



# Dining out in Tucson

## From downtown to the Foothills: the best culinary temptations for spring

SHEILA WILENSKY  
AJP Associate Editor

Tucson isn't the left bank of Paris, but elegant ambiance, lovingly prepared Southwest and ethnic dishes, and spring outdoor dining all contribute to the tasty local restaurant scene.

"Spring creativity came to me in a dream last week about drinks," says Chef Coralie Satta, owner of **Ghini's French Café**. "It'll come to me soon with other dishes." For now, Satta, who was born in Provence, France, is contemplating a watermelon spritzer and a chocolate mojito for her Friday night dinner menu. She's planning French rosé wine tastings for the spring, along with a new lunch menu.

"We're bringing back our stuffed portobello mushroom, which is gluten free," says Satta. "I'm thinking about more vegetarian options at this time of year, too." Ghini's has a pet-friendly patio.

For downtown patio dining with a dif-

ferent flavor, Chef Jared Scott at **Maynard's Kitchen** is "really excited about cooking with ramps, wild leeks that are hand-foraged, from Oregon. They've never been cultivated," he says. "They're great for grilling or pickling." A French-inspired bistro, Maynard's will be serving a summer cassoulet, house-made sausages and new vegetarian dishes, including a new rendition of vegetarian scrapple — a traditional Amish dish — featuring eggplant.

On Mother's Day, says Scott, "we'll have a unique family-style brunch, an entire duck feast that even uses the fat to make biscuits. We'll have blueberry shortcake for dessert." Maynard's also offers a personalized menu with a 48-hour notice. "If you have a special event and want every dish explained to your guests," he says, "call me."

The Historic Hotel Congress **Cup Café** is known for brunch on its patio in the heart of downtown Tucson. Nightly live

music and a revolving pie case highlight this destination — if you're there for dinner, late night drinks or just the fun of hanging out in an authentic Western hotel. Whether it's for a lunch of Nicoise salad or the lettuce wrap with falafel and smoked cashews, or a more elegant dinner of duck two ways, The Cup is ready to serve from 7 a.m. till 10 p.m., seven days a week.

Elegant dining is on tap at **Le Rendez-Vous**, with a wide selection of small plates such as brie en croute, mini Wellington and seared salmon in the bistro at lunch or dinner. Specialties of the house include Chateaubriand for two, coq au vin and *filet a poivre vert* (brandy flambéed pepper fillet with green peppercorns).

Before hot days arrive in Tucson, patio dining — along with spring specials — abound at local restaurants. At the **Westin La Paloma Resort and Spa**, "we're focusing on the seasonal vegetables of spring, the sweetness of English peas, grassiness of asparagus, earth tones of mushrooms, fava

beans and artichokes," says Chef Russell Michel. "We make a vibrant risotto from those ingredients," in addition to serving wild-water salmon, artisan salads using quinoa and farro grains, and desserts.

The Westin La Paloma will host a Mother's Day brunch with such traditional menu items as roast leg of lamb and prime rib, with a seafood station and "a decadent dessert display," says Michel. Aside from those holiday treats, "everything on our menu is designed to feed the body, not just filling it up," he told the AJP, "but preparing the body for the rest of the day."

**El Cisne** owner Phil Ferranti, who grew up in Tucson and Mexico, also relies on fine traditional dining. "We have tablecloths and linen napkins, which is not the stereotypical view in America of Mexican restaurants. This is a place to dine," says Ferranti, not a place to grab a quick burrito. "Our signature dish is wild-caught

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