

ABOUT CLEVELAND:

Public Square, on which both the Renaissance Hotel and Tower City Center stand, forms the heart of Cleveland's street grids: numbered streets prefaced by "West" are to the left of the hotel and center as you face the square; those prefaced by "East" are to the right. (East 4th Street restaurants are, therefore, four blocks to the right from the hotel's front door.)

Two blocks to the north of the hotel is the Warehouse District. A block southeast of Tower City is the Gateway District (home to Cleveland's basketball, hockey, and baseball facilities). And from the east stretches Euclid Avenue which runs past East 4th, the Old Arcade, the Theater District (about 14 blocks from Public Square) and Cleveland State University, eventually reaching the Case Western Reserve University, University Circle, and Little Italy, about four miles from Public Square.

Across the river to the west are some of Cleveland's most distinctive neighborhoods, in Tremont and Ohio City (which features the not-to-be-missed West Side Market, which is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 7 a.m. to late afternoon; www.westsidemarket.org). Ohio City in particular is readily accessible by Red Line train (a 5-minute trip), less readily by foot (a 25-minute trek over traffic-heavy roads).

DINING GUIDE:

Cleveland is a great city to eat and drink in. While it perhaps lacks the reputation of New York and Chicago, Cleveland's culinary scene is booming, with celebrity chefs and unknown cooks alike dishing out phenomenally tasty dishes. The following is a list of recommended restaurants and bars: it is by no means exhaustive—there many good-to-great places not listed—but these are pretty much guaranteed to please.

DOWNTOWN

The area around the Renaissance Hotel has many notable establishments, largely confined to two areas: East 4th Street (two blocks east of the hotel) and the Warehouse District (two blocks north of the hotel). The Warehouse District can get a bit rowdy at night, but East 4th is an excellent example of urban renewal based around great restaurants.

Tower City Center
50 Public Square (adjacent to the Renaissance)
Cleveland, OH 44113
(216) 623-4750
towercitycenter.com

Once the shopping epicenter of Cleveland, Tower City has suffered a bit with the rise of exurban shopping centers and is now likely one of the few structures in the US that houses both a 99-cent shop and a Brooks Brothers. The building remains a marvel, however, and offers a large selection of places to grab some grub. Sit-down places include a Morton's Steakhouse, a Houlihan's and a Hard Rock Cafe (you can buy a t-shirt and party like its 1989!). A food court offers numerous options, including a McDonalds, a Kentucky Fried Chicken, a Mixed Greens, a Subway and a Taco Bell. For early mornings, you might try the Tower Diner, Dunkin Doughnuts, the Cinnabon or the Caribou Coffee in close proximity to the Renaissance Hotel.

Lola
2058 East 4th Street
Cleveland, OH 44115-1024
(216) 621-5652
www.lolabistro.com

Cleveland's Iron Chef Michael Symon's flagship restaurant. Hip and swanky, Lola offers reinventions of Midwestern cuisine that make classic preparations feel immediately modern. The beef cheek pirogue is perhaps the perfect distillation of Symon's culinary aesthetic: a traditional Cleveland dish reimaged and

improved—it should serve as the first course of any meal had at Lola. The entrees are all well-considered, well-executed and worthy of an Iron Chef’s reputation. The Lola’s lunch menu is reasonably priced and the quick service gets you in and out as fast as you desire. Dinner reservations recommend.

The Arcade
401 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44114-2266(216) 696-1408
theclevelandarcade.com

The Arcade offers a food court where the options tend to be of the quick and cheap, calories before taste variety. The real appeal here lies with the building itself: built in 1890, the Arcade represents the height of architectural opulence in Victorian Cleveland. The intricate ironwork of the railings and the expansive glass ceiling make the Arcade well worth a walk-thru whether you grab a bite or not.

D’Vine Wine Bar
836 West Saint Clair Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113-1266
(216) 241-8463
dvinewinebar.com

One of the few gems in Cleveland’s somewhat puerile Warehouse District, D’Vine offers a good selection of beers and wines by the glass, bottle and flight. A limited food menu features cheese and charcuterie platters as well as pizzas and small plates, but D’Vine is more known as a place to grab a causal drink. It can get a bit crowded on weekends, but the crowd tends to be a bit more sophisticated and urbane than at other nearby bars.

