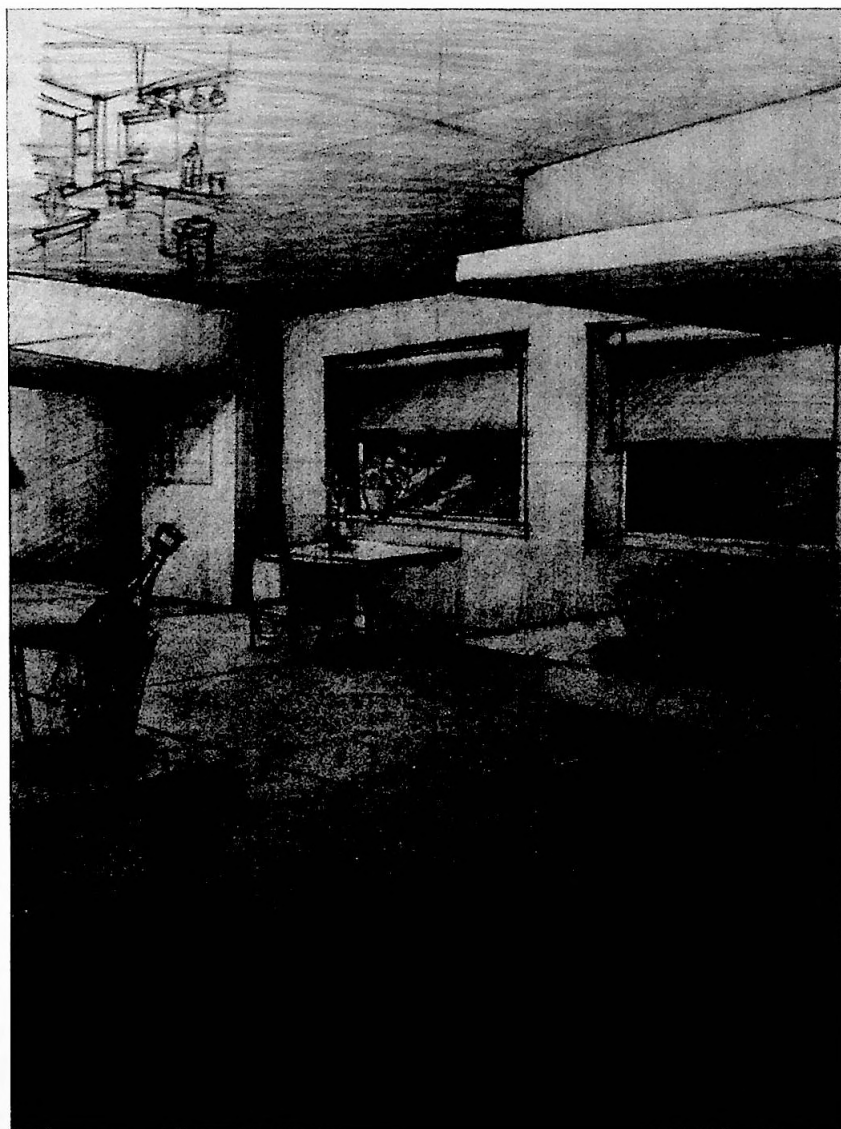


SMoFCon's Local Color and Dining Guide



I know, I know - you don't see San Jose as the culinary Mecca that San Francisco is (It hosted the first edition of Top Chef!), but I can tell you from 35 years of eating in San Jose, you'll find some lovely places to dine in this wonderfully madcap little center of technology. I'm happy to present to you the places where I eat every time I get a chance to dine in Downtown SJ.

The guide is organized by the type of food. The places I've included are among the better restaurants of San Jose. I've chosen not just the popular places, but also places where you can get a decent meal for a decent price. I've also chosen not to include fast food, but you can find a list of those included in the pages. You really don't have to look too hard to find them.

Most of the places listed are within walking distance of the Fairmont, and all walking directions are from the Fairmont to the destination. If the place is more than a mile away, I've simply included the driving distance. In those cases, Google Maps is your friend.

Things being as they are, some of these places may have called it a day and boarded up the doors. This happened with three places between the first and the final draft of this guide. Hours might have changed. Chefs may have gone to greener pastures and the food might have gone downhill, so I strongly suggest you call ahead or check other reviews (and may I recommend Yelp.com, the restaurant sections of sfgate.com or metroactive.com for that). Time, she is a fluid impediment. Still, I hope you'll find this guide useful in figuring out how you're gonna keep yourself fed and watered during our convention.

Christopher J Garcia

Rating notes

Meh- You can pass it up, but if you find yourself there, it won't be too rough. It's not actively bad, but it's nothing that you should worry yourself about missing.

Nom- Tasty, maybe one really good thing on the menu or maybe the service isn't what it could be.

Nom Nom- Tastier, probably better service, dependable. The kind of place you might fall in love with over time.

Nom Nom Nom- Delicious and wonderful. The kind of place you go "Man, that was good eatin'!" after you've finished your meal and loosened your belt.

Cost

\$ - easy on the pocketbook

\$\$ - inexpensive enough

\$\$\$ - enjoy the caviar and champagne - you've earned it

Directions

These are walking directions to the establishment from the Fairmont Hotel. There are exits to both South First Street and Market, as well as onto Paseo de San Antonio, a walking plaza that runs for several blocks. All of these paths are used as starting points for directions. For locations more than a mile away, we've simply included distance for driving.

American

1 *Agenda Restaurant*

<http://www.agendarestaurant.com> 408.287.3991

399 S. First Street at San Salvador St., San Jose CA

Wed-Thu. 5:30 PM - 2:00 AM, Fri-Sat. 5:30 PM - 2:00 AM, Sun. 9:00 PM - 2:00 AM

It's hard for me to eat here, remembering its time as a nightclub called Marsugi's back in the late 1980s. Nirvana played here to an audience of about 50 people total! I saw a lot of random Ska bands here. The Syrah Short Ribs are really good. How good? They almost make me forget that this place was once a Mecca for live music! The menu's kinda variable, with the appetizers being better than most of the entrees, but it's all very tasty. It's also not wheelchair accessible.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

2 *Arcadia Restaurant*

www.michaelmina.net/mm_arcadia/ 408.278.4555

100W San Carlos St. at South Market St., San Jose, CA 95113

Tue-Sat: 6:30 AM - 11:30 AM, 5:30 PM - 10PM, Sun - Mon: 6:30 AM - 11:30 AM

This is a Michael Mina restaurant that lives in the Marriott. The Head Chef, Daniel Patino, has a long history in the South Bay for his food, and Arcadia ain't bad. I usually go for the lobster in any form. The Lobster Corn Dogs are pretty much the best single appetizer you can find in the Bay Area. The Lobster Pot Pie is right up there too. DO NOT MISS THE DUCK FAT FRIES!!! I'm sorry to yell, but they're that good.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$+

3 *Billy Berk's*

www.maxsworld.com/billyberks 408.292.4300

99 S 1st Street at San Fernando St., San Jose, CA 95113

Mon - Wed. 11:30 PM - 10:00 PM; Thu. 11:30 PM - 11:00 PM; Fri. 11:30 PM - 12:00 AM; Sat. 4:00 PM - 12:00 PM; Sun. 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM

I don't think of it as much of a restaurant, but that's my problem. I think of it as a bar that happens to have great food. The best value you'll find in all of Downtown is the Mac 'n Cheese appetizer. It's awesome, just the right size and delicious! The dessert menu is good too, especially if you've come for drinks, which are the real highlight of the joint.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$/\$\$

4 *The Blue Chip*

www.thebluechipsj.com 408.971.2898

325 S 1st Street at San Carlos St., San Jose, CA 95113

Mon-Thu. 11:00 AM - 9:00 PM; Fri. 11:00 AM - 11:00 PM; Sat. 9:00 AM - 11:00 PM; Sun. 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM

This is a sports bar. If you think of what you'd expect from sports bar food, that's what you'll be getting if you go here. The atmosphere's decent enough, and there are friendly regulars. Here's the kicker: they've got a cheesesteak menu. That's right, a cheesesteak MENU!!! They do about a dozen variations. I have to say that I love the Pizza Cheesesteak. It's not traditional, but it's tasty. Wheelchairs may have difficulty.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

5 Cafe San Jose

www.cafesanjose.com 408.265.3020

1583A Meridian Ave. at Hamilton, San Jose, CA 95125

7AM - 3PM, Daily

Let's say you're like me and you've been up all-night playing poker and managed to lose 2/3 of your rent money to those sharps who totally managed to catch straights on the river when your three-of-a-kind should have had that pot wired and you're pretty sure that the only thing that'll make you feel better is a Belgian Waffle Sandwich. And if you go to Cafe San Jose, you can be sure it'll be good enough to make you forget that you've gotta find a new apartment. The breakfasts are some of the best around.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

6 Eulipia

www.eulipia.com 408.280.6161

374 S 1st Street after San Carlos, San Jose, CA 95113

Tuesday-Saturday: 5:30-10PM; Sunday: 4:30-9PM

This place has been around forever and was the lynchpin in the revitalization of South First Street in the 1980s. That doesn't make the food any better, though. It's not like the food is bad, it's just nothing above average and the price is fairly high. It's the steaks here that get most of the attention, and I do enjoy the Hanger Steak. The service tends to be fantastic, though. I actually got dumped by a girl here once and the staff was very nice, even comping me a couple of glasses of wine. Nice folks.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

7 Fahrenheit Ultralounge & Restaurant

www.fahrenheitsj.com

408.998.9998

99 East San Fernando Street at Second Street, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon-Fri 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Mon-Sat 5 p.m. - 2 a.m.

Fahrenheit is kinda swanky, I mean it's also a Ultralounge! The food here is delightful. The Grilled Skirt Steak has wonderful flavor and they certainly understand the concept of Medium Rare. The drinks are also spectacular.

Rating- Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

8 Firehouse No. 1 Bar & Grill

www.firehouse1.com 408.287.6969

69 N San Pedro St. near Santa Clara Street, San Jose, CA 95110

Mon-Fri. 11:30 AM - 2:00 AM; Sat. 3:30 PM - 2:00 AM; Sun. 6:00 PM - 2:00 AM

This is a bar. You love bars. Admit it. I shouldn't have to tell you this. You absolutely adore bars, but you know you have to eat sometimes. Of all the bars in San Jose, Firehouse may do some of the best bar food you'll ever have. Oh yeah, and there's a guy who blows fire. The Wings...my god the wings...they are spectacular. The place gets crowded and loud and the service can be slow, but the drinks and the food make it a place worth visiting.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

9 Flames Eatery & Bar

www.flameseatery.com 408.971.1960

88 S 4th Street at San Fernando, San Jose, CA 95112

7AM to Midnight, Daily

Flames is the place you go to for giant portions. The food's solid, unspectacular, but solid...until you get to the breakfast part of the menu where you see how huge the Waffle selection is. Then you turn the page and there's a section for their versions of Eggs Benedict. They have Potato Skins Benedict. I'm not lying. You ain't gonna find anything as rad as that anywhere else in Downtown!

