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# WHERE Y'AT

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Fall Restaurant Guide



# Parting Is Such Sweet, Sweet Sorrow

Photos and article by Su-Jit Lin

*Brennan's Bananas Foster in the making*



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*Jacques-imo's Cheesecake*



It's no surprise that the fondest memories of New Orleans are made around food. Our rich, bold, flavorful cuisine is internationally acclaimed, but ironically, it's so delicious and filling that many don't even realize that the last course at our award-winning restaurants is just as ingenious and mind-blowing as the first. Well, this fall, it's time to take a tour of just what this city has to offer the other, sweeter side of your tongue. Save room and linger a while — these are the spots you'll be loathe to leave.

## **Antoine's** **713 St. Louis St.**

History is celebrated with every Baked Alaska, "Since 1840" lovingly inscribed on this hot and cold delight. Here, warm pound cake gets cozily encased in smooth vanilla ice cream, then lightly browned under low heat. The Meringue Glacee, a warm, crisp meringue blanketed in ice cream, fudge, almonds, and strawberries also plays with temps, but for those undecided between after-dinner cocktails or dessert, Cherries Jubilee is the answer. Brandy-soaked dark cherries are flamed tableside and served with ice cream for a sinfully strong dose of Grandpa's favorite medicine.

## **Brennan's** **417 Royal St.**

Dining at Brennan's is far from just a meal—it's an exquisite experience from start to finish. And oh, what a finish! Dessert is a grand finale, especially when it comes their world-famous original, Bananas Foster. Sautéed tableside in soft brown sugar cut with fragrant cinnamon, butter, and banana liqueur, fresh bananas are flamed in rum, then served with cool vanilla ice cream, forming a lovely contrast in temperature and texture against the firm bite of the fruit. Once you've had a taste of this, regular bananas will be forever ruined for you, so be warned! This is a dessert that will change your life. Another signature made before your eyes is the Crepes Fitzgerald, a golden crepe filled with cream cheese and sour cream in a perfect ratio, topped with strawberries set excitingly ablaze in a Maraschino sauce. Similar but less flashy are the Crepes Bridget, accompanied by chocolate fudge and whipped cream instead. No dessert menu in New Orleans is properly rounded off unless a pecan pie appears; theirs is a chocolate variation of the beloved classic.

## **Brigsten's** **723 Dante St.**

Complex and daringly flavorful seems takes the lead at this cozy Riverbend restaurant, but the subtlety and homemade goodness of the desserts, juxtaposed against the old-fashioned family home floorplan and décor, bring you back to meals at Grandma's. Handmade crust envelopes a crunchy Pecan Pie accented with plenty of thick caramel and a peanut butter cookie with vanilla ice cream. Their Banana Bread Pudding is unassuming and comforting, served with light banana custard and caramel sauces, Bananas Foster adding a touch of cinnamon. Thick-cut strawber-

ries accompany the mild, cool Tres Leches Cake, and chocolate whipped cream helps to pull the dreamy dessert back down to earth; but a thick slice of the heavenly Double Chocolate Cake puts you in limbo again. Moist and made entirely with Ghirardelli cocoa powder, the flavor balance is such that the cake retains a remarkable mildness that's generally appealing.

## **Commander's Palace** **1403 Washington Ave.**

There are almost no words for the restaurant that practically invented the standard for New Orleans excellence. Every Commander's creation is unforgettable, from the century-old Bread Pudding Souffle — a soft, fluffy cloud of a dish punched with a pool of whiskey cream — to Chef Tory McPhail's edgy new interpretation of autumn breezes — a dense, spiced gingerbread cupcake with molasses, green apple strips, ganache, and mint. "Chocolate" stunningly presents Swiss dark, white, and milk chocolate, salted fudge ice cream, roasted pecans, chocolate espresso beans, and chocolate cigarettes with a balance that can be universally appreciated. Chocolate also graces the warm Pecan Pie, countered by Fleur de Sel caramel. And speaking of fleurs, "stunning" is the only word for the Dixie crystal fleur de lis atop the golden crust of the plate of Crème Brulee. Yes, plate. And the Creole Cheesecake is also a hefty fellow, with smooth house-made cream cheese. This favorite is the fruit of five days of painstaking labor, and simply divine in a honey graham crust and topped with a chocolate lattice and caramel. For more homegrown goodness, the Peach Cobbler is the best I've ever had, covered in crumbly streusel and served a la mode. Much lighter is "Citrus," a frothy lemon meringue sorbet with hints of orange and mint, and plenty of frozen vodka for that truly happy ending.