Vincenza's Pizza & Pasta
603 Prospect Ave
Cleveland, OH 44115-1114
(216) 241-8382

A staple for the downtown lunch crowd, Vincenza’s serves up New York and Sicilian-style pizza by the slice. Pretty good pizza, and more than reasonable on the budget. The lunch lines can be a bit intimidating, but don’t worry: they know how to serve up the food fast.

Johnny’s Little Bar & Grill
614 Frankfort Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113-1207
(216) 861-2166
http://www.johnnyscleveland.com/johnnys_littlebar.html

Somewhat hidden in an alley next to the over-priced Johnny’s (with which it shares a kitchen), the Little Bar offers reasonably priced entrees in a tavern setting. The potato crusted cod is a delight, and the burgers have a reputation as some of the best around. A bit cramped when busy, but for a decently priced dinner downtown, it’s worth checking out.

Flannery's Pub
323 Prospect Ave
Cleveland, OH 44115-1016
(216) 781-7782
flannerys.com

One of many faux-Irish pubs that dot the Cleveland dining landscape, Flannery's focuses on traditional pub food and Irish beers and whiskeys. It's also one of the more convincing of the faux-Irish pubs with an interior that transports you straight to Dublin (a round or two of Jameson helps to strengthen this illusion). If you crave shepherd's pie and a Guinness, this is the place.

Zocalo
2071 East 4th Street
Cleveland, OH 44115-1023
(216) 781-0420
zocalocleveland.com

A newish East 4th restaurant and part of celebrity chef Aarón Sanchez's growing culinary empire, Zocalo offers Mexican cuisine with a contemporary verve in a stylish setting. The service can be a little wanting, but the atmosphere is fun and lively and there are several vegetarian options on the menu. Open for lunch and dinner.

Winking Lizard Tavern
811 Huron Road East
Cleveland, OH 44115-1120
(216) 589-0313
winkinglizard.com

The Winking Lizard is a local chain of sports bars, and the downtown location is one of their most popular spots. An extensive beer list (with some great craft beers on draft) and above average pub grub place the Wink well-above national casual dining chains. The menu is exceedingly large and nearly every item is better than it has to be: the burgers are delicious, the wings are great and even the barbeque is more than passable. A great place to nosh down a bite and catch a game.

OHIO CITY

Ohio City is located across the Carnegie Bridge from downtown. Accessible by the Red Line (get off at the West 25th stop) and taxi, Ohio City is home to breweries, restaurants and the famous West Side Market.

Velvet Tango Room
2095 Columbus Road
Cleveland, OH 44113-4228
(216) 241-8869
velvettangoroom.com

Simply the best bar in Cleveland and one of the best cocktail bars in the nation. A prohibition-era, speakeasy ambiance sets the mood for imbibing classic, impeccably made drinks. The bartenders work with the passion of seasoned artists, and their ingredients, from freshly squeezed juices to imported, cognac-soaked cherries, put most mixological establishments to shame. The cocktails range from the hard-to-find elsewhere (French 75s and Ramos Gin Fizzes) to perfected versions of more common drinks (the VTR Manhattan, made with rye, will make you rethink what a Manhattan can be). A bit pricey, although their happy hour (4:30-7:00) prices are on par with the average Cleveland martini joint. But even at full price, the cocktails justify their expense.

Great Lakes Brewing Co
2516 Market Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113-3434
(216) 771-4404
greatlakesbrewing.com

Great Lakes offers some the best craft brews in the country, and at their brewpub, the beers are all unfiltered and on draft; they taste better at the brewery than anywhere else . Dortmunder Gold is the most famous beer—perhaps rightly so—but the Burning River Pale Ale and Edmund Fitzgerald Porter are excellent as well. The brewery often carries specialty, small batch beers unavailable elsewhere, and these are always worth a try. There is a restaurant as well as a bar, but, ambiance-wise, the best place to sample the goods is downstairs in the “Beer Cellar.” Unlike the beer, the food is pedestrian at best and not especially recommended.

