

OFF THE BEATEN PATH IN OKLAHOMA CITY: PHILIP'S 2013 RESTAURANT PICKS

A native Oklahoman, man about town and Morgan horseman offers readers his second review of the city's eateries.

By Philip Green



Downtown Oklahoma with the Devon Tower on the left. Photo by Philip Green.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH IN OKLAHOMA CITY

Well, horse show family, here I sit on a hot August afternoon in OKC and in just a little over a month and a half, I get again to play host-state to all of my fabulous horse show friends! It's been two years since I last reviewed and recommended local eateries for my friends, and I think it's high time I do it again!

Oklahoma City continues to thrive economically. Downtown continues to grow, and, thankfully, it continues to prosper. Twenty years ago, no one wanted to be near downtown. It wasn't unsafe, however, there was nothing to do downtown. Bricktown was just a glimmer in investor's eyes, business had moved to the suburbs, and to be honest, the lack of oil companies and big business really made downtown a ghost town of sorts. Contrast that with 2013 and our downtown looks nothing like it did. Downtown is full of buildings that, for the first time in about 30 years, are completely full. Many locally owned restaurants are open in buildings which once stood empty. Art galleries occupy old store fronts from yesteryear, and film, art, and food festivals, like the H&8th (Hudson and 8th) weekly food festivals, keep the streets buzzing with activity.

There have been a few new restaurants that have popped up in the past two years that I would like to include in this year's edition of my restaurant guide, namely in the downtown area. If you recall, my goal with these guides is to hope you'll explore OKC, and leave the Meridian district in favor of more local, less chain-style restaurants. Go East!



VAST
333 West Sheridan Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73102
(405) 702-7262

M-Th: 11am-1:30pm, 5pm-10pm; F: 11am-1:30pm, 5pm-10:30pm; Sat: 5pm-10:30pm

**Business casual attire is acceptable, however, sleeveless shirts, ripped jeans, ball caps, shorts of any kind or flip flops are not part of Vast's dress code.*

Since my last article two years ago, there is one restaurant which you need to try. If anything, at 726 feet above the ground, the views of Oklahoma City are spectacular, particularly in the evenings around sunset. As you may know, Oklahoma City built one of the tallest buildings west of the Mississippi. (We got Dallas beat in that arena, and they don't like it). The Devon Energy Building was completed in October 2012, and their showpiece restaurant, "Vast" opened shortly after. Vast is located on the 49th floor of the Devon Energy Building, and is a remarkable restaurant, not only for the food, but for the architecture as well. After taking a quick ride in the dedicated restaurant elevator, (and popping your ears a few times due to the change of pressure), you walk into the entry of the restaurant. Immediately you are greeted by beautiful and modern architecture, with a mixture of warm dark woods coupled with edgy steel. LED lighting accents the entire establishment, and upon walking into the restaurant, the floor to ceiling windows let in the magnificent view and, for a moment, you

stop and can do nothing else but take it in. It is a sight to see. Vast has come leaps and bounds since it's opening in 2012. The service has matured, the food has been polished, and I can officially say, I feel completely comfortable recommending this to everyone who attends the Grand Nationals this year. The food is Modern American coupled with accents from various parts of the world. Many standard dishes have an international flair hidden in them. Some more obvious than others. My personal recommendation, the scallops. It's basically like eating butter. Delicious! The price point is on the higher end, but remember this is Oklahoma City, casual atmosphere sans the pretentiousness of other cities, means it won't break your bank account, and you can also wear jeans with a blazer or button down shirt. I definitely recommend making your reservations as soon as possible. The dining room is large, however, to maintain the "cache," management limits the number of guests.