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

10 The Fountain

[http://www.fairmont.com/sanjose/GuestServices/Restaurants/](http://www.fairmont.com/sanjose/GuestServices/Restaurants/FountainRestaurant.htm)

[FountainRestaurant.htm](http://www.fairmont.com/sanjose/GuestServices/Restaurants/FountainRestaurant.htm)

408.998.1900

172 S. Market Street in the Fairmont Hotel, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon -Fri: 6AM-2PM, Sat:7AM-2:00PM;

Sun:day Brunch: 10AM - 1:30PM

The Fountain does some nice food. I've never been over-whelmed, in fact, I'm not sure I'd say I've even been just plain whelmed, but the food is tasty, if expensive. The service, though, is very nice. I do enjoy the Brunch. The website says they recommend reservations, but I've never had any problem getting a table on demand.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

11 The Grill on the Alley

http://www.thegrill.com/location677d.html?subsections_id=50

408.294.2244

172 S. Market Street in the Fairmont Hotel, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon - Thu: 11:30AM - 10:00PM, Fri: 11:30AM - 11:00pm; Sat: 5:00PM - 11:00PM;

Sunday: 5:00PM - 9:00PM

The Grill on the Alley is actually in the Fairmont. You probably walked right by it. Think back...try and remember when you were going through the hotel this morning...you passed it, you're sure you did. The food's good enough to merit a visit. I like the Chicken Breast with Herbs, but really, the bartenders are fantastic and have them make you a perfect martini.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

12 Morton's Steakhouse

www.mortons.com 408.947.7000
177 Park Avenue, Suite 100 at Market Street, San Jose, CA 95113
Mon - Thu: 5:30PM - 10:00PM; Fri: 5:30PM - 11:00PM; Sat: 5:00PM - 11:00PM

This is the San Jose edition of the Morton's chain. Get a steak. Honestly, it doesn't matter which one. They're all magical. I love coming to Morton's, and when I come on the weekends, I get myself the Double-cut Prime Rib. It's pert-near perfect.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

13 Naglee Park Garage

408.286.1100, 505 E San Carlos Street between 11th and 12th Streets, San Jose, CA 95112
Tue - Thu: 5PM to 9:30PM; Fri: 5PM to 10PM; Saturday (Dinner): 9AM to 1PM and 5PM to 10PM; Sunday: 9AM to 1PM.

This place does a lot of business with college kids. They do a lot of events from films to live music. You order at a counter and then find yourself a table. The show was featured on *Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives* on Food Network in 2010. The portions are

Fast Food Near Downtown

Baja Fresh- 150 S. First Street, San Jose, CA

Ben & Jerry's- 115 San Carlos Street, San Jose, CA

Chinese Gourmet Express- 150 South First St. Suite 111, San Jose, CA

Chipotle- 975 The Alameda, San Jose, CA

Denny's- 1390 South First Street, San Jose, CA

Happi House- 695 North Fourth Street, San Jose, CA

Jack in the Box- 1558 West San Carlos St., San Jose, CA

Johnny Rockets- 105 South First Street, San Jose, CA

McDonald's- 1398 West San Carlos St., San Jose, CA

Pinkberry- 368 Santana Row, San Jose, CA

Pizza My Heart- 117 East San Carlos St., San Jose, CA

Quiznos- 150 South First Street Suite 181, San Jose, CA

Quiznos- 754 The Alameda, San Jose, CA

Subway- 475 East San Carlos St., San Jose, CA

Subway- 165 San Fernando St., San Jose, CA

Subway- 103 East Santa Clara St., San Jose, CA

so-so, but the food is pretty tasty, especially the Maple Lacquered Cornish Game Hen. It's da bomb. Isn't that what all the kids are saying these days? Or is it jiggy? I can't keep up anymore...

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

14 Peggy Sue's

www.peggysues.com 408.298.6750

29 North San Pedro Street at Santa Clara., San Jose, 95113

and

408.294.0252

183 Park Avenue between Almaden and Market Streets, San Jose 95113

10am to 10pm

Hey, it's another 50s-themed place! This one, while not as decorated, has the better food. Come for breakfast. They do a fine Chicken Fried Steak breakfast. The prices are also better here than at that other place. Lunch can be rough at the Park Ave. location, but overall, it's decent eating.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

15 San Jose Museum of Art Cafe Too!

<http://www.sjmusart.org/content/visitUs/cafe/cafe.phtml> 408.277.0557

110 South Market Street in the San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA 95113

Tue - Sun: 11AM - 3PM

Soup, salads and sandwiches are what you get here. The Chef Salad isn't bad, and the Fire-Roasted Vegetable Sandwich is also worthy of above-the-title billing. It's actually pretty good for Art Museum Food.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

16 Sonoma Chicken Coop

www.sonomachickencoop.com 408.287.4098

31 N. Market Street at Santa Clara., San Jose, CA, 95113

Sun - Thu: 11 AM - 9 PM; Fri-Sat: 11 AM - 10 PM

This is a family favorite around these parts and is great for groups. The portions are big, the food is reliable and the for-the-dollar value is pretty high. The roast chicken is tasty, but if you pass up the desserts, you're a fool. The Banana Phyllo Sundae has at least two epic poems written about it, while the Bourbon Bread Pudding leads its own religion. You must!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

BBQ

17 Henry's World Famous Hi-Life

www.henryshilife.com 408.295.5414

301 W St John Street at Julian, San Jose, CA 95110

4PM to 9PM, Daily

This is a legendary joint around San Jose. Everyone's eaten here, or at least they say they have. The ribs are why you come here. They're tasty and sloppy and worth the trip. The place gets crowded, is kinda dim, and you're not going to find a lot of over-the-top service. It's an SJ landmark, and if you wanna say you did the whole San Jose thing, you should take a trip. You'll have good BBQ in a setting that smacks of BBQ joint. Sadly, it's not wheelchair accessible.
Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

18 JC's Famous BBQ

408.246.2147

1080 Saratoga Ave. Suite 8, San Jose, CA 95128

Mon - Sat: 11AM - 10PM

This not a mistake: this place doesn't have a website. I called and asked if they did, and they told me they didn't. I was kinda shocked. What kind of restaurant in the heart of Silicon Valley doesn't have a website? The kind that puts out good beans, nice ribs and solid BBQ chicken. The beef ribs are huge and I can't say enough about how tasty and filling they are. I particularly enjoy the beans, which come with every order. It's a ways out, but it's worth the trip!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

British

19 Britannia Arms

britanniaarmsdowntown.com 408.278.1400

173 West Santa Clara St. between Santa Clara & Almaden, San Jose, CA 95113

11AM - 1:30AM, Daily

The Brit has a few locations around San Jose, and the Downtown version is probably the loudest. There's nothing fancy on the menu, the mushy peas are mushy, the Fish & Chips are decent, but mostly, it's a bar that draws sports fans and karaoke-types. You know Karaoke types, don't you? They're the ones who sing Wild Horses quietly to themselves through out the week only to butcher it when they get in front of the mic!

Rating - Meh / Cost - \$\$

Cajun/Creole

20 Gumbo Jumbo

www.gumbojumbo.net 408.29.GUMBO.

80 North Market Street between St. John & Santa Clara, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon - Fri: 5:30PM to 10PM; Sat: 3PM to Midnight; Sun: 3PM to 10PM

This is Gumbo country. Not all of San Jose, but the specific area defined by the walls of this restaurant. There's a solid menu, most of it is very good as I've heard it from folks. I've only had one thing: the Gumbo Jumbo Jambalaya. It's a combination of seafood, sausage and chicken, but that's not all. They then use it

to make a burrito. No, I'm not kidding. It's awesome.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

21 Poor House Bistro

www.poorhousebistro.com 408.292.5837

91 Autumn Street at San Fernando, San Jose, CA 95110

Mon - Thu: 11AM - 9PM; Fri-Sat: 11AM - 10PM; Sun: 10AM - 8PM

Chicken Po Boy. You call to me. Across time. Across space. I must have you again. The menu is large and full of wonderful po boys and Cajun faves. You can also get a Muffaletta, a rarity in this part of the country. But none of them fill the need for Chicken Po Boy. only the Po Boy is the Po Boy! There is also a Sunday brunch, from 10 AM until 2 PM.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Cambodian

22 Chez Sovan

408.287.7619

923 Oakland Rd. at Berryessa, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon-Fri: 11:30am-2pm

If you haven't had Cambodian food, you're missing out. Amok, Whitefish wrapped in Banana Leaves, is tasty and they do it very well at Chez Sovan. There are curries, there are wonderfully grilled meats and more coconut milk per square inch than anywhere else in the state.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Chinese

23 Bo Town

408.295.2125

409 South Second at San Salvador, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon-Sun. 11:00 AM - 10:00 PM

At first, I thought that this was a Bo Jackson-themed restaurant, which would have been cool. I mean, the guy was a two sport superstar! The food here is OK. Hot 'n Sour Soup is pretty good. Other than that, I've never been overly impressed. It would have been better with Bo Jackson memorabilia all over the walls. Or maybe Bo Derek. Yeah, just a continuous loop of her running to Bolero playing on a TV.

Rating - Meh / Cost - \$

24 Cathay Restaurant

<http://www.thecathayrestaurant.com.sg/>

408.453.8148

1339 North First St. at Gish, San Jose, CA 95112

4:30 PM-10PM, Daily

That may be a way to disguise the menu. It's simple, and it's one-note, but it's food and it's available. Sometimes, you only need food, and this is certainly matter which can be processed by your human digestive system.

Rating - Meh / Cost - \$\$

25 Chef P's

408.729.4373

22 N Jackson Ave. between Alum Rock and Luz, San Jose, CA 95116

10AM – 9:30PM, Daily

You gotta love a Chinese place with a menu printed with both Spanish and English. Beware: they use MSG!!! For those who are sensitive, stay away. For those who are not, you will likely find the flavors pretty interesting. I will say that the combinations they do are pretty smart and the prices are very affordable.

Rating - Meh / Cost - \$

26 China Chen

408.294.2525

400 South 3rd St. between William & San Salvadore, San Jose, CA 95112

9AM – 9PM, Daily

Noodle soup is the specialty of China Chen. Stick to the noodle soup. The Fried Egg Flour Cake has been praised by many, but I don't see it. The place has spotty service and it's pretty much a Hole-in-the-Wall, but you cannot go wrong with the Noodle Soup.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

27 China Garden

www.chinagardensj.com 408.293.3149

1890 West San Carlos St., San Jose, CA 95128

Mon - Sat: 11:30AM – 9:30PM; 4:30PM – 9:30PM

Well, this place looks like a Chinese place should look. The food isn't much to write home about, but the decor might help give it some of the flavor it's missing in many of the dishes. The Hot Pots are the best thing on the menu, and there are three inexpensive Combinations that are fiscally responsible.

Rating - Meh / Cost - \$

28 China Wok Restaurant

408.280.6688

9 North Market St., San Jose, CA 95113

11am – 9pm

The food is only so-so and the service is attentive, but unobtrusive.

There's not a lot to China Wok, but it's worth a trip if you're in the mood for Chinese.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

29 E & O Trading Company

www.eotrading.com 408.938.4100

96 South First Street at San Fernando St., San Jose, CA 95113

Mon - Thu: 11:30AM - 10:00PM; Fri: 11:30AM - 10:30PM; Sat: 5:00PM - 10:30PM;

Sun: 5:00PM - 9:00PM

Another of the Asian Fusion places where the food is really good. There's a fine Roasted Black Cod with Matcha Tea Rice that is easily the best thing you'll find on South First Street. The bar is really good with strong bartenders slinging awesome drinks. You can make a fine evening of drinks and their small plates. The menu is somewhat limited, but you won't find a bad dish on it! Good place to bring a group for a nice meal.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

30 Edna Ray Chinese Restaurant

www.ednaray.com 408.280.7738

1181 Lincoln Ave. between Merideth and Willow, San Jose, CA

11AM - 3PM and 5PM - 9:30PM daily

The soups here are fantastic and the selection is strong. If you've never had Hot & Sour Seafood Soup, this is the place to start your love affair with it. The rest of the menu is kinda limited. The food is well-prepared and tasty, but there's just not the selection you'd look for in a place like this. Try one of their Family Dinners if you brought a group.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$ (Family Dinners - \$\$)

31 Hunan Taste

www.hunantaste.net 408.295.1186

998 N 4th St. at Hedding, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon - Sat: 11AM-8:30PM

San Jose lacks a truly awesome Chinese joint Downtown. Hunan Taste is probably the best of the non-fusion types in this part of town. Start with the Onion Cake. It's really a nice start to a meal. Follow that up with the Hunan Spicy Lamb and you're on your way. The seafood menu is diverse and people rave about it. Also, can you think of another place that does Polish Sausage Hunan-style?

