciting and esoteric, with a focus on off-the-beaten-path European options, though nice finds come from places as wide-ranging as Lebanon, Uruguay, and Arizona. Better still are the "Before" and "After" drink menu categories, which present erudite, inventive pre- and post-prandial options, like aperitifs, digestifs, their takes on various spritzes, and unique creations. Plates are small and made to sit beside the drinks: risotto, trout, tomato tart, focaccia with anchovy. As for the vibes, expect

Perhaps the last act in the storied career of a renowned old-school Phoenix chef, Christopher's manages to offer top-tier food and scene. The eatery perches on a high hill above the city lights of downtown Phoenix and the far purple sweep of mountains. Two nights a week, chef Christopher Gross rolls out French-leaning classics from his career, dishes like foie gras terrine, sauteed duck, smoked salmon. Gross, though, has a mind that motors to new places. Thursday through Saturday, he serves his winding, abstract tasting menu, which allows him to shift into a more creative gear. The tasting menu sees foie gras turned to soup, that duck aged seven days and plated with sherry gastrique, chocolate towers, and even enigmatic menu listings like "something cool" and "mignardise, mignardise, mignardise." Christopher's is an experience in many ways.

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This pioneering vegetable-centric restaurant in downtown Scottsdale whisks hyperlocal Arizona produce in new directions, resulting in dishes new to the world. But this isn't simply a case of a chef taking a hands-off approach and letting the carrots and kohlrabi shine. Charleen Badman is a creative and technically refined force. She shaves the kohlrabi into a salad with apple, aged cheddar, and horseradish, gives those carrots a Mexican street treatment and pairs them with lime-avocado mayo, chile, and cotija. The menu changes closely to track the evolving produce microseasons. Arizona beverage champion Pavle Milic matches Badman's food with a thoughtful, thrilling drink program; libations often include local gose, esoteric ciders made from foraged apples, and a range of interesting potables from afar. Cocktails keep things relatively classic. All drinks are best enjoyed at the "FnBar," a cozy, whimsically tiled room on the restaurant's easternmost end.



In a tiny lot by the airport, several giant smokers welded from old propane tanks emit the smells of woodsmoke. Even in the summer heat, a line of an hour-plus stretches, unless you've arrived at least 20 minutes before the 11:00 a.m. opening time. Laidback music plays, some people wait at picnic tables, watching pit masters (who have been on the clock

though, is that there are two menu items superior to even Holmes' 10/10 brisket. First, pastrami, a Thursday special with a cult local following. Second, a Flinstonian beef short rib offered most Fridays and Saturdays. To round out your tray with other meats and taste what else Holmes can do, consider a juicy smoked turkey breast, flavor-brimming sausage made from meat trimmings, and jalapeno cheddar grits.

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Courtesy of Resy



grill in the music-packed room's corner. Bacanora is a cool spot. People drink agave spirits out of bone luges, tuck into Flinstonian steaks ringed with flour tortillas and salsas, and enjoy bracing raw seafood plates like limey shrimp aguachiles. Flavors are huge and uncompromising. The fruity heat of chiltepin pepper scorches nearly everything, even cocktails and desserts. Andrade plays by no rules but his own, and that's what makes this young-but-now-classic Phoenix restaurant so great.

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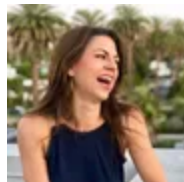
Aaron Soto



Yotaka and Alex Martin's nearly two-year-old Thai restaurant plates specialties from up and down the country, favorites inspired by their travels, friends and family, and Yotaka's Chiang Rai roots. As a result, Lom Wong is a bit of a unicorn, unlike any other eatery in Phoenix. The eclectic array of stir-fried crab, fried chicken, hand-pounded curry, diverse noodle dishes, mango salads, and fried bamboo takes the phrase "from scratch" to another level, as many keystone ingredients are squeezed, minced, or shaped in-house. Another excellent wrinkle here is the specific intensity of the drink menu, anchored by natural wines and cocktails concocted with ingredients like turmeric-infused scotch and galangal honey, dark rum and palm sugar. Drinks are tailored for spicy eating, and Lom Wong helps raise the bar for Thai eating in Phoenix.



the Akimel O’odham and Pee Posh peoples while paying homage to the culture and history of the area. It does this using local ingredients, many of them rare, many grown on local Indigenous farms or foraged from the land. In the formal dining room, tasting menus feature ingredients like heirloom squash, tepary beans, saguaro fruit syrup, and wolfberry creatively used to uplift dishes like steaks, salads, and more. One classic dish, “Pee-Posh Garden,” features Sonoran vegetables plated in a “soil” made from candied pecans. Meanwhile, wolfberry cream flavors lobster, and scorpionfish comes atop tepary bean puree. For dessert, the menu includes creations like a mesquite tres leches with a Hatch-chile-and-pistachio crumble. The wine list runs deep—dinners may stretch long into the night.



[Lizbeth Scordo](#) is a food, travel, and lifestyle writer who focuses mainly on California, Hawaii, and the Southwest. Her work has appeared in Condé Nast Traveler, AAA Explorer, Eater LA, Palm Springs Life, Thrillist, and The Red Bulletin. She’s also the contributing food editor for Westways magazine. A New Jersey native, she made the move ... [Read More](#)

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