Ludivine

LUDIVINE
805 North Hudson Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73102
(405) 778-6800

Tue-Sat: 5pm-10pm

**Happy hour, half price appetizers in the bar from 5pm-7pm, Tuesday-Friday. The late night menu is available in the bar Friday and Saturday from 10pm-2am and changes every week.*

I have to include Ludivine in this guide again. The last time I wrote about this hipster-chic restaurant, it went over well with those who tried it; however, since writing that article two years ago, it quickly came to my attention that not only is this one of the most talked about restaurants in OKC, the owner and chef is my neighbor! The world can be deliciously small at times, and who doesn't like walking into the restaurant greeted by a high-five and a "howdy neighbor" from the chef? Things like that make me feel so, "man-about-town." Ludivine boasts a motto, "From the Prairie to the Table." That is to say, everything you eat at Ludivine, aside from the seafood, is locally raised and grown. Now, if your palate borders on the boring or extremely selective, this establishment is not for you. Typically, the menu runs for a month, and is limited to four appetizer selections, four dinner selections, and four dessert selections. Wild game seems to be a forte of Ludivine, and don't be surprised to see rabbit, quail, or bison on the menu. Do not be scared by that, however. It will be one of the most tasteful presentation of prairie food you've ever seen, and it will be delicious as well. I always start out with the "Charcuterie" plate full of pates and fresh cheeses, followed by the chef's recommendations for entrees. The decor is modern and rustic. Many times, local artists will be displayed on the walls, and the feel of the dining room is urban, and so are the people. It's a great place to be seen, and a great place to people watch. The bar at Ludivine is located on the back side of the restaurant, and serves up many local favorites, many drinks being modern renditions of those popular in the early 1900's

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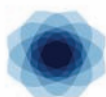
when Oklahoma City became the center of oil exploration and oil money. Reservations are recommended, though you may also dine in the bar.

guernsey park

GUERNSEY PARK
2418 North Guernsey Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73103
(405) 605-5272

M-Th 11am-9pm; F-Sat: 11am-10pm

A new favorite in OKC, Guernsey Park, is located in Oklahoma City's 23rd Street district near the Paseo. 23rd street is quickly becoming a favorite of the young urban professionals. Located just north of downtown, only a few streets from the old oil mansions of Heritage Hills, the 23rd street district is a place where young movers and shakers flock. Much of the property on 23rd street can be seen as run down in a sense, but most of these old shops have recently been bought and will soon be transformed into state of the art shopping and nightlife. 23rd Street has historically been an area where my mother always told me to never go. It wasn't until I moved close by that I observed the gem that it is quickly becoming. Guernsey Park opened this year and offers modern American cuisine with an Asian flair. The 23rd Street enclave is located directly to the south of Oklahoma City's Asian district, and many Asian entrepreneurs and restaurateurs have brought in new flavors coupled with OKC's dining favorites. Guernsey Park offers this. Located in what looks like a modern renovation of an old house, Guernsey Park's dishes are light, flavorful, and definitely something to snap a photo of and put on Facebook to make others jealous. The decor is modern and simple. It definitely has an independent feel to it, but also retains the warmth of a cozy local restaurant. Curries and Asian spices mix well with your traditional favorites. My personal favorite, Duck Confit. Delicious! Reservations are usually recommended.



TAMAZUL

TAMAZUL
5820 North Classen Boulevard,
Suite 1
Oklahoma City, OK 73118
(405) 879-4248
M-Sat: 11am-10pm; Sun: 5pm-9pm

Making the list this year is a new entry into the Oklahoma City dining options. Tamazul is a modern take on Mexican Cuisine. Tamazul is located in Classen Curve, a new and modern urban development in the Nichols Hills area of Oklahoma City. Classen Curve hosts high-end shopping and is close to Whole Foods Market. It is located approximately fifteen minutes northwest of the fair grounds. Tamazul's Mexican cuisine is brought to you by master chef and entrepreneur, Matthew Kenney. It combines old-world Mexican street food with upscale plating and offerings to tempt various palates. It's not your typical Tex-Mex and boasts options similar to those found in Mexico City. The idea behind the concept was to glamorize Mexican street food. Tamazul is definitely a place to be seen, as with any new establishment. The ingredients are fresh and typical of Mexican cuisine, and the atmosphere is

sophisticated, but as with any Oklahoma City restaurant, casual and relaxed.