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

32 P.F. Chang's

www.pfchangs.com 408.961.5250

98 South 2nd St., San Jose, CA 95113

Mon-Fri: 11AM-11PM; Sat: 11AM-Midnight; Sun: 11AM - 10PM

This is one of those Asian Fusion chain restaurants, which are so popular these days. You take traditional Chinese, throw in some European and American

and there you have it. The Lettuce Wraps are the favourite of all who come to eat. The menu is solid, and they're gluten-free, which is nice for those who have serious gluten issues. Bring your group, because they're used to it. The menu ain't big, but they are very accommodating to special orders, and aren't we all just moments away from asking for no onions in whatever it is we want to eat?
Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

33 Taiwan Restaurant

www.taiwanrestaurantsj.com 408.289.8800

1306 Lincoln Avenue at Willow San Jose, CA 95125

11:30AM – 3PM and 5PM – 9PM Daily

The Party considers this a Chinese Restaurant, while the US thinks of it as an Independent Eatery. Either way, its teams keep winning the Little League World Series. This restaurant in Willow Glen has the kind of menu I like to see, with lots of stuff you're not likely to find at other Chinese places. The Eggplant over Noodles has a lot going for it. They've got Family Dinners which are a good deal and get you a sampling of their menu.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

34 Ume Chinese Restaurant

408.433.3333

2595 North First St. at Trimble, San Jose, CA 95131

Basic Chinese food.

01 print average menu

10 order average food

11 eat and find yourself bored

100 wonder why you came

101 goto 100

Rating - Meh / Cost - \$

Cuban

35 Habana Cuba

www.988cuba.com 408.988.2822

238 Race St. near Park, San Jose, CA 95126

Tue-Thu. 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM and 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM; Fri. 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM; 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM; Sat. 4:00 PM - 10:00 PM; Sun. 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Cuban food is a delightful way to remind yourself of 1/3 of The Godfather Part II. The Bistec Empanizado is delicious and traditional and would have gotten Fredo off the hook for conspiring with Johnny Ola and Hyman Roth. The sandwiches are very good, but really, everything here hinges on the Meats. They do some good meat.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

36 Los Cubanos Restaurant

www.loscubanosrestaurant.com 408.279.0134

22 North Almaden Ave. in San Pedro Square, San Jose, CA 95110

Mon. 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM; Tue-Thu. 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM and 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM;
Fri. 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM and 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM; Sat. 12:00 PM - 10:00 PM; Sun.
1:00 PM - 8:00 p.m

If you're used to authentic Cuban food, you will feel right at home. The wait staff acts like you're family and they deliver food that is exceptional. The Vaca Frita is great, with just enough garlic to make it a savory delight. There are Brazilian Entrees on the menu, including Virado a Paulista Tutu, which is a pork dish that piles deep and mystical flavors on top of each other. Some of the best food you'll find in San Jose.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Dutch Cuisine

Nothing to see here. Move along.

Ethiopian

37 Ghion Ethiopian Restaurant

408.298.8681

1015 Park Ave. at Lincoln, San Jose, CA 95126

This is the newest Ethiopian place in San Jose, and it's pretty authentic. Of all of them, this is also the cheapest. It's a favorite of the local Ethiopian population. I like the food, and the atmosphere is nice enough to bring me back. You can bring a group here and enjoy it together. Not great for vegetarians.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

38 The Lunch Box

408.287.3511

1876 West San Carlos St. at Irving, San Jose, CA 95128

9AM - 9PM Daily

The Lunch Box is a strange name for an Ethiopian place, but believe me, it's not like they watered down their food to match the name. I've been there six or seven times and I've been the only non-Ethiopian eating at the time at least three of those times. The Foul (fava bean dip, in a sense) is very good and there's a bunch of heat that hits you just right. Their Gored Gored is tasty, but not overly impressive.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

39 Mudai Ethiopian

www.mudairestaurant.com 408.292.2282

503 West San Carlos St. at Josefa, San Jose, CA 95126

11AM – 10PM Daily

Ethiopian food is delightful, and it's half about the process of eating. The food at Mudai is layered and powerful. The Gored Gored is good good. The Kitfo is the Ethiopian Steak Tartar and it can be done raw, rare or well-done. The entire menu packs a wallop and the spice is what you walk away from Mudai with. It gets a bit crowded, so come either before 6 or after 9. Not a place for vegetarians. Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

40 Rehoboth Ethiopian Cafe and Restaurant

<http://www.caferehoboth.com/>

408.947.1717

655 N 6th St. between Jackson and Taylor, San Jose, CA 95112

Tue-Thu: 11:30AM – 9PM; Fri: 11:30AM – 10PM; Sat: Noon to 10PM; Sunday: 1PM – 8PM

If you can afford it, spring for the Mesob. You will find that it's worth every one of the 5000 pennies it'll cost you for a fine family-style combination. The meat combination is also excellent, especially for those not as familiar with Ethiopian food as others. You may want to try the Yebeg Alichu Fitfit, which sounds like the name of a Jedi Knight, but is actually delightful lamb cooked with ginger, garlic and onion. Again, a great place for groups.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

French

41 Emile's Restaurant

www.emilesrestaurant.com 408 289 1960

545 S 2nd St. between William and Reed, San Jose, CA 95112

Tues-Thurs: 5:30PM to 10PM; Friday – Saturday: 5:30PM to 11PM

Emile's has a good reputation in San Jose, for good reason. They do good food. I've always enjoyed the Three-Course Prix Fixe meals they offer, complete with a glass of wine. It's always good and affordable for the quality you're getting. The duck a l'orange has gotten rave reviews for ages, and draws converts every night. It's open until 11 on the weekends, so head over for some late night eating. It's dressy and you might want to think about making reservations.

Review- Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

42 La Foret

www.laforetrestaurant.com 408.997.3458

21747 Bertram Rd., San Jose, CA 95120

Tue - Sat. 5:30 PM - 9:30 PM; Sun. 10:30 AM - 2:00 p.m and 5:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Fancy. That's the word you'll need to understand if you wanna get to know La Foret. It's fancy, serving fantastic, fancified food at extremely fancified prices. The tasting menus are the way to go, even if they do run very pricey. Try the wild game specials; they are always fantastic, as are the scallops. And the

Beef. And the Souffle. OK, just get anything and you should be happy! Reservations are strongly recommended, though I've gotten in without them before.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$+

43 Le Papillon

www.lapapillon.com 408.296.3730

410 Saratoga Avenue off 280, San Jose, CA 95129

Mon: 5PM - 9:30PM; Tues-Wed: 11AM - 2PM and 5PM - 9:30PM; Thurs - Fri:

11AM - 9:30PM; Sat - Sun: 5PM - 9:30PM

This is a dressy place. It's one of the few places I'm willing to put a tie on to get to enter, and if I'm willing to put on a tie, I'm also willing to shell out 115 bones to get the Tasting Menu and the 55 bucks for the wines that they tailor to go with each course. Get someone to take you there. That's really the second best way. First best: expense account. It also helps that each course is impressively flavored and that the most refined palates will find much to love and those of us who enjoy Hoagies and Fries might just have our eyes opened. Also one of the few places you'll find around San Jose that do venison. Reservations do help.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$+++

German

44 Gunther's Restaurant and Catering

www.guntherscatering.com 408.266.9022

1601 Meridian Ave. at Hamilton, San Jose, CA 95125

Monday-Thursday 7am-8pm, Friday 7am-9pm, Saturday 7am-2pm

Gunther's is a glorified lunch counter. That's not a bad thing, but it's something to remember. The food tends to be pretty good, the meatloaf being the highlight on the menu, but you might always want to try their burgers, wurst or cold cuts. The strudle is exceptional. It's a nice little Mom and Pop place that is an enjoyable, highly casual meal.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

45 Harry's Hofbrau

www.harryshofbrau.com/ 408.243.0434

390 Saratoga Ave. at Steven's Creek, San Jose, CA 95129

11AM - 9PM Daily

Harry's is a small chain native to the Bay Area that features good-sized portions of roast meats and the fixin's that go along with 'em. For forty years, this place has been serving up fine sandwiches and sliced meat plates. I highly recommend the Reuben, or the Roast Beef. You really can't go too wrong here. ... unless you're a vegetarian. They've got themselves a bar in there, too!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

SJ Attractions Nearby with Food Available!

**Camera 12 Theatres- 201
South Second Street featuring
Movie Food!**

**History San Jose- 1650
Senter Road featuring
The Museum Cafe in
O-Brien's Candy Shop.
www.historysanjose.org**

**San Jose Museum of Art-
110 South Market Street,
San Jose. Fine Art Mu-
seum featuring San Jose
Museum of Art Cafe Too!
www.sjmusart.org**

**The Tech Museum of In-
novation, 201 South Market
Street featuring The Cafe.
www.thetech.org**

**The Winchester Mystery
House- 525 South Win-
chester Blvd. featuring
Sarah's Cafe.
winchestermysteryhouse.com**

46 Teske's Germania Restaurant, Bar and Beer Garden

www.teskes-germania.com
408.292.0291

255 N. 1st St. between Julian and St.
James, San Jose, CA 95113

Tue - Fri: 11AM - 2PM and 5PM - 9:
30PM; Sat: 5PM - 9:30PM

The atmosphere, she is delightful. The beer? Wonderful, and reasonably priced, for the most part. The food? Solid, if not spectacular. The jagerschnitzel with Spatzle is probably the best I've had outside of Wisconsin, and Rindsrolade is very tasty. You get a lot with your entree, soup, salad and dessert, and for ten bucks extra, you get an extra and two can split an entree. And the portions are big enough that you can easily make that a full meal for two with leftovers.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Greek

47 The Castle Greek Cafe

408.456.0346

3730 North 1st Street Suite 150 at
Tasman, San Jose, CA 95134

This place gets crowded at lunch. I'm talking opening night of Twilight at a cinema next to a Girl's Middle School crowded. The weird thing is they use ranch dressing instead of tziki in some of their wraps, which is odd, but actually pretty tasty. Not a place to bring groups, but it's a great place for a fast meal.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

48 City Falafel

408.947.8789

273 E. San Fernando St., San Jose, CA
95112

Mon - Thu: 10AM - 10PM, Fri: 10AM - 4PM

Greek food has a history of small-time places sweltering away like the dusty memory of a John Belushi Saturday Night Live sketch. That's not the case with City Falafel, which is trying to be a serious fast food chain serving Greek food. The food tastes good, not too many frills, which is nice, and the Chicken Shawarma is pretty great.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

49 The Pita Pit

www.getpitas.com 408.694.3200

151 S. Second Street, Suite 185 between San Fernando and San Carlos, San Jose, CA 95113

Hours Mon - Wed. 9:30 AM - 12:00 AM, Thu - Fri. 9:30 AM - 3:00 AM, Sat. 11:00 AM - 3:00 AM, Sun. 11:00 AM - 12:00 AM

Let no man stand in the way of your Pita Enjoyment. Why should time prevent you from going somewhere and buying a pita to eat. Yes, you can get a pita at 2:30 in the morning, after you've closed out The Cinnebar or had your last round at Billy Berk's. You can head over, get a decent pita and that's that. Do not accept that you cannot both close out a bar and get an exceptional pita! Both are possible! Not a place to bring a group though, and it's very good for vegetarians.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

50 Taza Bistro

tazabistro.com 408.292.8292

1 N. First St., San Jose, CA 95106

Prices are good. Food's good. The atmosphere's nice. What else do you need to know? I mean, is it that important that I tell you that the Falafel Supremo is filling and managed to make me, against 33 years of conditioning, enjoy falafel? Is it significant that that the Pita Pizza is my favorite dish in the North Side of Downtown? Am I required to tell you that the Mediterranean Platter is cheap and a wonderful sampler of this place? Well, am I!!!!!!?