Phnom Penh
1929 West 25th Street
Cleveland, OH 44113-3418
(216) 357-2951
ohiorestaurant.com

For many Clevelanders, Phnom Penh is the best restaurant in the city. Cheap and filling, Phnom Penh’s Cambodian cuisine offers flavors you will neither recognize nor forget. The large menu can be a bit daunting, but the menu includes numbers as well as names and there is actually no wrong thing to order (nearly everything can be made vegetarian as well). Especially recommended are the Hue Beef Soup (item 8 on the menu), the “Specials for Today” (items S1-S5), the Pad Tai (items 55-61) and the Chha Kreoung (items 89-98). Phnom Penh is cash only and BYOB.

Bar Cento and Bier Markt
1948 West 25th Street
Cleveland, OH 44113
(216) 274-1010
barcento.com

One front door, two spaces. Bier Markt is a Belgian-beer specialty bar with an impressive list of Belgian ales complete with proper glassware (the Kwak is worth ordering for the serving vessel alone). Bar Cento is more of a restaurant, with a menu somewhere in-between Italian and Belgian: the cheese and charcuterie plates are exquisite, the pizzas are clever and tasty, the burgers are a highlight and the mussels are, well, mussels (thus, good). The main draw though is the Belgian frites: fried in duck fat and served with rosemary stems, crushed garlic and mayonnaise dips, these are the fries they serve in heaven. Bar Cento has a few more items on the menu than Bier Markt, but all beers are available both places and which location you choose is largely a matter of preference.

Flying Fig
2523 Market Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113-3431
(216) 241-4243
theflyingfig.com

Located across from the Great Lakes Brewery, Flying Fig’s menu is home-style meals made posh, like Grandma’s cooking if Grandma was gunning for a Michelin. Simple, fresh and often local ingredients are served up in one of the more stylish venues in town. The small plates (several of which are vegetarian) are Flying Fig at its best, although the short ribs are a pure, carnivorous pleasure. Reservations recommended.

TREMONT

Positioned on the southwestern side of the Cuyahoga River, Tremont is the trendiest area in town, featuring popular restaurants, art galleries, and the house from *A Christmas Story*. A bit difficult to reach from downtown, a taxi is your best bet.

Lolita

900 Literary Road
Cleveland, OH 44113-4441
(216) 771-5652
lolabistro.com

Michael Symon's other restaurant, this one focused on Mediterranean cuisine. A bit more low-key than Lola's, Lolita is in some ways the more satisfying experience: free of the burden of expectations, Lolita allows Symon to concentrate on extracting huge flavors from simple ingredients. The happy hour specials (5:00-6:30 and after 9:30), featuring sub-\$10 plates and sub-\$5 drinks, are some of the best culinary deals in town. Lolita's hangar steak is the best around and their polenta is a shockingly good side dish. Reservations for dinner recommended; happy hour is, apparently, first come first serve.

Parallax
2179 West 11th Street
Cleveland, OH 44113-610
(216) 583-9999
parallaxtremont.com

Specializing in progressive seafood presentations, Cleveland restaurateur Zack Bruell's Parallax combines Asian and Mediterranean influences to coax out great flavor from fish. The menu isn't confined to seafood, with entrees typical of hip Cleveland joints—short ribs, duck confit, hangar steak—rounding out the offerings. Seafood is Parallax's star, however, and the elegant dishes make this the best place to go aqua-cuisine. Reservations recommended.

Prosperity Social Club
1109 Starkweather Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113-4416
(216) 937-1938
prosperitysocialclub.com

Prosperity Social Club is unadulterated kitsch: stepping into it is like stepping into a working-class version of *Mad Men*. Schlitz signs and pin-up girls abound. A tiki-style patio fills the backyard. But a great beer selection and excellent food help make Prosperity perhaps the coolest bar in Cleveland. The deep-fried oyster appetizer is devilish, but the menu is mostly great tasting Cleveland comfort foods—Hungarian cabbage, pirogues, fish fry and sandwiches. Low-key, unpretentious and thoroughly enjoyable.

Flying Monkey Pub
819 Jefferson Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113-4638
(216) 861-6659
flyingmonkeypub.com

The screeching monkey that comes flying out of a box above the bar livens up this otherwise standard fare Tremont bar. Like The Treehouse down the street (which features a bar built around tree), the Flying Monkey is a casual bar that makes for a nice stop off before or after visiting one of the nearby restaurants.

