

TOP 10 ROMANTIC RESTAURANTS

Food and romance have gone together ever since our ancestors first sat around a fire roasting a woolly mammoth and gazing into each other's eyes.

Although the venue may have changed, our instincts still tell us that there's no better time to kindle the flames than over dinner. The sparks fly even further when you add pampering service, lovely settings and dreamy wines to the sumptuous fare.

So find yourself a partner, put on your best outfit and get ready to share the likes of everything from foie-gras teriyaki to butter-poached lobster.

KAI RESTAURANT

Exquisite fare and pampering service set off sparks at this gem, which celebrates Native American and regional bounty. Look for Baja scallops, buffalo loin with saguaro-blossom syrup and fry bread drenched with Mexican chocolate.

Details: Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, 5594 W. Wild Horse Pass Blvd., Gila River Reservation. 602-225-0100, wildhorsepassresort.com.

QUIESSENCE

This bucolic spot, set amid pecan groves and vegetable gardens at the foot of South Mountain, showcases chef Greg LaPrad's hyper-local fare, which changes nightly. He makes his own charcuterie, the lamb is part of a neighborhood herd and the produce is plucked from the garden.

Details: Farm at South Mountain, 6106 S. 32nd St., Phoenix. 602-276-0601, quiescencerestaurant.com.

T. COOK'S

The Mediterranean look — vaulted ceiling, clerestory windows, gleaming tile and terracotta brick — is utterly romantic. So is the fare: paella, duck a l'orange, curry-dusted bass and Georges Bank scallops are among the sumptuous attractions.

Details: Royal Palms Resort and Spa, 5200 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix. 602-808-0766, royalpalmsresortandspa.com.

ELEMENTS

Nab a window table and enjoy the sparkling Paradise Valley view. Then focus on the fare prepared by chef Beau MacMillan, an "Iron Chef" winner. MacMillan's seasonal dishes may include foie-gras teriyaki, chile-rubbed swordfish or roasted quail with sweet-potato grits.

Details: Sanctuary Camelback Mountain, 5700 E. McDonald Drive, Paradise Valley. 480-948-2100, sanctuaryaz.com.

J&G STEAKHOUSE

Set in the space that used to house Mary Elaine's, J&G Steakhouse is superstar chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's paeon to beef. Start off with the seafood platter, then move on to the six-peppercorn New York strip and side of Comte-draped gratin potatoes.

Details: The Phoenician, 6000 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix. 480-214-8000, jgsteakhouse.com.

LON'S

This beautifully restored hacienda recalls Old Arizona, but the regional American fare whisks you to new Arizona. Enjoy a duo of pork strip loin and pork belly with Cheddar corn grits, or pan-roasted halibut with wild mushrooms. The salt-seared ahi tuna appetizer is a destination dish.

Details: Hermosa Inn, 5532 N. Palo Cristi Road, Paradise Valley. 602-955-7878, lons.com.



DIFFERENT POINTE OF VIEW

The elegant room and stunning views are part of the swanky formula. So is the luxury cuisine, such as braised duck ravioli, prosciutto-wrapped lamb and butter-poached lobster with pancetta-wrapped prawns.

Details: Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs Resort, 11111 N. Seventh St., Phoenix. 602-866-6350, differentpointeofview.com.

VINCENT ON CAMELBACK

Nobody does l'amour like the French. You'll find it at James Beard Award winner Vincent Guerithault's superb restaurant, where French technique meets Southwestern ingredients. Duck tamales and blue-corn-crust sweetbreads are marvels.

Details: 3930 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix. 602-224-0225, vincentoncamelback.com.

ORANGE SKY

The view from this rooftop restaurant, especially at dusk, is breathtaking. Book a west-facing table at one of the private booths and gaze at a glowing orange sky framing Camelback Mountain. Then enjoy the surf-and-turf fare, such as prime-grade New York strip and lobster with blood-orange sauce.

Details: Talking Stick Resort, 9800 E. Indian Bend Road, Salt River Reservation. 480-850-8606, talkingstickresort.com.

ROKA AKOR

Sit at the robata counter at this sleek London import and whisper sweet nothings in each other's ears as you sip trendy Japanese shochu cocktails and nibble on luscious grilled meats, fish and poultry flamed over fragrant Japanese oak charcoal.

Details: 7299 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale. 480-306-8800, rokaakor.com.



HOWARD SEFTEL'S

Bacon-wrapped shrimp and scallops at Orange Sky. MICHAEL MCNAMARA/
THE REPUBLIC



Trendy Japanese cocktails at Roka Akor. THE REPUBLIC