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$

Hawaiian

51 Hawaiian Drive Inn

www.hawjiandriveinn.com/ 408.275.9888

304 E. Santa Clara St., Suite B at 7th, San Jose, CA 95113

7:00AM - 9:00PM, Daily

Though slightly out of the way out by the airport, this is a fine place to grab a bite. It's also completely unfair that I have to review it now, while I'm sitting at work and unable to get out there for their Loco Moco (Hamburger Steak with Eggs and Gravy) or the fantastically grease-o-rific BBQ Mix Plate. The BBQ Pork Saimin is also better than most at sit-down Hawaiian joints.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

52 Hukilau

www.dahukilau.com 408.279.4888

230 Jackson St. between 5th & 6th, San Jose, CA 95112

Tue - Wed. 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM and 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM, Thu-Fri. 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM, and 5:00 PM - 11:00 PM, Sat. 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM - 11:00 PM, Sun. 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Located in the heart of San Jose's historic Japantown, this is the kind of Hawaiian place that you think of when you think "Hey, I wonder if there are any Tiki Bar-Family Restaurant Hybrids out there." This is it, that unholy monster created by slamming Trader Vic's into an Chili's. The reasons to go here are decent drinks made by very nice bartenders, an excellent Hawaiian Burrito and the Kalua Pork Cheese Fries are magnificent in the fact that they sound disturbing yet turn out to be somewhat magical. Bring a group, though you might wanna call ahead.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Indian

53 Silk Road Bistro

408.286.3969

87 E. San Fernando St. between 2nd and 3rd, San Jose, CA 95113

I'm not the biggest fan of Indian Food, so I have, in a strangely appropriate form of revenge, out-sourced my reviews of Indian restaurants to my buddy Neil Hopkins, an ex-pat Brit.

Chris, this place is highly uneven. It's almost two different restaurants if you come during the week or the weekend. They've got a lot more during the week. I like the saag paneer, spinach with cheese, and the chicken tikka is a lot like they do it in London. The samosas are also very good. The weekend is strange, less impressive.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

54 Tandoori Oven

www.thetandoorioven.com 408.292.7222

150 South First St. between San Fernando and San Carlos, San Jose, CA 95113

11:30AM - 9:30PM, Daily

This is the one Indian restaurant in the world that I can stand, though I'll let Neil, who took me there the first time, have a couple of words-

That's the place I take my Indian friends when they visit.

That should say something. The Seekh Kabob is very tasty, but the king here is the Lamb Biryani. It is only version of the dish I've ever been able to tolerate. It's got lovely spice and delicious flavor. It's incredibly close to the Fairmont, but does crowd up quite a bit around noon and five. Great for groups, vegetarians and just about everyone.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Italian

55 Antonella Ristorante

www.antonellasristorante.com 408.279.4922

1701 Park Ave. at Naglee, San Jose, CA 95126

Mon - Fri: 11:00 AM - 9:00 PM; Sat - Sun: 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM and 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM

If you're walking down the street and find yourself humming Unchained Melody, and you happen to be near Antonella's, you're in luck because you can't eat there without that song fitting your mood. The food matches it perfectly, and the ambiance too! It's good food, not over the top, but you can practically hear the violins in the background as you're enjoying your Chicken Marsala.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

56 Bella Mia

www.bellamia.com 408 280 1993

58 South First St. between Santa Clara and San Fernando, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon - Thu: 11:30AM - 9PM; Fri: 11:30AM - 10PM; Sat: 4PM - 10PM; Sun: 4:30PM - 8PM

It's not too pricey, but the tab gets fat quickly because of all the great stuff. The Cioppino is the best thing on the menu (and of all the places on First street, it's among the best of all dishes!) and they mix seafood with pasta very nicely. Lunch is good, dinner is better. A decent place for a bunch of folks to come as a group.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

57 Il Fornaio

ilfornaio.com 408.271.3366

302 South Market St. in the Saint Claire, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon - Thu: 7AM - 10:30AM and 11:30AM - 11PM; Fri: 7AM - 10:30AM and 11:30AM - Midnight; Sat: 8AM-Midnight; Sunday 8AM - 11PM.

She was sitting at a table at the window, alone, enjoying the Turtei con Aragosta where the lobster was delightfully dense and fluffy and the leeks added a note that brightened everything. She saw him walking by, alone, carrying a briefcase and staying close to the building, hiding from the mid-day October sun. She watched him walk by, enjoying her choice from their extensive wine list and noticing the others around with their pastas and pizzas, all smiling at the quality of food, the exceptional service, and the attention paid to the design of the restaurant itself. She wondered what he was thinking and why she cared. The delivery and first bite of the delicious zabaione washed the image of the lone man with his briefcase away.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

58 La Pastaia Ristorante

www.lapastia.com 408.286.8686

Hotel De Anza, 233 West Santa Clara St., San Jose, CA 95113

Mon-Thu: 11AM - 9PM; Fri: 11AM - 10PM; Sat: Noon - 10PM; Sunday: Noon - 9PM

I love the hotel De Anza, which is where La Pastaia lives. The service is exceptional, though they do find themselves swamped once in a while and that can make waits slightly longer than you'd like. The carpaccio is delicious with lovely fried shallots as a marvelous counter-point. I'm not a big fan of their pizzas, but the pasta is exceptionally good. Of course, you should try their desserts. The chocolate crême brulee is really nice take on a traditional brulle and I'd take it over almost any other I've had!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

59 Original Joe's

www.originaljoes.com 408.292.7030

301 South First St. at Market, San Jose, CA 95113

11AM-1AM Daily

How many meals have I enjoyed nestled in the comfy, high-backed booths of Original Joe's? At least once a week for a couple of years I'd put myself into one of those seats and enjoy an Italian meal that was neither ideal nor awful. It's dependably average, though you'll get a miracle once in a while. The service here is the real treat. It's like those restaurants you see in movies made in the 1990s about the 1950s! Not the best choice for vegetarians.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

60 Paolo's Restaurant

www.paolos.com

333 W. San Carlos St. just N of 87, Suite 150, San Jose, CA 95110

Mon - Fri: 7:30 AM - 10:00 PM, Sat: 5:30 PM - 10:00 PM

This place has some decent food, and they've been around in one form or another for 50 years. The Prawns in White Wine Sauce I had the last time I was there was fantastic. I mean truly fantastic. It was as if it'd been designed to give me a sense of somewhere else that never existed, could never exist, but for that moment, in the flavors that mingled in my mouth, I was there. I came back to reality when I got the check. A slightly harsh landing, indeed. The food is good enough that it will almost certainly impress any date/client. Reservations can be helpful, especially on the weekends.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

61 Siena Bistro

www.sienabistro.com 408.271.0837

1359 Lincoln Ave. at Minnesota, San Jose, CA 95125

Tue - Thu: 11:30AM - 2:30PM and 5PM - 9PM, Fri: 11:30AM - 2:30PM and 5PM - 10PM, Sat - Sun: 5PM - 10PM

Siena is delightful, though poorly sound designed. I never thought I'd say that about a restaurant. Poorly sound designed. It's not easy to have a good long conversation when it gets busy. That said, it's got really good food. I loved the scallops salad, which made me happy. The Braised Beef Ribs were good too. High-priced food, but very tasty. Friday and Saturday are good nights for reservations. Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

62 Vin Santo Ristorante

www.vin-santo.com 408.920.2508

1346 Lincoln Ave. at Minnesota, San Jose, CA 95125

Tuesday: 5pm-10pm; Wednesday-Fri: 11:30am-2pm and 5pm-10pm; Saturday: 5pm-11pm, Sunday: 5pm-8pm

Vin Santo is a lovely place to go for seafood. Cioppino, whole seabass, Cernia Mediterranea and a lovely swordfish are all highlights. The wine list here is delightful. The service is good, better for dinner than for lunch, honestly, but the prices are slightly high for what you get. They've got a good wine list and know how to recommend for your meal. That's a big deal.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

Japanese

63 Godzilla Express

www.godzillaexpress.com 408.297.0568

130 East Santa Clara St., San Jose, CA 95113

Mon - Sat: 11AM - 9:30PM

Ok, this should be easy. There are hundreds of Godzilla jokes to be made. I've seen every Godzilla movie, so a gag on Toho shouldn't be difficult. I mean, the Godzilla Roll they have here is wonderful, and there should be something there. Something funny... Maybe I could make a joke about the Ramen with Tonkatsu., which I have 3 out of 4 visits here. No, doesn't fit the theme. Maybe I should note that the place is tasty, can get quite crowded and loud. Good for groups, maybe those who are fleeing the monsters that are attackign the city? Man, why isn't a joke coming to me?

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

64 Gombei Japanese Restaurant

408.279.4311

193 Jackson St. between 4th and 5th, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon - Sat: 11:30AM - 2:30PM and 5PM - 9:30PM

Gombei is a fairly significant part of San Jose's Japantown. The place is old school: cash only and no website. The food is good, but don't go here looking for traditional sushi. The Hotpots are good enough to call you the few miles out of downtown into Japantown.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

Bring You Friends: Good Eats for Groups

Billy Berk's - 99 South First St.

The Blue Chip - 325 South First St.

Britannia Arms - 173 West Santa Clara St.

House of Siam - 151 South Second St.

Hukilau - 230 Jackson St.

Il Fornaio - 302 South Market St.

Kazoo Restaurant - 250 East Jackson St.

Menara Moroccan Restaurant - 41 East Gish Rd.

Naglee Park Garage - 505 East San Carlos Blvd.

P.F. Chang's- 98 South Second St.

Pizz'a Chicago - 155 West San Fernando St.

Red Sea Restaurant - 684 North First St.

Sonoma Chicken Coop - 31 North Market St.

Tandoori Oven - 150 South First St.

65 Kaita Restaurant

408.287.5551

215 Jackson St. between 5th and 6th, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon - Sat: 11:30AM - 2PM and 5PM - 9:30PM

I was introduced to real, traditional sushi at Kaita. You don't go to Kaita for the complex rolls that so many places have started to specialize in, but you go for very fresh fish rolled expertly and presented simply. The gyoza's very tasty and the tempura's a solid choice.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

66 Kazoo Restaurant

408.288.9611

250 Jackson St. at 6th, San Jose, CA CA 95112

Mon - Thu: 11:30AM - 2PM and 5PM - 9:30PM; Fri: 11:30AM - 2PM and 5PM - 10PM; Sat: Noon to 2PM and 5PM - 9:30PM; Sun: Noon to 2PM and 5PM - 9pm

This place is beloved. It's like El Santo in Mexico or Jerry Lewis in France. Kazoo comes as close as you can come to a Japanese restaurant being sainted. It's a lot of fun, and the sushi is spectacular in that they definitely try and put on something of a show, and by that measure, the service can be theatrically rude. Still, it's a lot of fun and the San Jose Roll alone makes the place dine-worthy.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

67 Minato Japanese Restaurant

www.japantownsanjose.org/rest8.html

408.998.9711

617 North 6th St. near Jackson, San Jose, CA 95112

Tues -Thu: 11:30AM-1:30PM and 5PM - 8:30PM; Fri - Sat: 11:30AM - 1:30PM

and 5PM - 9PM

OK, I can't do justice to this place. I've been going here for years. The Teriyaki Spareribs are wonderful, and they call them World Famous, but do not look over the Katsu Curry, which is very tasty. It gets busy, but they tend to have great service. Try the Minato Dinner Box is a very good deal and offers most of the best things of the restaurant.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

68 Tsugaru Japanese Restaurant

408.275.1493

224 Jackson St. between 5th and 6th, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon - Fri: 11:30AM - 2PM and 5PM - 9PM; Sat: 5PM - 9PM

Japantown rolls along, with another good sushi place. Tsugaru gets overlooked, which is a shame because of the quality of their food. The prices are strange, as some prices are high and some very reasonable, but the service is among the best I've had in all of Japantown.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

