



dining



debra's beautiful summer dining guide

With the excitement of the approaching summer season, one tends to make vacation plans, step up the fitness routine, and pledge to spend more time with friends and family, which usually includes dining out. So in this spirit, I am going to recommend to you a few of my culinary favorites, as well as give you a some tips for adding that extra shot of fun that makes summer so amazing.

What is it that makes a restaurant good? I think most people would agree that the most important quality of a good restaurant is consistently good food. Of course, good service and good ambiance are important as well. But with so many great places to choose from, my picks in this article are the ones that bring more to the table than just good food and service. These spots will make you feel special the moment you walk into the door. The proceeding list will deliver you to destinations where you truly get the whole package, not just another dinner out. Here are my favorites for summer 2010.

Del Frisco's

Del Frisco's certainly has all the trappings of an exclusive private club: a beautiful staircase, rich dark wood, an impressive wine cellar and beautiful people everywhere. Southern hospitality, a relaxed dress code, and "local favorite" menu items that are priced under \$20 make this establishment a must-try for everyone this summer.

Yes, local celebrities and sports figures frequent Del Frisco's, but from my personal experience, everyone is treated like a VIP. The atmosphere is relaxed, warm and personable. Dining at Del Frisco's is just as comfortable as having dinner in your own home, but with the added bonus of reliably outstanding food with prompt and friendly service.

My suggestion is to start off with their signature drink, The VIP, which is concocted with orange vodka and fresh Hawaiian Pineapple. From there, allow the friendly and knowledgeable staff to guide you through the menu suggestions. Then, one of the two full-time wine captains will visit your table to assist with any questions you may have about the extensive yet reasonably priced wine list. Del Frisco's boasts a wine selection of more than 1,000 varietals and has been awarded the Wine Spectator's Award of Excellence every year from 2000 to 2008.



General Manager Rick Cheesman takes pride in this establishment and it shows. Guests leave feeling not only satisfied, but eager to return. You'll find yourself planning your next visit as soon as you finish your last bite of dessert.

Debra's Pick: Filet Mignon and Lemon Cake (fluffy layers with tangy lemon filling).

- Happy Hour from 4:30 to 7:00 nightly with bar menu features half-price
- VIP Wednesdays: All night long enjoy the V.I.P. Martini for only \$6.95

Brio Tuscan Grille Piedmont

There is nothing more important in life than good food and good friends. The perfect way to combine the two is found at Brio Tuscan Grille, located near Southpark Mall on Piedmont Row Drive. To find a restaurant that offers outstanding food, service, ambiance and entertainment can be quite the challenge. Brio delivers all of these essential elements and more! The Wednesday night band delights guests of all ages and backgrounds, from the 20-something Charlotteans to the vacationing jetsetters. The dining room is filled with the aroma of garlic, basil and other savory selections that will evoke every sense in your body.

Overall, Brio can offer a great time to everyone! Book one of their private rooms for a large party of diners, or just drop in for a casual drink and munchies at the bar. Managing Partner Greg Roach certainly makes a name for himself with Brio Tuscan Grille.

Debra's Pick: Shrimp and Scallop Linguine

- Wednesdays: \$2 off martinis
- Tuscan Taster Bar Menu: Monday through Friday 3 to 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. to close



Eiffel Tower Restaurant, Las Vegas

Traveling to Vegas this summer? Just above the strip on the 11th floor of the Paris Las Vegas Eiffel Tower replica you will find the city's premier French cuisine at the Eiffel Tower Restaurant.

You begin your culinary quest as you are whisked up to the restaurant in a glass elevator. As the doors open, you enter the kitchen of the Eiffel Tower Restaurant. Energy and activity abound in this kitchen, which is one of the finest in the city. You are then escorted into the dining room, where panoramic views of the city and exquisite cuisine take center-stage.

The glittering lights of the Las Vegas strip appear even more exciting inside the Eiffel Tower Restaurant. Guests are enchanted by the spectacular view of the glorious Bellagio Water Fountains from practically every table in the restaurant.

Each and every time I visit Vegas (at least twice a year), I dine at The Eiffel Tower Restaurant. The food is always amazing and the atmosphere is simply romantic. I have seen many marriage proposals at this restaurant, and while I'm not sure of the success rate, at least the ambiance is right.

The corner table at the end of the restaurant has the best view in all of Vegas. There is a good reason why world famous Chef JoHo's Eiffel Tower Restaurant is regarded as the crown jewel in Paris Las Vegas' collection of restaurants: it is simply the best.

Debra's Pick: Surf and Turf

Now, it is up to you to take control of your summer and start to enjoy those things that bring you the most pleasure. I have recommended my favorite restaurants – now, all you need to do is call a friend and come join me!

Tune into Fox News Rising on Thursday, May 6 at 8:30 a.m. for my Mother's Day Picks.

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Until Next Time
Debra Kennedy