

## WASHINGTON DC RESTAURANT GUIDE

### From your Forum Chair-Elect – John Marshall Cook

No longer the “stodgy”, coat & tie, dining scene that long marked the city, Washington DC has become a paradise for “foodies”. Delicious options abound. Name a cuisine and you can find it.

Following the well-known axiom “never listen to restaurant recommendations from a skinny guy” - Brian and Catherine asked me to assemble a list of my ten favorite restaurants within walking distance of the hotel. Fortunately for me, the hotel is exceptionally well positioned for eating – with Shaw and Blagden Alley to the North and Penn Quarter to the South. I started with a 20 minute radius, but quickly realized that encompassed too many options, so I trimmed it back. My list has some rules: 1) No steakhouses – too boring. 2) No chain restaurants – life is too short. 3) The list only includes restaurants I have visited at least twice (one good meal can be a fluke, but two is a trend) and enjoyed immensely. You can’t go wrong with any of the below:

#### **The Dabney – Upscale American Wood-fired Cooking - 7 min walk**

DC’s “foodies” flock to the Michelin-starred Dabney – so reservations are hard to come-by. But if you can get in, you are in for a treat. The Dabney is in Blagden Alley – an actual alley complete with corners and turns – has become home to some of DC’s finest restaurants and is only a few blocks from the hotel. The Dabney’s open kitchen exposes a crackling wood fire whose embers are cleverly used to prepare all the food that is served (no kidding – this place does not have an oven). Magnificent takes on relatively simple dishes makes you wonder after most of the courses in the 6-course tasting menu – “why has nobody done this before?” <https://thedabney.com/>

#### **Unconventional Diner – Comfort Food with a Modern Twist - 6 min walk**

There is not a more appropriately named restaurant on the list. While you will have some of the same dining options as you would get at a dinner off the NJ Turnpike, the flavors here are not your conventional diner fare. How about a bite-sized chicken pot pie or meatloaf with a Sriracha glaze? The tastes never disappoint at Unconventional Diner and the food presentation and restaurant décor take the fun up a notch. <https://www.unconventionaldiner.com/>

#### **Rumi’s Kitchen – Persian – 7 min walk**

Dimly lit, uniquely decorated, and perfumed with notes of saffron and freshly made bread, Rumi’s sets the mood from the moment you enter. The meal is built around 6 different flavors of rice (go with a big group so you can try them all) and absolutely delicious Persian kabobs and stews. The skewered meats are pounded thin to make them tender and to better hold the seasonings. If you can pull it off, order the tahdig (the charred rice at the bottom of the pot –a Persian delicacy) with the “gorme sabzi” or “gheimh” stew on top even though it does not appear on the menu – I learned this trick from some Persians friends who introduced us to Rumi’s! <https://www.rumiskitchen.com/>

### **Chercher (pronounced “share-share”) – Ethiopian – 9 min walk**

To call the décor here “unassuming” would be kind... it’s a hole in the wall. But it dishes out some of the finest Ethiopian food in DC – so good that it received a Michelin Bib Gourmand recommendation. This is my 16 year old son’s favorite restaurant and I am not far behind him. The Doro Wot is packed with flavors unlike anything you will taste in other cuisines. The Zil Zil Tibs are a treat and the vegetable dishes are incredible (that’s right, I just praised vegetables). If you are new to Ethiopian cuisine, the friendly staff will guide you along. <https://www.chercherrestaurant.com/2018/05/13/menu/>

### **Tiger Fork – Chinese – 7 min walk**

Head to Tiger Fork to sample some Hong Kong street food and sip a specialty cocktail spiked with medicinal Chinese herbs. Tiger Fork is also located in Blagden Alley and features family style tables that add to the ambiance. The dishes sound like typical Chinese standbys (Dan Dan Noodles / Pork Ribs / Fried Rice) but the flavors are fantastic. This is also a great place for a very late night snack . . . perhaps after visiting a local bar. <https://www.tigerforkdc.com/>

### **minibar – Molecular Gastronomy – 8 min walk**

Bring a full wallet and a camera to this José Andrés spot that is more theater than dinner - more science experiment than cooking. The preparation and presentation is all done right in front of you in this 12 seat restaurant. Visually it is among the most stunning meals you will ever experience. The flavors are well-conceived and interesting. Where else can you get a gelatinous blob that explodes in your mouth and tastes exactly like a Caesar salad? How about an edible butterfly? This is a Michelin 2 star restaurant. Reservations are hard to come by and typically open up 1-2 months in advance. If interested, sign up for their reservation updates on the website. <https://www.minibarbyjoseandres.com/minibar/>