69 Sushi Zen

408.453.1070

1305 N 1st St. at 880, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon - Fri: 11:30 AM - 2:30 PM and 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM; Sat: 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM

I really can't review this place as I still haven't managed to read the entire roll menu. I mean, it's huge. We're talking George R.R. Martin writing in the style of JRR Tolkien with the brevity of JK Rowling-type long! Spider Fantasy Roll? Does anyone really have fantasies about spiders? Ecstasy Roll? Does it come with glow stick and throbbing techno beats? Everything I've heard about this place says that the rolls are fantastic, and the rolls that I've had have been great. You could eat five different rolls every day and not have gone through the whole menu in a year!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

Korean

70 Omogari Korean Restaurant

Omogari.biz 408.288.8134

154 East Jackson St. at 4th, San Jose, CA 95112

11:30AM-9:30PM, Daily

There aren't a lot of Korean places around, which is a shame for those of us who love a good bi-bim-bop or have a hankerin' for kimchi. This is a pretty good place. The best thing on the menu might be the chap chae, though there's nothing bad on the menu that I've found.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Latin American

71 Nazca Peruvian Cuisine

nazcaperuviancuisine.com

167 West San Fernando Street between Almaden and San Pedro, San Jose, CA 95113

408 295 2828

Tue - Wed 11AM - 3PM and 5PM - 9PM; Thu - Sat 11AM - 3PM and 5PM to 10PM

Alas, no capybara or guinea pig on the menu, but what you will find is some of the most unique and delicious food you'll find in San Jose. It's tasty seafood and wonderful meat. The ceviche is especially good, but the real highlight is the Pastel de Choclo appetizer which features corn bread stuffing with ground meat, raisins and onions. I've never had anything like it and once started out a meal with two orders of it. It's that amazing!

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

Mediterranean

72 Opa!

www.opawillowglen.com 408 998 8704

1384 Lincoln Ave. at Minnesota, San Jose, CA 95125

11AM - 11PM, Daily

I love a restaurant that has punctuation included in the name. Opa! It reminds me of that episode of *Three's A Crowd* where the Greek family comes to Jack Tripper's new restaurant and destroy all the dishes. The dips and spreads here are worth of an exclamation point, while the Pork Souvlaki Pita is worthy of !!! If you like dessert, try the fruit souvlaki which is skewered fruit with nutella, raspberry and caramel. It's delicious.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$

Mexican

73 Bakery Mexico No. 2

408.920.2518

87 East Santa Clara St. near 3rd, San Jose, CA 95113

5AM - 3PM

This place is a little gem. The Torta Cubana is the highlight. It's a semi-traditional cuban sandwich, but it's also amazingly awesome sauce. I mean really, it's great. I've enjoyed it several times and it plays wonderfully on the palate. The Tortas are big and tasty, and the bread is exceptional. Plus, they're open late for the nighthawks among us. It's wheelchair accessible, but can be difficult to navigate tables.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

74 La Victoria Taqueria

www.lavicsj.com 408.298.5335

140 East San Carlos St. between 3rd and 4th, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon - Fri: 7:00 AM - Midnight; Sat: 9:00 AM - 12:00 AM ; Sun: 7:00 AM - 12:00 AM

La Victoria, better known as La Vic, is the college eatery to end all college eateries. The food is OK, though it's probably been genetically enhanced so that San Jose State students must eat it at least once a week. The quesadillas are good, and the carnitas are very tasty, if a bit too greasy. In fact, you can say that about almost everything in this place. The sauce, available on every table in the joint, is pretty magnificent! It's a walk-up Victorian, so it's not wheelchair accessible.

Rating - Meh / Cost - \$

75 Pedro's Restaurant -y- Cantina

www.pedrosrestaurants.com

3935 Freedom Circle at Great Maerica Parkway, Santa Clara, CA 95054

408.496.6777

Hours- Mon - Sat: 11AM - 9PM; Sun: 10AM - 9PM

This is a bit further out than most of the places I've written up, but Pedro's is a classic joint where hundreds of folks go everyday. Luckily, it's a great place for groups and there's seldom a long wait for anything. The food is good, not spectacular, but the building is a faux hacienda with a lovely internal courtyard that looks like the kind of place where a gunfight should break out. The Sunday Champagne brunch buffet is fantastic, and there are Mariachis roaming around while you eat. To me, that makes the trip worth it!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$ (\$\$\$ for the Sunday Champagne Brunch)

76 Taqueria El Abuelo

408.293.4470

1005 Lincoln Ave. between 280 and Willow, San Jose, CA 95125

8AM - 11PM, Daily

There is nothing better than sitting down with a nice plate of tacos and going to town. That said, Taqueria El Abuelo isn't the best of places to do just that. It's decent, but it's not great. The portions are nice, the prices are right and you'll be satisfied, though not too much more than that.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

77 Taqueria San Jose

235 East Santa Clara St. near 6th, San Jose, CA 95109

8:30AM - 10PM Daily

This is the kind of Taqueria that you're friends who are always saying how much better real Taquerias are than the Taco Bell you dragged them to are talking about. Go and get an horchata and a burrito. They wrap their burritos

perfectly, which is the immediate sign of a good taqueria. The nachos are very good too, and I've even done Carne Asada Fries, which is nachos replacing the chips with fries, or as the Brits call them, chips.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Middle Eastern

78 Gulzaar Halaal Restaurant & Bakery

www.gulzaar.net 408.292.2786

1880 West San Carlos St. between Bascom and Leigh, San Jose, CA 95128

Mon - Thu: 10:30AM - 8PM; Sat and Sun: 11:30AM - 7:30 PM

There's almost nothing that's as satisfying as Gulzaar. I enjoy the lovely samosas, but the highlight here is the kebab. It does not get any better than that. The service is also amazing. The waitstaff must be the nicest people I've ever met. Seriously, I'm providing for them in my will.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

79 Casablanco's Café

www.casablanco'scafe.com 408.993.8636

1185 Lincoln Ave at Willow, San Jose, CA 95125

Mon - Sat: 10AM - 9:30PM; Sun: 10AM - 3PM

Please, only use cash here. That's the warning I must give or you'll find me after you've gone, enjoyed some of their marvelous gyros and the massively flavorful hummus but were then greeted with the owner who said 'yes, I accept debit, but it's hard' and then you complain that he was a big meany. I'm just putting it out there. The food is very good, though the décor is stark and the service can be a bit surly, as I said. The food is delightful. Get it to go, and PAY IN CASH!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$

80 Menara Moroccan Restaurant

www.menara41.com 408.453.1983

41 Gish Rd. near 1st, San Jose, CA 95112

6PM-10PM Daily

You're in the mood for dinner and a show. You yearn for something exotic. Menara might be the place for you. The food is decent, the place looks exotic, and the bellydancers are blast. The drinks are strong, the food is pretty good, especially the Honey Lamb, the atmosphere is exceptional, but most of all, it's a lot of fun. It's a great place for a group of friends to hang out, but call ahead and make sure you have a designated driver!

Rating - Nom (though it's FUN FUN FUN!) / Cost - \$\$\$+

81 Morocco's

www.moroccosrestaurant.com 408.998.1509

86 N. Market Street at St. John, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon: 11:00 AM - 9:30 PM; Tue - Fri: 11:00 AM - 11:00 PM ; Sat - Sun: 5:00 PM - 11:00 PM

The various tagines they serve at Morocco's aren't bad, they're the best things on the menu, probably. I just never leave satisfied and find my mind wandering about all sorts of things as my stomach asks for some more. What will I do without the twenty bucks I just spent to get myself only half-full? The lunch menu is cheaper and they have this special for about 6 bucks that allows you to choose three items from their lunch menu. It's a deal and it's OK. Good for groups, wonderful for couples on a date.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$ (\$ for the Lunch Special)

Pizza

82 La Nostra Pizza Ristorante

www.lanostrapizza.com 408 995 0924

80 South First St., San Jose, CA 95173

Mon - Thu: 9AM to 10:30PM; Fri - Sat: 9AM - Midnight

Pizza is good, but it's not great. It's thin-style New York pizza, though it's not nearly New York enough for the tastes of someone who really enjoys New York style pizza... and there is no other type of pizza! Still, the sandwiches are decent enough and it's an OK to go for lunch. Just don't expect much.

Rating - Meh / Cost - \$\$

83 Nick's Pizza and Italian Restaurant

www.nickspizzaitalian.com 408.286.9710

354 East Santa Clara St. near 6th, San Jose, CA 95113

Nick's is a tasty joint where you can get a really good pizza and some decent pasta at a price that's not too bad. I love the Chicken Parm in a way that might be unhealthy. I have a photo of it that hangs in my bedroom. While taking off from San Jose Airport, I look wistfully out the window towards Downtown thinking "Good-bye, Nick's, I shall return to you soon."

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

84 Pizz'a Chicago

www.pizzachicago.com 408.283.9400

155 West San Fernando St. at San Pedro

San Jose, CA 95113

11am-9pm Daily

Chicago-style pizza. That's the best kind of pizza. Remember what I said about New York Pizza? Well, forget it! The best things that you'll find on the menu are the calzone. They are delicious and the choose-your-own style is the way to go. The pizzas are big and awesomely filling. Do not expect to go home without a take-home box. It can get pretty busy, especially at lunch, but it's worth a visit. The place is good for groups, but don't expect to be in and out fast. They make it

when you order it!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Seafood

86 McCormick & Schmick's

www.mccormickandschmick.com

408.283.7200

170 South Market St. in the Fairlornmt Hotel, San Jose, CA 95113

Sun - Thu: 11:30AM - 11PM; Fri - Sat: 11:30AM - Midnight

This is a chain of high end seafood places, but it has some drawbacks. It's expensive for what you get, and the food ranges from very tasty to pretty bland, but if they have the mussels, get them and love them. The curry sauce they use is remarkable. The rest of the food's pretty decent, but it won't knock your socks off.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

87 Scott's Seafood

www.scottsseafoods.com

408.971.1700

185 Park Avenue. near Almaden, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon-Fri: 11:30AM - 9PM; Sat: 5pm - 9PM; Sun: 4:30-8PM

The big deal about Scott's is the view. It's on the sixth floor of 185 Park Avenue, so you get a lovely view. I've never had a great experience at Scott's. The service is decent, though the waits can be long for food. While there are things on the menu that folks I know rave about (the Cioppino, the Blackened Snapper, the Almond Crusted Sea Bass), I've always found the food lacking in flavor. It high-class fancified, and you should think about reservations.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

SJ Bars & Lounges

Bamboo 7- 162 Jackson Street (featuring Karaoke)

Cinnabar-69 East San Fernando Street (with Pabst on Tap!)

The Caravan- 98 South Almaden Ave.

Dive Bar- 78 East Santa Clara Street (featuring Tuesday Night Beer Pong!)

Fahrenheit Ultra Lounge- 99 East San Fernando

Goza Hookah Lounge- 18 North First Street

The Hedley Club in the Hotel DeAnza- 233 West Santa Clara Street.