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY/UNIVERSITY CIRCLE/LITTLE ITALY

Interspersed around Case Western Reserve's campus are a few bars restaurants and coffee shops. The historic Little Italy area, just east of campus (largely contained on Mayfield Road) was once home to celebrated gangsters such as Frank Milano and is now a tremendously popular dining area.

Sergio's University Circle

1903 Ford Drive
Cleveland, OH 44106-3923
(216) 231-1234
sergioscleveland.com

The menu has undergone changes recently, and Sergio's now seems to focus on seafood with a Mediterranean and somewhat Brazilian influence. Conveniently located on campus, the small, upscale restaurant has patio seating available and is, in general, a solid restaurant with flavorful, well-prepared food. Reservations recommended.

L'Albatros
11401 Bellflower Court
Cleveland, OH 44106-3961
(216) 791-7880
albatrosbrasserie.com

Zack Bruell's stylish and popular restaurant gets classic French bistro right: the food is simple, hearty and full of flavor. The appetizers offer great interpretations of bistro standards such as pork rillettes, but the real standout is the "French Toast"—a wild mushroom ragout and balsamic reduction that is pure umami. The cracker crust pizzas underwhelm, but the entrees, especially the cassoulet, revive well-trod bistro dishes by focusing on the essence of each dish and celebrating it. Reservations recommended.

Barking Spider Tavern
11310 Juniper Rd (Behind Arabica)
Cleveland, OH 44106
(216) 421-2863
barkingspidertavern.com

Tucked in the alley between Sergio's and L'Albatros, the Barking Spider Tavern is a roots music institution in Cleveland (two performances each night, always free). On nice evenings, the ample supply of picnic tables provides space to relax, drink and talk. A quirky, one-of-a-kind place. No liquor and cash only.

Jolly Scholar
<http://www.case.edu/diningservices/wackadoo.htm>

Case Western Reserve's official campus bar with full liquor service and a better-than-it-should-be beer list. The typical bar food choices miss more than they hit, but the pulled pork is strangely delicious. Cheap, caloric and convenient, it can be found in the Thwing Student Center at the Adelbert Road HealthLine stop (north side of the street). Try to sit at the bar if possible to ensure prompt service.

Mama Santa's Restaurant Pizzeria
12305 Mayfield Road
Cleveland, OH 44106-1927
(216) 421-2159
mamasantas.com

A classic Italian-American diner in Little Italy featuring good-and-greasy pizza and cheap carafes of wine. Popular with students and locals alike, Mama Santa's still looks and feels like it's 1975, which adds to its many charms. The menu also features pasta dishes and other Italian fare, but the pizzas are likely the way to go.

La Dolce Vita
12112 Mayfield Road
Cleveland, OH 44106-1924

(216) 721-8155

ladolcevitacleveland.com

Of the many restaurants in the three blocks of Mayfield Road that form the Little Italy strip, La Dolce Vita stands out. Much superior to the better known (thanks Rachel Ray!) Trattoria across the street, La Dolce Vita serves up pasta and other Italian favorites in flavorful dishes that are solid, if not exceptional. Limited outdoor seating places you in the center of a vibrant intersection in one of Cleveland's most popular dining destinations.

Baricelli Inn

2203 Cornell Road

Cleveland, OH 44106-3805

(216) 791-6500

baricelli.com

Located off Little Italy's main drag, Baricelli's is worth the extra walk. A sophisticated interior and large patio create a pleasant atmosphere for the best Italian restaurant in the city. Baricelli offers half-portions of many entrees that are priced reasonably and do a good job of filling you up. The cheese selection is one of the most highly regarded in Cleveland. Reservations recommended.

Valentino's Pizza

2197 Murray Hill Rd

Cleveland, OH 44106

(216) 795-0463

valentinos-pizza.com

Great ingredients and a not-too-thin crust make for the best pizza in the city. Some outdoor seating is usually available, weather-dependent, but there are no tables inside the restaurant itself. Still, a great place to grab a pizza to go in order to find a nice place on campus to sit outside and enjoy Cleveland on an April evening.