## **Copeland's Cheesecake Bistro** **2001 St. Charles Ave.** **4517 Veterans Blvd., Metairie**

When in Rome, do as the Romans, and here, the Romans are eating cheesecake. Mild, creamy, and whopping on pecan crusts, cheesecake provides a great base for unexpected variations like the surprisingly palatable Hawaiian, topped with pineapple, toasted coconut, and white chocolate sauce, which combine to create a deceptively light flavor and feel. Frangelico cream sauce and hot caramel tops the Crème Caramel, and Strawberry is always in style. But there is more to the Bistro than sauce-drenched cheesecakes. Bet on the fried vanilla/chocolate ice cream duo, rolled in candied pecans and toasted coconut, and the s'mores-like Black and White Tuxedo with chocolate and a marshmallow-esque cheesecake for a tempting twist. Pair your choice with a recipe coffee drink for the ultimate finish.

## **Emeril's Delmonico** **1300 St. Charles Ave.**

In under a year, pastry chef Amy Lemon has already made quite a splash. An enticing, fruity,

goeey, gloppy one, as from-scratch jams grace her latest concepts, carrying uber-ripe flavors over to the next season. The Chocolate Peanut Butter Bomb's whole roasted peanuts introduce a toasty saltiness to the rich flourless chocolate cake and semi-sweet sauce, but her strawberry jam gives it a great touch of freshness. Cinnamon Monkeybread adds an element of fun with buttery biscuit dough sugared with cinnamon providing a base for buttermilk ice cream, while firm preserved peaches lends sunshine to the crispy, autumn-y pull-apart treat. The season of spice has been encapsulated with Pumpkin Pie in a pastry-style crust, served with bay leaf ice cream and green tomato chutney—all familiar flavor components, but made excitingly intriguing by combination. But summer memories have a habit of lingering — the Frozen (Maker's Mark) Mint Julep captures the spirit of the classic cocktail, but enhances it with subtle creaminess, mint granita, fried mint leaves, and some huckleberry compote that's a treat in itself with the buttery shortbread.

## **Galatoire's** **209 Bourbon St.**

Blanche du Bois' favorite restaurant is about tradition, with a menu that's remained largely unchanged for about a century. But once in a while, new items like the Sweet Potato Cheesecake are added, creamy cheesecake texture bringing a modern kick to your mouth with a bit of spice and a strong lingering yam taste. This has gained popularity, but the big two are still the Cup Custard, a cool, firm all-season treat similar to flan, and Banana Bread Pudding, covered in a benign banana praline sauce and distinguished by uncooked bananas and a bit of a crust.

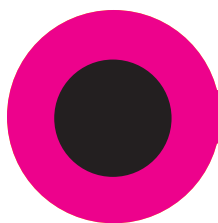
## **Herbsaint** **701 St. Charles Ave.**

Big, bold tastes dominate this casually chic restaurant's desserts. Alternating selections — like the Green Tomato Fried Pie with lemon glaze and a cheekily tart Creole cream cheese ice cream, or the rustic Cornmeal Pound Cake with soft roasted peaches — take advantage of the season's best produce, which also inspires house-made sorbets and recipe ice creams. Meanwhile, a Chocolate Crème Caramel with salted whipped cream acts as a robust contrast to more summery counterparts like Chef Donald Link's Coconut Cream Pie, a Pina Colada-inspired treat wrapped in a toasted macadamia crust and topped with pineapple. One bite fills your entire mouth with expansive flavor and your mind with visions of palm trees and white sand. To aid your return to the quaint, bumpy streets of New Orleans, count on the Banana Brown Butter Tart, accented with Fleur de Sel caramel. Warm and flaky with the unexpectedly fresh flavor of naturally sweet, ripe bananas, this treat is relevant year-round.

