

TOP 10: PATIO DINING

After a long, hot summer, it's finally safe to step away from our air-conditioning vents and venture outdoors.

What makes the outdoors an even more appealing destination is the possibility of eating a great meal on a restaurant patio.

The Valley has plenty of wonderful restaurants, but eating alfresco just seems to make everything taste better. Whatever the reason — cozy charm, spectacular views, the cool evening air — we instinctively know that dinner under the moonlight delivers life-is-good pleasure.

What's not to like about a prime-grade steak beneath a starry desert sky? What's not to like about seared ahi with Camelback Mountain looming nearby? What's not to like about king crab in blood-orange butter in a rooftop setting, with the Valley twinkling below?

As far as we can tell, absolutely nothing at all.

KAI

It's hard to take your eyes off the stunning desert and mountain scenery. But the exquisite fare is just as breathtaking. Gaze on grilled buffalo tenderloin with saguaro-blossom syrup and fry bread burnished with Mexican chocolate.

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

QUIESSENCE

Rustically set amid pecan groves and gardens, Quiescence changes its menu daily. Whatever is on it will be fresh, seasonal and local, from the homemade charcuterie and pastas to truffled boudin blanc sausage and savoy cabbage wrapped around guinea hen and foie gras.

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

LON'S

This lovely Old Arizona courtyard has it all, from the burbling fountain and roaring fireplace to a spectacular view of Camelback Mountain. Such dishes as seared ahi on a superheated block of Himalayan sea salt, and the pork tenderloin/pork belly duo make the great outdoors even greater.

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

BOURBON STEAK

Forget the McDowell Mountains in the distance. Up close are perhaps the best steaks you will ever eat, slow-poached in butter and finished over a wood grill. The 32-ounce porterhouse, 10-ounce filet or 14-ounce dry-aged American Kobe New York strip prove life is worth living.

Details: Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, 7575 E. Princess Drive. 480-513-6002, fairmont.com/scottsdale.

TALAVERA

Twinkling stars. Saguaros. Pinnacle Peak. Talavera's patio has it all. So does the kitchen, with such sumptuous appetizers as the pork belly/scallop duo and main dishes like the veal porterhouse; 20-ounce prime-grade, bone-in rib eye; and Chilean sea bass.

Details: Four Seasons Resort, 10600 E. Crescent Moon Drive, Scottsdale. 480-515-5700, fourseasons.com/scottsdale.

J&G STEAKHOUSE

When you peer down from J&G's Camelback Mountain perch, the Valley spreads out below like a Hollywood backdrop. What's on your plate can be just as eye-catching, whether it's a hamburger or New York strip steak. Don't miss the side of Comté potatoes.

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

ORANGE SKY

From this lovely rooftop, you'll gape at the magnificent Valley view, with the McDowells rising in the northeast and Camelback Mountain silhouetted against an orange sky to the west. Then focus on the handsome surf-and-turf fare, like the New York strip and king crab in blood orange butter sauce.



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

THE HOUSE AT SECRET GARDEN

Set on the grounds of a historical South Mountain mansion, this charmingly secluded spot, set next to a barn, provides a blazing fireplace and a view of the desert sky. You'll also notice the homey fare, which includes first-rate smoked brisket, homemade pastas and a daily fresh catch.

Details: 2501 E. Baseline Road, Phoenix. 602-243-8539, houseatsecretgarden.com.

CAFE BINK

This casual sibling to renowned Binkley's offers a

shaded patio with pretty-as-a-picture mountain views, along with lusty dishes, like a bacon and date tart, chicken potpie, trout meuniere and corned beef and cabbage coated with brown-sugar mustard butter.

Details: 36889 N. Tom Darlington Drive, Carefree. 480-488-9796, cafebink.com.

LOCAL BREEZE

The delightful shaded, misted patio is such a comfy place that you'll feel like hanging out here even before you've had a bite to eat. And it's worth sticking around for the Coca-Cola ham sandwich, the lahvosh pizzas, green-chile burger and rum cake.

Details: 606 N. Fourth Ave., Phoenix. 602-368-3613, localbreeze.com.



**The back patio
at Quiescence
Restaurant & Wine
Bar at the Farm at
South Mountain in
Phoenix. DAVID
KADLUBOWSKI/
THE REPUBLIC**



The view of the Valley from the patio at the J&G Steakhouse, at the Phoenician.
J&G STEAKHOUSE