CAFÉ 501
5825 Northwest Grand Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73118
(405) 844-1501
M-Th: 11am-10pm; F: 11am-11pm;
Sat: 9am-11pm; Sun: 9am-3pm, 5pm-9pm

Just around the corner from Tamazul, also in Classen Curve, is Café 501. It has the feel of a modern bakery with a display of dessert cakes that wow the senses, both in sight and smell. The food is fresh and modern, but traditional in many senses. Café 501 encompasses recipes gathered from around the world and presented in sophisticated fashion. The idea was to incorporate various world flavors into traditional Oklahoma City favorites. Café 501 boasts a huge array of sandwich and salad options that are fitting for a full meal. The decor is ultra-modern, but is warmed by the bakery and deli feel of this popular restaurant. This is definitely a great lunch spot with so many menu options. Don't be concerned that there aren't many options for dinner. Café 501 has a large assortment of dinner options, including my favorite, Bacon Wrapped Meatloaf. The wine menu is eclectic and surprisingly good for what is seemingly a deli/bakery.

Mahogany[®] PRIME STEAKHOUSE

MAHOGANY
3241 West Memorial Road
Oklahoma City, OK 73134
(405) 748-5959
M-Th: 5pm-10pm; F-Sat:
5pm-11pm; Sun: 5pm-9pm

Many of you frequent Red Prime in downtown Oklahoma City. There are very few upper-end steak restaurants that can compare to Red Prime. If you are looking for an alternative, for one of those "fancy nights out" in Oklahoma City, Mahogany is really your best bet. It's a little bit of a drive, about fifteen minutes north on the Lake Hefner Parkway in North Oklahoma City, but it's well worth it. Mahogany is definitely upper-end, so be prepared to pay for that and dress for that. However, the steaks, in my opinion, are a notch above. It has a more traditional feel to it, both in decor and cuisine, but the food is out of this world. The steaks are cut thick, and the seafood is traditional and hearty. I hate using the phrase, "Surf and Turf," as it seems to downplay the sophistication of the restaurant, but that's what it is. You won't leave hungry, as the portions are large, and the menu plentiful. Did I mention wine? The list is huge and contains many bottles and liquor options that you cannot find anywhere else in the city.

KITCHEN No 324

KITCHEN NO. 324
324 North Robinson Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73102
(405) 763-5911
Sun-Sat: 7am-2pm

This is a new addition to Oklahoma City, and it has gone over well in our community. This is definitely a breakfast, lunch, and

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brunch spot. It takes Southern comfort food to the next level with presentations for the most discerning palate. Located in the Braniff Building, once home to Braniff Airlines, Kitchen No. 324 brings the modern bakery to life for downtown Oklahoma City neighborhoods. Kitchen No. 324 is a favorite spot of business associates and the urban-chic alike. Kitchen No. 324 is open for breakfast and lunch, and while their hours are limited to these times, don't believe that their menu options are as well. Traditional breakfast options take on an art form with fresh ingredients, modern combinations, and tasteful side options. The lunch menu is full of soups, salads, and sandwiches. If you do happen to venture downtown to enjoy breakfast at Kitchen No. 324, I'm coming close to demanding that you try my personal favorite, the "Fried Green Tomatoes Benedict." It is out of this world!



ROCOCO RESTAURANT &
FINE WINE (Two locations)
2824 N. Pennsylvania Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73107
(405) 528-2824

M-Th: 11am-10pm; F: 11am-11pm; Sat: 5pm-11pm; Sun: 11am-9pm

12252 North May Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73120
(405) 212-4577

M-Th: 11am-10pm; F-Sat: 11am-11pm; Sun: 10am-2:30pm, 5pm-9pm
There is something to be said when you go to one of Oklahoma City's best steak house restaurants and you order their crab cakes. When asking if these are the best in Oklahoma City, the restaurant manager says, "No, we try, but they will never rival those of Rococo." Rococo is located on Pennsylvania Avenue, near the 23rd Street Enclave, about ten minutes north of the fairgrounds. Any OKC'er will tell you, if you want crab cakes, go to Rococo. I'm not sure what they do, what magic they perform, or what religious ceremonies they conduct before making these amazing crab cakes, but I'd sure like to know. No one in the city seems to be able to duplicate them, and many in OKC simply get to-go orders of these to include in their dinner party menus at home. While I could go on and on about their crab cakes, the rest of their menu is nothing to laugh at either. The concept was to bring "East Coast style" to the Mid-West. Steaks, seafood, and pastas abound at Rococo, and the atmosphere is nostalgic and higher-end, with a casual feel.