O'Flaherty's Irish Pub- 25 North San Pedro Street

Smoke Tiki Lounge- 152 Post Street

South First Billiards- 420 South First Street

Tanq- 301 South Market Street

Toons Nightclub- 52 East Santa Clara Street

Spanish/Tapas

88 Picasso's Tapas Restaurant

www.picassostapas.com 408.298.4400

62 West Santa Clara St. between 2st and Market, San Jose, CA 95113
408 298 4400

Lunch- Tuesday to Friday- 11:30am to 2pm; Dinner 5:30pm to 10pm 7 Days a Week

I brought a six year old here. Some would say that bringing a kid to a Tapas bar would be a bad idea, but she loved it. I did too. She enjoyed the scallops and we both dug into the paella hard and fast. I love the tapas, and it's a decent place to take a date, as long as you both don't mind a strong hit of garlic.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

Thai Cuisine

89 Fantazia Thai Cuisine

408.294.8424

1100 North First St. just south of 880, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon-Fri: 11am-3pm, 5pm-10pm; Saturday-Sunday: 11am-10pm

The Appetizer Combo was remarkable the last time I got it to go. The Corn Cakes are a gift. The Prawns in Tapioca Wrappers manage to make me forget my troubles, while the Green Curry is tasty, and the Garlic Chicken makes me happy. All in all, it's the kind of place that'll make you glad you took the time.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$

90 Hanuman Thai Cuisine

www.hunumanthaicuisine.com 408.286.2482

1 E San Fernando St. at 1st, San Jose, CA 95113

Sun - Wed: 11AM-10PM; Thu - Sat: 11AM - 11PM;

Tom Ka Gai is a delicious soup with chicken in coconut milk and the Roast Duck Curry was the favorite of everyone at the table. It really was something to behold. The staff is really nice, some of the nicest folks you'll ever meet. Sadly, Hanuman is not wheelchair accessible.

Rating - Nom Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

91 House of Siam

www.houseofsiamsanjose.com 408.295.3397

151 South 2nd St. near San Fernando, San Jose, CA 95113

Mon - Fri: Noon to 3PM and 5PM to 10PM; Sat - Sun: Noon to 10PM

House of Siam is a bit of a legendary place for Thai food. The ghosts of hundreds of high school prom dates linger here with the delightful scents of Angry Prawns, Pineapple Fried Rice and Sticky Rice with Mango. They do a lovely Thai Iced Tea, and there's a traditional Thai seating section is especially good for

groups. And yes, one of those lingering prom dates was mine.
Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$ for Lunch, \$\$\$ for Dinner

Vietnamese

92 Bihn Mihn Restaurant

408.297.9868

1006 East Santa Clara St. near 21st, San Jose, CA 95116

Mon - Sat. 10:00 AM - 9:00 PM; Sun. 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Surprisingly, there ain't a lot of places to get goat in San Jose. Bihn Mihn is one of the places you can get it, and of all the places, it has the best goat you'll find. You'll also locate some lovely rabbit dishes and the entire atmosphere is very nice, better than most of the Vietnamese joints you'll find in town. Lunch is the most popular meal, but you'll discover that goat is best enjoyed in the evening. Also, it's not a place for those who don't enjoy the meat class of foods. It can be difficult navigating the tables at Binh Minh with a wheelchair.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$\$

93 Dalat Restaurant

408.294.6989

408 East William St. between 9th and 10th, San Jose, CA 95112

7AM - 8PM, Daily

Dalat is ancient when it comes to American Vietnamese restaurants. It was founded in the 1970s and has gained a loyal following. The Glass Noodles (rice vermicelli) is just about the best you'll ever find. The place ain't immaculate, but you'll be well taken care of while you're dining on delicious Vietnamese food. Not at all bad for groups.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$

94 Pho Lan Noodle House

408.298.5168

255 East Santa Clara St. at 6th, San Jose, CA 95113

9AM - 9PM

Pho is wonderful noodle soup and you're not going to find better Pho in all of San Jose. Pho Lan's noodles are great, and the broth, oh the broth!, has a deep flavor that mingles with the noodles as they soak in it. If you've never had pho, watch the folks around you for the best way to enjoy this magical combination of broth, noodles and add-ons. Me? I just slurp 'em up!

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$

95 Tofoo Com Chay

www.tofoocomchay.com 408.286.6335

388 East Santa Clara street near 9th, San Jose, CA 95113

408 286 6335

Monday-Friday: 9am-9pm; Saturday: 10am-6pm

A fully vegetarian restaurant, Tofoo Com Chay isn't perfect, but even without meat to make it great, it's still a decent place to stop for some fine food. The taste of their tofu is pretty darn good, and the tofu drumsticks are wonderful. I appreciate the service more than anything. They are super-nice. and I'm planning on providing for them in my will.

Rating - Nom Nom / Cost - \$\$

96 Vung Tau Restaurant

www.Vungtaurestaurant.com 408.288.9055

535 East Santa Clara St. near 12th, San Jose, CA 95112

Mon - Thu. 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM, 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM; Fri - Sun. 10:00 AM - 9:00 PM

Vung Tau Restaurant is the kind of place that I tend to frequent and no one understands why. It's got a lovely little space, the food is delicious and I can pack a book along, read a dozen or so pages while enjoying the Beef-wrapped onions plate. It's got good service and the prices, while high for a Pho place, isn't bad overall.

Rating - Nom / Cost - \$\$

The Best of Santa Clara

Introduced by Ed Stokke

I'm reviewing the special restaurants of Santa Clara: San Jose's little neighbor to the left. By special, I mean great food value and, with a few exceptions, no large chains.

Andy's BBQ

408.249.8158

2367 El Camino Real Santa Clara, CA
Mon-Thu: 11 AM - 9; Fri: 11 AM - 10; Sat
3PM - 10PM; Sun: 3PM - 9PM

When Andy's was a rustic dive in Campbell it was my favorite BBQ joint. Then Andy's went out of business. It has since been reinvented in Santa Clara in nice new surroundings. The food is still special but not as special as it once was.

Birk's

www.birksrestaurant.com
408.980.6400

3955 Freedom Cir., Santa Clara, CA
Lunch Mon - Fri: 11:15 AM to 2:30 PM;
Dinner: Mon - Sat: 5:00 PM-10:00 PM

This fine dining establishment serves Silicon Valleys' elite on weekdays and is usually loud and packed. However, on weekends this is a quiet and romantic getaway. The menu is surf and turf, the food is excellent, and the clam chowder is featured everyday of the week. Some of the best clam chowder I have tasted and I love clam chowder.

Country Inn Café

408.244.6267

2008 El Camino Real Santa Clara, CA
Mon - Fri: 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM; Sat: 7:
00 AM to 9:00 PM; Sun: 7:00 AM to 8:
00 PM

They serve American food

Downtown SJ Amenities

Comedy Clubs

Comedysportz
288 South 2nd Street
San Jose, CA 95113
(408) 224-0842

The Improv
62 S. Second Street
San Jose, CA 95113
(408) 280-7475

Copies/Shipping

FedEx Kinko's Office Print & Ship
Center
93 East San Carlos St.
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 295-4336

Mon - Fri 7:30am - 9:00pm
Sat 10:00am - 6:00pm
Sun 12:00pm to 6:00pm

FedEx Kinko's Office Print & Ship
Center
975 The Alameda, Suite 40
San Jose, CA 95126
(408) 971-2409

Mon - Fri 7:30am - 9:00pm
Sat 10:00am - 6:00pm
Sun 12:00pm to 6:00pm

Postal Annex

123 East San Carlos St.
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 975-0893

Mon - Fri: 9:30 am - 6:30 pm
Sat: 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Drug Stores

Downtown Pharmacy
60 N 13th Street Suite A
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 294-2757

Leiter's Pharmacy
1700 Park Avenue . Suite 30
San Jose, California 95126
(408) 292-6772
Mon-Fri: 9:00am-6:30pm
Sat: 9:00am – 6:00pm

Walgreen's
5 S. 1st Street
San Jose, CA 95113
(408) 283-0835
Mon-Fri: 7:00am – 9:00pm
Sat: 8:00am – 9:00pm
Sun: 9:00am – 9:00pm

Grocery Stores

The Market by Safeway
100 S. 2nd Street
San Jose, CA 95113
(408) 292-4010
6:00am – 11pm Every day

Safeway
1300 W. San Carlos
San Jose, CA 95126
(408) 882 – 0999
Open 24 hours, 7 days a week

Zanotto's
38 South Second Street
San Jose, CA 95113
(408) 977 – 1333
Mon – Fri: 7:00am – 9:00pm
Sat – Sun: 8:00am – 8:00pm

for breakfast lunch and dinner. This is not health food. This restaurant serves the real deal, large portions of great food. Here is a contender for the best breakfast in Santa Clara.

Fish Market

www.thefishmarket.com 408.246.3474
3775 El Camino Real Santa Clara, CA
Lunch Mon - Sat: 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM; Sun: Noon to 4:00 PM; Dinner Sun - Thu: 4:00 PM-9:30 PM; Fri - Sat: 4:00 PM - 10:00 PM

This is my old favorite fine dining establishment. While seafood is the house specialty, there are other options. This is my entrant in the "Best Oysters Rockefeller on the West coast" contest, a private contest I have been judging for years.

Jaoa's

57 Washington St. Santa Clara, CA (408) 244-1299
Tue - Wed: 7:30 AM - 1:30 PM; Thu - Sat: 7:30 AM - 9:00 PM; Sun.: 7:30 AM - 2:00 PM
Fantastic home-style Brazilian food. Also a wonderful place to come watch soccer when the Brazilians are playing.

La Paloma

408.247.0990
2280 El Camino Real, Santa Clara, CA
Mon - Thu: 11:00 AM to 9:30; Fri - Sat: 11:00 AM to 10:00; Sun: 11:00 AM to 8:00

This restaurant serves excellent, family-style Mexican food. It is a Santa Clara landmark, and a long time favorite.

Mariani's Inn & Restaurant

www.marianis.com 408.243.1431
2500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara, CA

6:30 AM - 10:00 PM Daily

Chicken Marsala and Parmesan are the specialties of the house. All my life friends have insisted that this was the best restaurant in town. Writing these reviews made me test those assertions. They were right! The ambiance, service, food, and presentation were four star. The prices were two and three star. Mariane's is a Santa Clara landmark having opened in 1953.

Peacock

www.peacockindianrestaurants.com
408.247.9264

2798 El Camino Real Santa Clara, CA
11:30 AM - 3pm, and 5pm-10pm, Daily
My wife Sue gives this new Indian Restaurant an excellent rating. She loves Indian food and raved about Peacock. The Butter Chicken is exceptional.

Shindokdo

408.243.6000
2690 El Camino Real Santa Clara, CA
(408) 243-6000
Mon - Fri: 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM and 5:00 PM-10:30 PM; Sat - Sun: 4:00 PM-10:30 PM

This review comes from the two very nice ladies at the Trade-A-Book in the Moonlight shopping center. They eat there often and call it excellent Japanese cuisine. I concur.

Smoke Eaters

www.smoke-eaters.com 408.241.2582
2565 The Alameda Santa Clara, CA
Sun - Thu: 11 AM to midnight; Fri - Sat 11AM to 2 AM

The specialty of the house is Hot Wings. There are seven levels of heat. The hottest one is dangerous. This is a loud sports bar that caters to Santa Clara University. There are always

Liquor Stores

Willow Glen Liquors & Wine Shop
1110 Lincoln Ave.
San Jose, CA 95127
(408) 926-8180
Mon-Thu: 10 am - 10 pm
Fri-Sat: 10 am - 11 pm
Sun: 10 am - 9 pm

Wine Galleria

377 South First Street
San Jose, CA 95113
(408) 298-1386

News Stand

Saint Claire News Stand
311 South First Street
San Jose, CA 95113
(408) 275-0242

Post Offices

USPS Downtown San Jose Collonade
200 South 3rd Street
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 292-0487
Mon-Fri: 9:00am-4:00pm

USPS Downtown Saint James Park
105 North 1st Street.
San Jose, CA 95113-9998
Mon-Fri: 8:30am-5:00pm

Tobacconist

Mission Pipe Shop
1205 The Alameda
San Jose, CA 95126
(408) 293-5144
Mon-Fri 10 am - 7 pm
Sat 10 am - 5:30 pm
Sun 12 pm - 5 pm

multiple games on including the X Box.

Su's Mongolian BBQ

408.985.2958

1111 El Camino Real Santa Clara, CA

Mon - Sat: 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM and 5:00 PM-9:00 PM

During the Mongolian BBQ ubiquity Su's was one of the first, is one of the last, and continues to be one of the best. All you can eat buffet, bottomless soft drinks, and soft ice cream cones. Build your own stir fry and watch them stir fry it.

