

Wining & Dining :: Entertainment & Culture :

Ingram's August 2010

Best New Restaurant (Locally-Owned)

When James Beard award-winning Chef Celina Tio of The American ventured out on her own in Brookside, many were excited. And rightly so, proven since the Gold award goes to that venture, Julian. The Gaslight Grill in Leawood has plenty of seating and good food, a jazz band Wednesday through Sunday and a friendly owner. And the Moonlight Sushi Bar & Grill in Liberty is casual and inviting, inspiring sushi lovers from the Northland—and beyond—to vote it the Bronze.

Best Overall Restaurant

Tatuhtatah! (Pretend that's the sound of trumpets blaring in this ultimate category.) To be the best in this city is really saying something. Again, we return to names you've already seen: The Capital Grille for the Gold, The American Restaurant for the Silver, Plaza III – The Steakhouse for the Bronze. What more can we say? You just can't go wrong at any one of the three.

Best Restaurant (Jackson County)

This vote certainly had to be close—all three of these restaurants deserve kudos deluxe. Garnering the Gold for the first time is **bluestem in Westport**, where a gorgeous lounge sets the stage for always superb food in cozy surroundings. Chef/owner Colby Garrelts was a finalist for the James Beard Best Chef Midwest once again this year. The Silver belongs to The Capital Grille, proving that a chain restaurant can be simply excellent. The Bronze goes to The American Restaurant. Try all these fine restaurants.

Best Dessert/Presentation

Yep, a fish place wins the Gold again—McCormick and Schmick's. It has to be the "Chocolate Bag," unique to this location—a handmade chocolate box filled with white chocolate mousse and fresh berries. Oh, yum. Speaking of decadence, Andre's Confiserie Suisse has been sweetening up Kansas Citians since 1955. Its "Matterhorns" alone could account for this year's Silver. The Cheesecake Factory, because it's more than "just" cheesecake, wins the Bronze. National Cheesecake Day was July 30—did you get your slice for half price?

Best Ethnic Restaurant

Ethnic food must be true to its roots, its culture, and its tastes. La Bodega, a long-time resident on Southwest Boulevard, taps the Gold again for its authentic Spanish tapas menu and the conviviality it inspires. Korma Sutra, in Westport for years and now on 110th as well, lives up to authentic Indian cuisine and is well-known for its lunch-time buffet. It scarfs up the Silver. The Bronze goes to a different country, Italy, for Garozzo's Ristorante, authentic as can be. Of four locations, some of us still favor their Harrison location the most—and we haven't even told you about their Thursday lunch special.

Best Outdoor Dining

It's once again The Classic Cup Café for the Gold—Kansas Citians do like that sidewalk and want to watch as Plaza patrons stroll by, struggling with kids, bags, and strollers. The Blue Grotto, relatively new on the “scene,” demonstrates with Silver finesse that a back space (not an alley, certainly) can be turned into a metro respite with both the charm of Brookside and the pizzazz of pizza. Yia Yia's out south is up for the Bronze, its big green umbrellas, glass artwork, and plantings all combining to create an oasis in a parking lot.

Best Place to Take Out-of-Town Guests

Not just one restaurant but at least 25 of them currently light up for the Gold—it's the entire Power and Light District to impress out-of-town guests. There's no better place to people watch and wander and finally decide just what you're in the mood for. Fiorella's Jack Stack Barbecue stakes out the Silver, in a town where the barbecue experience must be great. And Plaza III – The Steakhouse eats up the Bronze again, representing the best of KC steak and people.

Most Romantic Restaurant

When you want a little romance served up with your aphrodisiacs, Chef Debbie Gold's exquisite cuisine at The American Restaurant is, appropriately, the Gold choice. The atmosphere includes soaring windows looking down on a glittery moving tableau if you want a break from your beloved's besotted eyes. The Silver belongs to Starker's Restaurant secluded and reserved upstairs restaurant, their wine-lined room especially intimate. And Chaz on the Plaza, with its light and airy redo, inspires our voters for the Bronze. Of course, the Raphael is still right upstairs.

Best Steak

This is always a fierce competition—steaks, as you know, are a KC signature, and there's simply no limit to the numbers of restaurants that make these cuts of beef the centerpieces of their menus. When it comes to our honorees in this category, it all starts with the hoof. Returning to the Gold corral is hometown Plaza III – The Steakhouse. You already know why. The Capital Grille is next for the Silver, its steaks also always perfectly done and its ambience a secret ingredient. Ruth's Chris Steak House takes the Bronze. Extra butter can do no harm in the steak world. Just don't forget to try their crab cake, as well.

Best Wine List

It's wine-o'clock and time for JJ's traditional Gold win for the best list in town. Thousands of bottles, old and new, await your sipping pleasure, and staff is always ready with a suggestion or six. New for Silver honors in this category is Trezo Vino Wine Bar and Bistro on 115th Street. You can sample wines all night in the restaurant, outside, or in a private dining room. The Bronze goes to Plaza III – The Steakhouse, where the staff knows exactly which of their many wines will tickle your tongue.

Best Service

A restaurant can't be great, or even good, without superb service. These three winners all have well-trained, long-term wait staff who truly care that you're having not just an excellent meal but an excellent experience. For the Gold, The Capital Grille. For the Silver, the The American Restaurant. The Bronze goes to bluestem. Our kudos to these folks for doing a hard job really, really well.

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