### **Oyamel Cocina Mexicana – Mexican – 11 min walk**

This is no chain Mexican joint that slings good chips and salsa. Oyamel has been serving elevated Mexican cuisine for years. While it has the staples (amazing margaritas, incredible guacamole, and tasty chips), the highlights are in the less common dishes that masterfully combine fresh ingredients and distinctive Mexican flavors. People rave about the ceviche (I can’t vouch for it), but I crave the Bistec con Mole Coloradito – steak with a mole of ancho, guajillo, almonds, pecans and chocolate. Nothing here disappoints. Oyamel hits all the marks which would explain its Michelin Bib Gourmand recommendation. <https://www.oyamel.com/>

### **China Chilcano (MBG) – Japanese-Chinese-Peruvian Fusion – 10 min walk**

This is, hands down, the best Japanese-Chinese-Peruvian Fusion food I have ever had (okay – so it is the only J-C-P fusion I have ever had, but still ...). I can’t say I would have put them together, but I am glad that José Andrés decided to do it. The Peruvian edge adds a spice to the comfortable Chinese flavors and the delicate Japanese

ingredients. The little bites, dumplings, and most of the entrees are designed for sharing – all the better way to sample the amazing flavors this menu has to offer.

<https://www.chinachilcano.com/>

### **Sfoglina – Italian – 5 min walk**

If you like homemade pasta, prepared with delicious simple sauces, then Sfoglina is for you. The pasta melts in your mouth. Some of the basic Italian dishes are carried out expertly. The menu rotates, but nothing I have tried here has disappointed. The Cacio & Pepe has a delightful bite to it. The Truffle Fettuccine Alfredo is the perfect earthy-cheesy combination. The Carbonara and the Bolognese are fantastic. If you are not in the mood for pasta, they have some entrees that are good, but the pasta here steals the show. <https://sfoglinapasta.com/downtown>

### **Rasika – Indian - 11 min walk**

Rasika presents upscale Indian cuisine with a modern twist. It is consistently ranked among the best restaurants in DC and with good reason. For over a decade now, Vikram Sunderam has been blending the unique flavors of India to create inspired dishes that you will not find anywhere else (except for his second Rasika – West End, on the other side of DC). Most dishes have only 4-6 ingredients listed on the menu, but seem to have twice that many flavors. While there are some traditional Indian sauces (e.g. Vindaloo and Tikka Masala), even those are presented with an imaginative twist.

<https://www.rasikarestaurant.com/penn-quarter-menu>

While there is no need to hit other parts of DC given the wealth of options within a few minutes' walk of the hotel, here are a few of my favorites from other parts of town:

### **The Red Hen – Italian in Bloomingdale**

<https://theredhendc.com/>

### **Pineapple & Pearls – A Tasting Menu Experience in Capitol Hill/8<sup>th</sup> St**

<https://www.pineappleandpearls.com/#>

### **Little Pearl – Upscale American Creation on Capitol Hill**

<https://www.littlepearlDC.com/>

### **Rose's Luxury – Innovative American in Capitol Hill/8th St**

<https://www.rosesluxury.com/>

### **Tail Up Goat – Unique Tasting Menu in Adam's Morgan**

<https://www.tailupgoat.com/>

### **Makan – Malaysian in Columbia Heights**

<https://www.makanrestaurantdc.com/>

**Anju** – Korean in DuPont Circle  
<https://www.anjurestaurant.com/>

**Compass Rose** – Eclectic World Menu in U. Street Corridor  
<https://www.compassrosedc.com/>

**Blue Duck Tavern** – Artisan American Cuisine in West End  
<https://www.blueducktavern.com/>

**Le Diplomate** – Parisian Brasserie on 14 Street Corridor  
<https://lediplomatedc.com>

**Bindaas** – Indian Street Food in Foggy Bottom  
<https://www.bindaasdc.com/foggybottom>

This list is just a sample of the many amazing options that DC has to offer. I look forward to seeing you in DC in September!

Bon Appetit!