Thaibodia

www.thaibodia.com 408.248.8868

2155 El Camino Real Santa Clara, CA

Sun - Thu: 11:00 AM to 9:30 PM; Fri - Sat: 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM

Thaibodia caught my eye while I was preparing these reviews. Thai and Cambodian are two of my favorite cuisines. The fusion is unique in my experience. The online reviews are as good as my own.

Thai Pepper

1045 Monroe Santa Clara, CA (408) 984-1931

Mon-sat lunch 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM dinner 5:00 PM-9:30 PM

This is my favorite Thai restaurant. It is a bit hard to find. It is down the walkway through the Franklin Mall from the intersection of Monroe and Franklin. Well worth the trouble.

For Those with Extra Time and a Car!

The Bay Area is legendary for being a great place to visit, and so if you're gonna be around for a little extra time, well, we figured we'd give you a look at a few places that you might want to take a little side trip off to visit.

Thankfully, we're lucky enough to have some experts to give us a look at some places that you might wanna spend an afternoon, evening or even a full day hanging around!

Berkeley

Introduced by David Bratman

Berkeley! Named in 1866 by a founder of the University of California who stood on a hillside rock looking out over the Golden Gate and quoted a line from Bishop George Berkeley, "Westward the course of empire takes its way," it's been famous ever since for the university and all the cultural amenities that go with being one of the most famous college towns in the world: bookstores, restaurants, theatre and museums, and of course the history of protests and the colorful street life. Berkeley is also famous for its fantasy literature. I've arranged a short selection of sights by neighborhood. All phone numbers are area code 510.

A little guide like this must omit much. If you've been to Berkeley before but not very recently, you may find its booklife sadly diminished. Cody's is no more, and Black Oak has gone into hibernation, we hope to re-emerge some day. But many others remain. In most cities the list of bookstores is quickly told. In Berkeley I have space to mention only half of them. And this doesn't even pretend to be a serious restaurant guide. I'm listing one personal favorite restaurant for each neighborhood of the city. If you want more, the online newspaper listings at www.eastbayexpress.com/ebx/Restaurants and www.sfgate.com/restaurants are good, and there's useful advice at chowhound.chow.com and even the health plan town hall of food websites, yelp.com.

Claremont/Elmwood

The easiest drive to Berkeley from San José is to take I-880 north to downtown Oakland (about 42 miles from the Fairmont), then east on I-980 and Highway 24, off at the Claremont Avenue exit, and turn left. This will take you uphill directly towards the Claremont Hotel, the huge white wedding cake of a building that was host to, among other things, the 1981 WFC. In the hills just to the south is Greyhaven, the only private home to have given birth to an entire school of fantasy writers and its own anthology (DAW, 1983; the back cover blurb says its "exact location is known to a very special few" – actually, it's in the phone book).

Shops: On the way uphill you'll pass the Groove Yard (5555 Claremont, at Forest St., 655-8400), a used record store specializing in jazz LPs – yes, around here such places still exist – and then, on the left between Woolsey and Prince, at the Uplands traffic light, are no fewer than *three* book stores in one block. First is Dark Carnival (3086 Claremont, 654-7323), Jack Rems' rabbit-warren of a fantasy/SF/mystery store, filled with colorful knickknacks as well as new and used books in endless surprising alcoves. Also on the block are Afikomen (3042 Claremont, 655-1977), Jewish books and gifts, and Turtle Island (3032 Claremont, 655-3413, limited hours), a collectors' used book store specializing in modern mainstream literature and art books.

Food: Turn left on the side streets here, or at the next light at Ashby, and immediately downhill on College Avenue around Ashby you'll find the Elmwood shopping district. Among the restaurants here is Shen Hua (2914 College Ave., 883-1777), northern Chinese cuisine, noisy but clean with minimalist decor, with some of the best shrimp dishes I've ever had in a Chinese restaurant.

Theater: A couple blocks north of Elmwood is the Julia Morgan Theater (2640 College Ave., 845-8542), a gem of a small performing space, named for its architect.

South Campus

You can get here from state 24 by turning right instead of left on Claremont and then a hard right on Telegraph Avenue, or from Elmwood by continuing north on College Avenue to campus and turning left. Parking is challenging here. There's a public lot just east (uphill) of Telegraph between Channing Way and Haste Street that costs \$1/hour in machines that take bills only, and the Sather Gate Garage just west of Telegraph between Channing and Durant Avenue where you pay at a counter before leaving, and which costs more but gives discounts through validation cards from local businesses.

The last stretch of Telegraph Avenue immediately south of campus is the soul of Berkeley, with colorful shops and all the street life you can imagine, from vendors selling tie-dye to the more exotic and less licit. Most Berkeley fiction, including fantasy, is set in and around here. The House Between the Worlds in Marion Zimmer Bradley's 1980 novel of that title, for instance, is somewhere on this part of Telegraph, and The Folk of the Air in Peter Beagle's 1986 novel of that title make their first appearance on the equivalent of this street.

Everywhere else in the city displays characteristic Berkeley qualities in direct proportion to its closeness to Telegraph. It's the Wthywindle, the center from which all the strangeness comes.

A tour of historic Sixties Berkeley would begin on the chunk of brick sidewalk at the edge of campus on Bancroft Way at Telegraph. A dispute over the right of students to set up tables supporting political causes here gave rise to the Free Speech Movement of 1964. Just beyond it, on campus, is Sproul Plaza. Here and on the front steps of Sproul Hall (the administration building to the right, also home to a famous sit-in) were the famous rallies and speeches. Turn around

and walk three blocks to Haste Street. Across the street on the left is a mural depicting the events of the era, and just up the street beyond that is People's Park, the university-owned vacant lot that was liberated into a park in 1969. Much of the subsequent police-student battle took place around the intersection of Telegraph and Dwight Way. On the far corner was the shop where Robert Anton Wilson's daughter worked and was killed in a robbery in 1976. Also near that corner (but before the road was widened) was the Garden Library, where Anthony Boucher and other members of the Elves', Gnomes', and Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder and Marching Society met in the 1950s. Boucher lived four blocks south of here, and set some of his stories in the neighborhood.

Shops: Moe's, between Haste and Dwight (2476 Telegraph, 849-2087) is four floors of Berkeley's flagship used bookstore, with a separate antiquarian shop on the top floor. Jonathan Lethem used to work here. Across the street is Shakespeare & Co. (2499 Telegraph, 841-8916), also used and also good. At the Haste St. corner is Amoeba Music (2455 Telegraph, 549-1125), a large and excellent used-and-some-new CD store that also carries DVDs and LPs. Another block up, at Channing, is Rasputin Music (2401 Telegraph, 848-9004), somewhat similar. In the mall beneath the Sather Gate Garage is the Friends of the Berkeley Public Library Bookstore (2431 Channing, 841-5604, limited hours); the back half of its space was the original home of *The Other Change of Hobbit*, now downtown. On Bancroft Way below Telegraph are several stores specializing in textbooks (including one across the street on campus in the Student Union). A bit further down is The Musical Offering (2430 Bancroft, 849-0211), just about the last classical CD specialty store anywhere; it's also a café.

Food: Some is good, but this neighborhood can be spotty. Between the mural and People's Park you'll find Mario's La Fiesta (2506 Haste St., 848-2588 – recently moved from its old location half a block away), a long-standing Mexican restaurant offering what I consider the canonical chicken and pork tamales. Caffè Mediterraneo (2475 Telegraph, 549-1128) serves salads and sandwiches and is a noted hangout featured in Diana L. Paxson's contemporary urban fantasy novels.

The U.C. Campus

Central campus, past Sather Gate at the far end of Sproul Plaza, is quieter than anything around it – an oasis of greenery and disparate buildings. Much of *Earth Abides* by George R. Stewart (a U.C. professor) takes place in its future ruins. At the center of campus is the Campanile; during limited hours you can ride the elevator to the top for \$2. Facing it on the uphill side is LeConte Hall, the Physics building where Oppenheimer, Lawrence, et al had their offices. (Their element-discovering Chemistry colleagues had labs just up the hill in Lewis Hall.) The small building connected to LeConte, Birge Hall, then an empty space, was where Ernest Lawrence set up his first cyclotron. Facing the Campanile on the downhill side is the Bancroft Library, a rare books collection specializing in California history, and connected to that on the far side is Doe Library, the main

library, designed by John Galen Howard. Doe's Reference Hall, on the second floor, has the most beautiful ceiling on campus.

Museums: The Hearst Museum of Anthropology (642-3682) is in Kroeber Hall (named for Ursula K. Le Guin's father, longtime professor in the department) at the corner of Bancroft Way and College Avenue. The Berkeley Art Museum (2626 Bancroft Way, 642-0808) is across the street from campus between Telegraph and College. High up in the hills above campus (drive up behind the football stadium and take the road going up the canyon) is the Lawrence Hall of Science (Centennial Dr., 642-5132), a good basic science museum emphasizing children's and general public education.

Downtown

Downtown is just west of campus, and Shattuck Avenue is its spine. If you take BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) to the Berkeley station, you'll arrive at Shattuck and Center Street. Just behind you across the street as you emerge from the main escalator is 2165 Shattuck (now a GNC health store), site of the TV and electronics shop where Philip K. Dick worked in the 1940s, model for all the small businesses in his novels, though the neighborhood has changed much since then.

Shops: The Other Change of Hobbit (2020 Shattuck, 848-0413) is 2 ½ blocks north of BART on the left (west) side of the western branch of Shattuck. Dave Nee runs this, the other fantasy/SF/mystery bookstore in Berkeley. Besides the books, enjoy the classical music on the radio and the two cats, which (as of two months ago when I wrote this) were still young enough to scamper across the floor and underneath the bookcases in pursuit of any dust bunnies they could find. Just down the street is Comic Relief (2026 Shattuck, 843-5002), a comics bookstore of mindboggling size and stock. Round off your visit with Half-Price Books (2036 Shattuck, 526-6080)

Food: There are some gems hiding here. Just around the far corner and half a block down the street from the Other Change is Jayakarta (2026 University Ave., 841-0884), a modest Indonesian restaurant that's extremely inexpensive and incredibly good.

Theater: These are located in the block of Addison Street west (downhill) from Shattuck, a block north of the BART station. Berkeley Rep (2025 Addison, 647-2949; www.berkeleyrep.org) is currently running a set of short plays by Tony Kushner, collectively titled *Tiny Kushner*, get it? The Aurora Theatre Company (2081 Addison, 843-4822; www.auroratheatre.org) next door is performing Neil LaBute's *Fat Pig*. The new home of the Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse across the street (2020 Addison, 548-7603; www.freightandsalvage.org) is ground zero for acoustic music. Nightly performers offer folk, neo-urban folk, bluegrass, or Celtic; occasional jazz, blues, western swing, or even classical; and sometimes the just

plain unclassifiable.

North Shattuck

Continuing north on Shattuck Avenue from downtown is the area called the Gourmet Ghetto, with many upscale foodie places between Delaware and Rose. If you want to eat at Alice Waters' Chez Panisse (1517 Shattuck, closer to Vine than Cedar, downstairs restaurant 548-5525, upstairs café 548-5049) – which I never have – you'll already have made a reservation. Right next door is the affordable and lovely Cha-Am Thai Restaurant (1543 Shattuck, 848-9664) My usual hangout in this part of town is Saul's Deli (1475 Shattuck, just north of Vine, 848-3354). It's not a patch on a good New York Jewish deli, and it may not even be the best deli in the Bay Area, but it does have the best atmosphere. Across the street from Chez Panisse is the Cheese Board (1504 Shattuck, 549-3183), a fabulous cheese shop which probably *would* have Venezuelan Beaver Cheese if you were crass enough to ask for it. On the cross street just above this corner is the original outlet of Peet's Coffee and Tea (2124 Vine, 841-0564).