TUCKER'S ONION BURGERS
(Two locations)
324 Northwest 23rd Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73118
(405) 609-2333

5740 North Classen Boulevard, Suite 3
Oklahoma City, OK 73118
(405) 286-3331
Sun-Sat: 11am-9pm

Are you craving a burger? Trust, as any true, red-blooded American will tell you, there are those times when you just need some red

meat, ground. We love our burgers, and at Tucker's Onion Burger, that's what you will find. Tucker's is a new entry into the realm of Oklahoma City eateries by the Hal Smith Restaurant Group, the same people who own Red Prime Steak and Cheever's. Tucker's is casual, but inherently sophisticated given its clientele and parent company. The menu is just that, burgers, and all the fixins to go along with it. It's quick, it's good, and it's filling. Also, if you want to be adventurous or you have worked up a rather large appetite riding your horse, indulge in a "Mother Tucker"—a generous helping of 1 pound of ground beef on a big bun. Trust, your friends will be envious of your conquest, and it gives you the right to say, "Mother Tucker" in public.



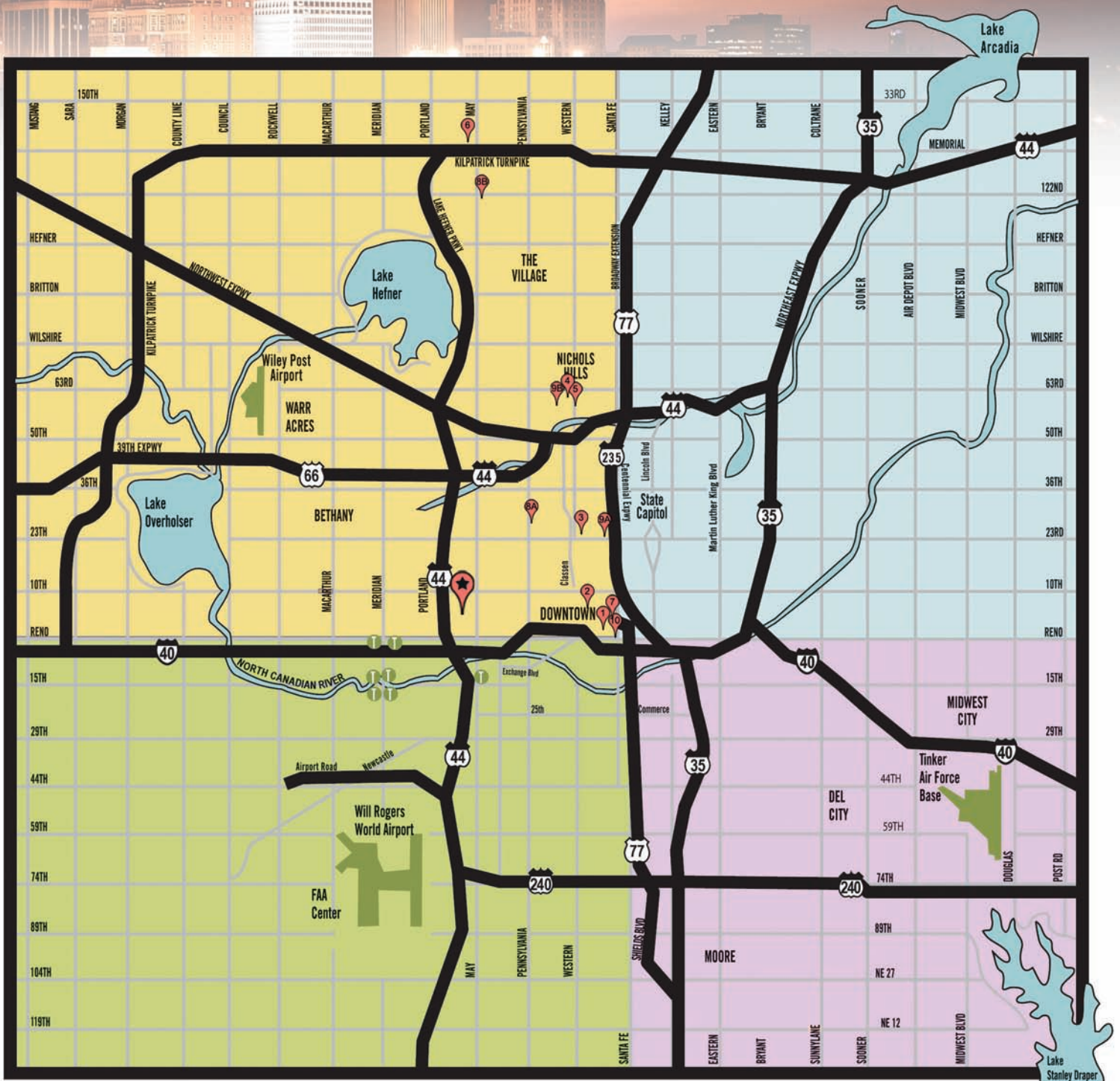
FLINT
15 North Robinson Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73102
(405) 605-0657
M-Th: 6:30am-2pm, 5pm-11pm; F-Sat: 6:30am-
2pm; 5pm-12am; Sun: 6:30am-2pm, 5pm-11pm