## **Jacques-imo's** **8324 Oak St.**

After a richly seasoned meal, sometimes you need to revert to simple classics. Jacques-imo's





# New Orleans' Most Irresistible Endings

answer is a coconut bread pudding covered in a caramel sauce instead of traditional liquor bases, or a creamy scooped cheesecake, which satisfies a craving for richness, sour cream adding a thick heaviness to the dessert. Their Crème Brulee is made for sharing, making it a popular choice after a gut-busting dinner, and served in a shallow dish, this is a dream for people who prefer the top to the bottom – light in texture, heavy on the caramelized sugar.

## **Mr. B's Bistro** **201 Royal St.**

The ambience at Mr. B's feels like a Prohibition-era boys' club, but dessert can bring out the feminine side of anyone and any place. The sassy Lemon Icebox Pie in a banana graham cracker crust and served with raspberry coulis is sweet and tart simultaneously, and the Coconut Cream Pie is similarly effective at blurring sweetness agreeably. Also in the graham crust, this fluffy pie is as generously covered in toasted coconut flakes as the Buttered Pecan Pie is in crispy crushed nuts. The latter, in a thick crust slathered with filling and topped with a shell of pecans, is all a pecan pie should be.

## **K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen** **416 Chartres St.**

Whopping portions of feel-good Louisiana cookin' have made K-Paul's revered; well, the desserts come in Southern-sized helpings, too. Tasks for two include the Ultimate Chocolate Cake, an incredibly moist, fluffy cake thinly layered with creamy cheesecake, and an equally sizeable Coconut Cake (in white or chocolate) with filling made from fresh, whole coconuts. A flawless Praline Cheesecake has melt-in-your-mouth pralines generously swirled into every bite in perfect proportion, the usually overly sweet candies well cut with cheesecake. The Peanut Butter Cheesecake also achieves great balance, but between sweet and salty; Chef Sarah Wood preserves hearty PB flavor in a perfect cheesecake texture. Most impressive is the Bread Pudding, an indulgent, decadent mix of Mother's rolls, biscuits, black strap molasses muffins, pecans, and raisins, topped with a butter hard sauce. In fact, it's a testament to its excellence that it outranked (to me) their famous Sweet Potato Pecan Pie, a soft, generously nutty dessert so well loved that America orders it from the K-Paul catalog.

## **Mat and Naddie's** **937 Leonidas St.**

A gourmand's buffet by day and a homey epicurean eatery by night, this Riverbend gem remains a dessert paradise at all hours. Host to a treasure trove of comfort sweets with a twist, the menu leads with an extraordinarily light Crème Brulee, streusel-topped Blueberry Peach Cobbler, and dainty profiteroles. A flourless semi-sweet Chocolate Truffle Cake with crème anglais and raspberry coulis leaves you feeling as spoiled as the luxurious Chocolate Peanut Butter Goopy Bar does – a cakey allspice-tinged goodie that erupts

palate-blanketing peanut flavor. A tasty Sweet Potato and Pecan Pie boasts a soft whipped core and mild whispers of smoke, but the crowning achievements remain the Dulce de Leche Cheesecake, featuring baked-in caramel swirls and an almond graham cracker crust, and the innovative Paneed White Chocolate Almond Bread Pudding, a panko-crusted stunner fried in clarified butter for a rich flavor that permeates throughout. The banana brulee and Bananas Foster rum sauce provide perfect complements to this edgy version of a New Orleans classic.

## **ONE Restaurant & Lounge** **8132 Hampson St.**

An attention-grabbing open kitchen offering guests an expo-level front row seat may be one of the draws of this sleeper, but their refreshing desserts offer yet another. Interestingly, many of the end-of-meal selections at ONE don't weigh you down – rather, a few actually cleanse your palate and refreshes you. The inventive alternating ice creams and sorbets are designed with lightness in mind, with flavors like Cucumber/Mint/Vodka and familiar-yet-exotic Bourbon/Pinenut/Rosemary. Even the Strawberry Shortcake accomplishes a fresh feel, with a layered biscuit-style cake topped with vanilla Bavarian cream as dulce de leche caramel adds a harmonizing touch of sweetness. Other options for traditionalists include a generous portion of medium-consistency Crème Brulee, topped with a hand-whipped cream reminiscent of marshmallows, and an ultra-rich brandy-tinged dark Swiss Chocolate Cake.