Solano Avenue/Albany

As you keep going north past the Gourmet Ghetto, the artery changes names a couple times and then dives into a tunnel. When you emerge you're on Solano Avenue westbound. In the mile-and-a-bit of Solano between here and San Pablo Avenue, in this part of Berkeley and the adjoining town of Albany, are packed what I consider the best restaurants in the area. There are several Chinese and Thai places, literally half a dozen other Asian nationalities represented, and some other things including Mexican and a few good varieties of basic American. I've never finished exploring the depth here, so I'm not even going to try to make recommendations, except to note the presence, near the tunnel end, of Zachary's Pizza (1853 Solano, 525-5950), deep-dish Chicago style, often considered the best pizza in Berkeley. It's also right next door to Pegasus Books (1855 Solano, 525-6888), specializing in high-quality remainders, also offering new and used books.

Coming from Shattuck, if you skip the tunnel by turning uphill on Del Norte, the last street to the right before the tunnel, this will curve around and deposit you at a traffic circle above the tunnel. Running uphill from here is upper Marin Avenue, once a streetcar line, barreling straight up at a terrifying incline that will challenge your car's transmission. It's one of Berkeley's odder sights.

San Jose's 6 Best Downtown Happy Hours

Billy Berk's- 99 South First Street, Discounted Appetizers and drinks.

Cinnabar- 69 East San Fernando Street, 2 Dollar Draft Pabst Blue Ribbons. That's right...Pabst, baby!

Johnny V's- 31 East Santa Clara Street, 2-for-1 Kamikazes, Cosmos and Sake Bombs

The Loft Bar & Bistro- 86 South Second Street, An affordable Happy Hour Menu and Drink Specials served by the nicest bartenders in town

McCormick & Schmick's- 170 South Market Street, Large affordable Happy Hour Menu

Tied House Brewery- 65 North San Pedro Street, Half-off Appetizers, 3.25 Draft Beers

Santa Cruz

Introduced by M Lloyd

Let's look at the city of Santa Cruz. You've probably have heard of it, a legendary spot for surfers and a beautiful city for all all visitors. The beauty of Santa Cruz is that you can see a gorgeous city coupled with a lovely Boardwalk and several places for delightful food.

There is no easier set of directions than those from downtown San Jose to Santa Cruz. Hop onto 880 South (also known as Highway 17) and keep going until it dumps you out in the center of town. No other way to do it, really. The road between Los Gatos and Santa Cruz is twisting, mountainous and lovely. Those prone to car sickness should sit in the front.

If you're going to Santa Cruz, you should start by setting some time aside for the Boardwalk (400 Beach Street, Santa Cruz, 831-423-5590). It's a classic assortment of rides and sand and bad carnival food. The Giant Dipper is a legendary roller coaster that is worth the trip over the mountains. The place has improved as an amusement park, with mor erides added every year. Currently, it's the new Haunted House dark ride that's all the rage. This is also one of the few arcades left with actual video games and pinball machines instead of those ticket-delivery games that my kids are always begging to play.

After you've spent some time at the boardwalk, there are a couple of lovely places that you might want to visit, like the Lighthouse Surfing Museum (809 Center St, Santa Cruz, 831-420-6289). It's a tiny museum with a selection of legendary surfboards,

memorabilia, and photos from 100 years of surfing history. It's a lovely joint, a good place to spend an hour or so. You'll learn a lot about surfing. Unless you already know a lot about surfing. Then you'll simply be in the best place to enjoy your passion. Or perhaps you're more of a natural history type, in which case the lovely Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History (1305 East Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, 831-420-6115). They've got a giant statue of a blue whale out front that kids love to climb on. They've got a big exhibit on bones right now. It's a pretty good one if you're a bone fan, which I am. It's the Goth in me.

After that, you'll be hungry. You're lucky, there are bunches of places. I'd suggest starting with The O'mei (2316 Mission St., Santa Cruz, 831-425-8458). For more than twenty-five years, this place has been doing Chinese Fusion and is a fave with locals and families of UCSC students' families. The small plates are exceptional, and the calamari dishes are universally delightful. Café Brazil (1410 Mission St., Santa Cruz, 831-429-1855) is another great place, this one for lovely Brazilian foods. If you get a chance, enjoy the Acia bowls. I've been to a number of Brazilian places around the world and this is my favorite. Upper Crust Pizza & Pasta (2415 Mission St., Santa Cruz, 831-423-9010) is one of the best pizza places around. Highly enjoyable. If you like Greek, Vasili's Greek (1501 Mission St., Ste # A, Santa Cruz, 831-458-9808) and The Greek Authentic (435 Front St Santa Cruz, 831-466-9990) are both great Mediterrean fare.

Late afternoon might be a good time to head over to Natural Bridges State Park, where the monarch butterflies will have already started gathering. They cover the trees in the park and it's amazing. They close at sunset, so you can enjoy a lunch and then head over.

If you're looking to close-out the day in the area, try 99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall (110 Walnut Ave., Santa Cruz, 831-459-9999), which is right in the middle of the lovely downtown area. Beers from around the world along with a good smattering of bar food. It's a great way to end a visit to a lovely sea-side city.

Piedmont Avenue, Oakland

Introduced by Christopher J Garcia

To get there, take Interstate 880 north to Interstate 980. Veer off there and head on the 51st Street ramp, turning right off the ramp. Go straight a mile and a half, turn right at Piedmont. There are several small parking lots on both sides of the street, but they are often packed on the weekends.

Starting on the Eastern side of the street, there's Fenton's. If you remember the days when a trip to the Soda Fountain was a treat, then you're in luck because this place will take you back. The ice cream is delightful, and if you're interested, you should try the burger. Tasty, though slightly expensive. After that, you'll want to head up just a few doors to one of my favorite used book stores- Black Swan Books. You can find everything from classic literature to postcards from the 1939 World's Fair to the Julliard School of the Arts Year in Review, 1966. Well, you can't find those anymore, since I bought them, but you get the idea.

After that, there's a lovely church on the corner that's worth a look and maybe a photo or two, but the highlight of this section of Piedmont Avenue is the Piedmont Theatre (<http://www.landmarktheaters.com/Market/SanFranciscoEastBay/PiedmontTheatre.htm>). It's a lovely joint that shows Art House fair. If you've got a few spare hours, there are far worse locations to see a flick.

Cross the street and you're at the Park Avenue Bar & Grill (www.parkavebar.com). It's a lovely place for a meal, but even better during the weekend brunches. Try the steak sandwich. It's marvelous when fully-loaded.

If you cross Piedmont again, you'll find four fantastic places, a wine shoppe (Wine on Piedmont), a coffee/tearoom (L'Amynx Tea Bar), a marvelous bookstore (Spectator Bookstore- www.spectatorbooks.com), and an old-skool antique store (Lost & Found Antiques). All within a block of each other. You can spend some good money in those four places, especially at Spectator, where you can find recent best-sellers and hard-to-find paperbacks all in the same building. Their selection of art books, both new and used, is fantastic.

Hungry again? Cross Piedmont AGAIN and you'll find a similar run of fantastic places to eat. There's a magnificent burger place (Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers-www.barneyshamburgers.com/), a Mexican restaurant (Baja Taqueria-www.bajaonpiedmont.com/) that does amazing Lobster Burritos and Quesadillas, Simply Greek (www.simply-greek.com), a fine place for Souvlaki and Gyros. If you're there for breakfast, try Piedmont Cafe & Bakery.

I've been there every weekend for more than two years and I've not yet found a bad restaurant.

Comic Books? There's Dr. Comics & Mr. Games, which is a large, well-stocked comic shop with plenty of back issues, graphic novels, games, toys and what have you. You can find everything from Gumby to A Treasury of Victorian Murder on their shelves.

You can find food stuffs of exotic and high-end qualities here too, with two fine groceries (A.G. Ferrari's and Piedmont Grocery Company) almost exactly across the street from one another. Right next to Ferrari's is Gregoire

(www.gregoirerestaurant.com), and if you hit there last, you can take a wonderful boxed dinner away with you. The potato puffs are amazing. You can also find fine dining at Bay Wolf a bit further down the street. It's delicious and up-scale. You'll drop a good bit of wallet weight eating there.

All of that and marvelous clothes stores, shoes galleries, Starbucks, a marvelous newsstand, and so much more. You can spend a few hours or repeated visits over months and months and you won't be sorry for the time spent.

University Avenue, Palo Alto

Introduced by Christopher J Garcia

Palo Alto means the Tall Tree. The tree which it's named after is still there, but it's not nearly as impressive as you'd expect a tree with a city named after it would be. Palo Alto has all the advantages of being a tech town and a college town, what with Stanford being right next to downtown. University Avenue is, in many ways, the heart and soul of Palo Alto.

To get to University Avenue, take 101 North to the University Avenue exit and head towards Palo Alto (for the love of all that is holy, Don't head towards East Palo Alto!). You'll pass through a couple of miles of lovely, expensive, huge and expensive homes. You'll pass across Middlefield and you'll be in the business portion of University.

Any visit to University Avenue will start with finding parking. Sometimes, this can be a majority of the visit. It is never easy, and during peak dining hours can be downright impossible. Do not be dissuaded! It is worth every second of effort. There are also parking garages off of University on the side streets that are well marked and can usually be counted on to have a few spaces.

Let's start with shopping. There are hundreds of shops up and down University, and it would be foolish to try and list them all. You want a Persian Rug? Go to Hatami Rug Gallery (170 University). You want high-end art? Try Modernbook (494 University). If you're in the mood for in-line skating supplies, Black Diamond Sports (162 University) is there for your needs. You could spend all day walking up and into the shops all along the street. You really can't go too wrong.

Food is always my priority. You'll find many exceptional restaurants on University, including Tamarine (www.tamarinerestaurant.com), one of the best Vietnamese places on Earth. There's also Pluto's Fresh Food (www.plutosfreshfood.com) a small chain specializing in Made-to-Order salads. I always try to make room for La Strada Ristorante Italiano, (www.lastradapaloalto.com) which is as tasty as Italian food gets in this part of town. Places like Loui Loui Steakhouse (473 University) only add to the joy. Probably the most beloved restaurant on the entire street, Miyake Restaurant (140 University) is usually packed and it's an absolute must for those who like having dinner surrounded by Stanford students.

There's a lovely pizza place called Patxi's on Emerson, less than a block off of University that serves amazing pizzas that tend to be big enough to feed competitive eaters. The crust is a work of magic.

There are a few wonderful locations for architecture. While Border's may represent everything that's wrong with booksellers, the University Avenue venue is a lovely place for a cup of coffee to admire what was once the Varsity Theatre, where many a high school kid first encountered Rocky Horror. The courtyard area is a fine place.

Speaking of movie theatres, any description of University has to include the Stanford Theatre. The Stanford has been around since the 1920s and has

restored to the beautiful state that was once its calling card. They show a rotating schedule of pre-1960 films, typically in double features. There's also the Mighty Wurlitzer which comes out between movies on the weekends. I can not stress how cool it is. It's a place that's a lot of fun to hang out in, enjoy some popcorn and watch a flick.

There's also the Aquarius Theatre up the street and around the corner on Emerson which shows current art house fare, which can make for a good afternoon's viewing.

You can enjoy frozen enjoyables all over the place in Palo Alto. With the exception of Boston, there may be more frozen dessert action in Paly than anywhere else on Earth. First, right across the street from the Aquarius Theatre is some delightful gelato at Gelato Classico (435 Emerson St). You go around the corner to Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream Shoppe (203 University) and that's never a bad thing. Frozen Yogurt? Red Mango (429 University), L'Amour Frozen Yogurt Cafe (276 University) and Michael's Gelato & Cafe, which has amazing FroYo.

If you can make it down to University Ave., try and spend a little time just walking around. It's the best way to really understand Palo Alto.