Rounding out this year's dining options is my personal favorite, Flint. Flint is located in the Colcord Hotel, which is Oklahoma City's first "skyscraper" and a historic building located next to the Devon Energy Center, which is that towering metal and glass building erected in Oklahoma City to display our prowess in the energy sector. Flint encompasses a world cuisine with many traditional dinner options having an international flair to them. The menu offers daily specials of seafood and fresh meats, as well as many standard options. My favorite starter would definitely be the Jalapeño Hush Puppies. They are amazing, and I highly recommend trying them. You may even want two orders. For main course options, my favorite would have to be the Sauteed Prawns with Pumpkin Gnocchi. I could go on about the menu, but the atmosphere is what is great at Flint. Flint is known as having the best outdoor patio in the city. While dinner is served on only a portion of the patio, and seating is limited, if you are looking for a place to have drinks on a beautiful Oklahoma October evening, Flint is where to be, where to be seen, and where everyone will be, being seen. The outdoor decor is modern and full of, how shall we say, "pretty people" who have finished up their day working downtown. Full of judges, attorneys, businessmen and women, if you want to people watch, Flint is definitely the place.

It is with great honor that I am able to play host-state to you all every year. My goal is to provide you with some dining options that are not typical, and give you insight to the life we have here in Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City has been, and always will be, my home. I have had the honor of watching my town grow and evolve into a modern city, that is worthy of hosting such events as the Grand National and World Championship Morgan Horse Show®. Through many years of determination, public funding, and inspiration of various individuals and leaders, Oklahoma City is growing into a destination each and every year. I hope to continue to see my city grow and become more popular with events and tourism, and I hope to continue to play host to all of my wonderful Morgan Family.

Best of luck this year at Grand National 2013! ■

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805 N. Hudson
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2418 N. Guernsey Avenue
-  **4 Tamazul**
5820 N. Classen Boulevard
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5825 NW. Grand Boulevard
-  **6 MahoganyPrimeSteakhouse**
3241 W. Memorial Road
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324 N. Robinson Avenue
-  **8A Rococo Restaurant**
"Rococo Penn"
2824 N. Pennsylvania Avenue
-  **8B Rococo Restaurant**
"Rococo Northpark"
12252 N. May Avenue
-  **9A Tucker's Onion Burgers**
"23rd Street"
324 NW. 23rd Street
-  **9B Tucker's Onion Burgers**
"Classen Curve"
5740 N. Classen Boulevard
-  **10 Flint**
15 N. Robinson Ave

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