## **Restaurant August** **301 Tchoupitoulas St.**

Chef John Besh's restaurants are internationally acclaimed for inventive cuisine, and the desserts at this award-winning establishment do not disappoint. Complex flavor is emphasized, so the forms of desserts may change, but the featured tastes remain the same. For example, with the Trio of Spiced Chocolate, the focus is on vanilla-scented white chocolate, milk chocolate with chili, and salt and caramel bittersweet ... but whether it will come as a cake, custard, mousse, or other is unpredictable. The Frozen Crème Fraiche Souffle plays with texture; vanilla crème fraiche, crumbled Linzer cookies, blueberry sorbet, and peaches each cunningly evoke unique sensations. But their signature staple dessert, the Pere Roux Banana Rum Cake, is the real star. Bananas Foster layered with an airy white cake, frosted with Creole cream cheese icing, and held in place with large white chocolate flakes, this crowd-pleaser is as approachable as the personable chef himself.

## **Upperline Restaurant** **1413 Upperline St.**

Providing classic favorites with a sophisticated twist is the prevalent concept at this Uptown favorite, from chocolate-drizzled Profiteroles to their "grown-up's sundae" Eugene, served in a

wine glass and covered in hardened semi-sweet chocolate and toasted almonds. Lusciously thick, the Crème Brulee comes with crushed pralines and is perfected with a beautifully crystallized crust. The Pecan Pie has a great balance of texture and flavor, wonderfully warm, whole pecans providing a nice crunch alongside the soft, buttery crust, as hand-whipped cream provides a great neutralizing point. The best, of course, is mentioned last – the Honey Pecan Bread Pudding. Decadently moist and dense, it melts in your mouth and tastes like bliss. Warm honey pecans lend it an earthy flavor and a natural sweetness, and the English sticky toffee pudding-inspired sauce ties it all in beautifully.

## **Zoe** **900 Poydras St.**

This cosmopolitan restaurant in the trendy W is all about smooth elegance with a contemporary flair, an attitude Chef Roberto Bustillo carries on through dessert. Strawberry Shortcake provides a light ending, served with a strawberry sorbet that captures Ponchatoula summers. Softness is the focus here, with moist cake, mild cream, and wilted strawberries. But for melt-in-your-mouth, go with the Chocolate Decadence with an icy white chocolate gelato. This flourless concoction looks like cake and crumbles like cake, but expands and dissolves luxuriously in a distinctly non-cakey way. A juicy strawberry in a white and milk chocolate tuxedo shell creates a counterpoint of refreshingly tart notes against the cake's earthiness. The Opera Cake is a bit more traditional, with chocolate frosting, crème anglais filling, and a coffee liqueur infusion, well complemented with rum raisin gelato.

## **Sucre** **3025 Magazine St.**

Obviously, the focus has been on heavyweight restaurants that just happen to have outstanding dessert selections designed to round off a sumptuous feast. Well, just for lagniappe, artisan sweets purveyor Sucre can provide a change of scene before dinner officially ends. Choices abound at this impishly stylish shoppe, where taste is tantamount and aesthetic equally ranked; creamy gelatos, sorbets, and gourmet chocolates are up for grabs. But sophisticates demand a bit more, like the soft, melty Tiffany, a popular raspberry gelee and mousse in chocolate cake enrobed in a sparkly plum-hued dark chocolate. For something cooler, there's the Exotic, a tangy, tart goodie with coconut mousse, banana marmalade, and passionfruit gelee atop a coconut dacquoise. But if chocolate is your poison, there's the dark Chocolate Sucre, a bittersweet dessert made of 72% Bolivian chocolate, chocolate cream, flourless cake, and glaze. Lighter is the Café Caramel, milk chocolate mocha mousse, caramel creameaux, and dense chocolate cake, which satisfies without being sugary or overwhelming.

**wyat**

*Mr. B's Warm Pecan Pie*



*Mat & Naddie's Sample Spread*



*Restaurant August*



*Upperline's Honey Pecan Bread Pudding and Profiteroles*



*Strawberry Shortcake from ONE*

