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FEATURES

10 Great Outdoor Dining Spots

By Travis R. Wright
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10 Great Outdoor Dining Spots Everything Under The Sun

Finally the gods are smiling on us — the grass is green again, the birds back and the sun, for the most part, is shining. That could only mean one thing — it's time for some serious outdoor dining, foodios. Here's a brief guide to some of the best outdoor eateries in the area. There are so many great open-air eateries in town, so this list isn't all-inclusive (we could do an entire issue on it), but we hope this ties you over.

Beach Grill

Sitting on one of those cool little canals on Jefferson Ave. in St. Clair Shores, The Beach Grill is one of a kind. When it comes to grabbing a bite beneath a bright blue sky or starry night, Beach Grill has what it takes to accommodate just about any size party and any practiced palate. Boasting over 5,000 square feet of outdoor space, Beach Grill has a menu that won't break the bank but might overwhelm you with options.



Suggested Dish: Blackened Swordfish Steak — a bit of kick and one hell of a zip sauce!

Life's a beach: beachgrillrestaurantandresort.com

Big Rock Chop House

With their serene setting landscaped ever-so lovely, their award-winning wine list and brewery, stellar service and mouthwatering hand-cut aged steaks, the Stone Terrace at Big Rock has to be one of the best places to enjoy fine dining outdoors. Sure, they have live entertainment, but part of what makes the scene at Big Rock are the guests you're dining with. Is that Chauncey and Rip sharing a glass of chianti? Aww, how cute.

Suggested Dish: Big Rock Bone-in Filet: This specialty of the house weighs in at 14-ounces and comes with sautéed Swiss chard and white cheddar-roasted garlic mashed spuds — comfort food doesn't even come close to describing the experience.

Chopping block: bigrockchophouse.com



Cheli's Chili Bar

You know the great thing about Cheli's Chili Bar is that though sports come first and, in all honesty, drinking might come in second, they don't skip a beat on the top notch bar food finds. The deck at Cheli's might also be one of the best spots in The D to check out a Tigers game, as it serves as the farthest upper deck available, but with better food and cheaper beer. It's a casual spot that ensures a fun time with friends along with some really savory edibles — be sure to check out their Smokehouse Specialties.

Suggested Dish: Bread bowl of Cheli's Original Chili — top it off with some cheese or sour cream and some chopped onion.

Slap shot: chelischilibar.com/Detroit

Como's Restaurant & Pizzeria

One of the most lively patios in the metro-Detroit area has to be that belonging to Como's in Ferndale. There's always an energetic vibe buzzing throughout the place, always laughter to be heard, drinks to be had and pizzas to devour. Como's patio is also a melting pot of the area, as its inhabitants come from all walks of life and unite for the single cause of socialization and imbibition. Young and old, straight, gay, black, white or Arab, it never matters, just don't steal my pizza, bro!

Suggested Dish: A big old pizza with anything you want on it ... and maybe a calamari appetizer, too.

Slice it up: 248.548.5005

Fishbones (St. Clair Shores)

Throughout the year, Fishbones offers partying pleasure by way of events like their first Hot Dog Eating Contest, the Music & Brew Fest and their annual Mardi Gras party, but when the sun is shining and your stomach is rumbling, this Eastside seafood paradise is the place to be. For as long as we here at RDW can remember, Fishbones has had one of the most loyal customer bases in town, so it's a good thing they have a patio large enough to hold everyone.

Suggested Dish: Snapper Beausoleil — Grilled yellow tail snapper, shrimp and scallops topped with sautéed mushrooms and scallions.

Nothin' fishy 'bout it: fishbonesusa.com

La Dolce Vita

Welcome back to La Dolce Vita — easily the most unassuming, and thus overlooked, outdoor dining spot in Detroit. Seriously, if you don't know this quaint little Italian bistro by now, we have to critically evaluate your allegiance to the city. LDV has it all — the music, the food, the flowers, the service and the sun. You won't be paying ghetto prices at this Six Mile and Woodward eatery, but you will leave with a new found respect for ambiguity and your wallet won't be completely empty. Actually, we take that back, after you pay for valet it will be ... but it'll be worth it, we promise.

Suggested Dish: Eggplant Parmesan — very fresh flavors, no food coma.

Contactio: 313.865.0331

Memphis Smoke

The picnic you've always wanted awaits you on the roof of Memphis Smoke in Royal Oak. You have picnic tables large enough to hold you and your best friends, you have full access to their killer southern barbeque fare, you have beer being brought out to you, TVs to entertain you and all the eye candy one iris can handle. Once you get over the fact that you're getting plasticware you'll feel right at home ... well, at home in the backyard out on the deck anyway. And when the sun goes down things really start to get interesting out there — check it out for yourself.

Suggested Dish: Anything swimming in sauce ... with a side of sweet potato fries.

Beale St. blues: metroline.com/memphisismoke



Portofino

Where else do you have the choice of pulling up to the restaurant in your boat or pulling up your car and



taking a river
tour on their
boat? I'm
hard-pressed
to find
another,
especially
another as



tasteful as Portofino. This Wyandotte hot spot will host their patio opening celebration on Memorial Day, so mark your calendar now. Portofino lucked out with an amazing location, but add in the perfect deck and efficient and friendly staff, not to mention a menu that stands up with the big boys downtown and you have the recipe for a new summer tradition.

Suggested Dish: Parmesan Encrusted Salmon — healthy, savory & filling.

Rollin' on the river: portofinoontheriver.com

The Rattlesnake Club

Remember those “big boys” I mentioned above? Well, The Rattlesnake is one of the biggest of ‘em all. The acclaim for The Rattlesnake is infamous — it’s one super swanky spot to be sure. But one thing that can’t be overlooked no matter what kinda bacon you’re bringing in is the fact that they have some truly unbelievable outdoor dining — overseeing the Detroit river and Windsor, no less. On a warm night with a gentle breeze and your true love sitting across from you, I’m certain you’ll all agree that this open-air eatery provides one of the most romantic meals found in the city of Detroit. Really, it’s that perfect.

Suggested Dish: We suggest you don’t skimp on anything. Got that tax return/incentive check from the Fed? You’ll need it.

Take a bite: rattlesnakeclub.com

Slows Bar BQ

In Corktown we trust. Hailed by hipsters, hip-hopsters and hip-replacementster Grandpas alike, Slows Bar BQ has some of the best barbeque this side of the Mason-Dixon line and also offers us one of the best patios within the 313. There’s always an eclectic mix of customers, it’s always busy and the food is always worthy of a long dining experience. With cold beer, good friends and the urban vibe you’ve been looking for, Slows is definitely a one-of-a-kind spot, one to bring out-of-towners to. Goin’ to a show at The Lager? Hit up Slows beforehand and make it a Michigan Ave. kinda night.

Suggested Dish: The Yardbird — Applewood smoked bacon, pulled chicken, sauteed mushrooms and a slice of cheddar with Slows Mustard Sauce on a big bun. You’ll need to go to the gym the next day. | **RDW**

High spirits: slowsbarbq.com

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