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## Hot Stuff 2008: Eatin' out

### Best Exotic Stuff to Eat

Critics' choice

Nile Restaurant  
1951 S. Havana St.  
720-748-0239  
[www.nileethiopianrestaurant.com](http://www.nileethiopianrestaurant.com)

No need to worry about pricey plane tickets to get a real taste of Africa. Just zip over to the Nile for authentic Ethiopian marvels you won't ever forget. You can sit a table or gather round the mosseb, sort of like a straw table. Each meal is served on and with rolls of traditional soft, spongy and slightly sour injera, Ethiopian bread. Atop the delicacy is a variety of spicy wat stews, the reddened beef is our favorite, vegetable curries and pungent sauces. Washed down with creamy Ethiopian beers or plentiful cups of traditional African mead, Nile brings the intriguing African continent right to Havana Street.

Readers' choice

Sushi at Mt. Fuji Japanese Cuisine Sushi & Hibachi  
6100 S. Main St.  
Ste H-101  
303-699-9388

### Best Chinese Cuisine

Critics' choice

Tea Station  
545 Sable Blvd.  
303-343-0330

It's easy to get caught in the malaise that is American Chinese food. There's enough mall shops and small delivery places in the metro area to confuse even the hard core General Tsao's fan. Luckily, Tea Station is like a great classic rock radio station — they do all the old, good stuff well and offer enough of stuff you haven't had yet to keep you coming back. If you're looking to break out of the same Sesame Chicken rut everyone's been in for years, find your way to Tea Station. Their crispy breading and sweet sauce makes this their biggest seller.

Readers' choice

Paradise Cafe  
6180 S. Gun Club Road  
720-876-1808

### Best Japanese Cuisine

Critics' and readers' choice

Mt Fuji Japanese Cuisine Sushi & Hibachi  
6100 S. Main St.  
Ste H-101  
303-699-9388

Want a taste of the Far East in Aurora? Head south. Mt. Fuji Restaurant at Southlands Mall serves up the best Japanese cuisine Aurora has to offer. They have exotic foods like octopus and Japanese staples including some of the best sushi in town. Don't miss the tempura, it has just the right amount of crunchiness.

### Best sushi

Critics' choice

Blue Koi Sushi Bar & Asian Grill  
6020 S. Gun Club Road  
303-766-5886



**Zephyr LOUNGE**  
COCKTAILS  
LIVE MUSIC  
HAPPY HOURS  
303-364-8981



**COLSTON'S**  
BBQ and more  
720-870-5772



**BLUE KOI**  
Sushi Bar & Asian Grill  
303-766-5886



**OLD CHICAGO**  
PIZZERIA  
303-338-0144



14000 E. Mississippi Ave.  
303-597-0080  
**CICI'S**  
PIZZA  
18648 E. Hampden Ave.  
303-617-3222



**IT'S A GRIND**  
COFFEE HOUSE  
720-876-1500

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[www.bluekoisushi.com](http://www.bluekoisushi.com)

It seems like sushi joints are popping up all over the place, but many forget the most important key: freshness. Blue Koi's cuisine practically melts in the mouth. Give the sashimi 15 (\$27.95) a try —it's an assortment of 15 pieces of the chef's choice. Or if you're just starting out, try their Taste of Sushi for beginners (\$12.95) platter, featuring cooked shrimp, crab, tamago and inari.

**Readers' choice**

Mt Fuji Japanese Cuisine Sushi & Hibachi

**Best Thai Cuisine****Critics' choice**

Thai Pepper II  
10890 E. Dartmouth Ave., Unit #C  
303-369-0266  
[www.thaipepperaurora.com](http://www.thaipepperaurora.com)

Tucked inconspicuously in a shopping center off Parker Road, Thai Pepper II boasts a wide menu of tastes and flavors for its humble digs. The small eatery offers affordable and delicious takes on standard noodle dishes like Pad Thai and soups like Tom Jerd, with spicy recipes that make for good in-restaurant dining as well as take-out options.

**Readers' choice**

Pearl of Siam  
18660 E. Hampden Ave.  
303-617-7408  
[www.pearlofsiam.net](http://www.pearlofsiam.net)

**Best Korean Cuisine****Critics' choice**

Han Kang Korean Restaurant  
1910 S. Havana St.  
303-873-6800  
[www.hankangkoreancuisine.com](http://www.hankangkoreancuisine.com)

The nice thing about living in Aurora is that it's home to the best Korean cuisine in the state, and Han Kang Korean Restaurant is the best of them all. Sitting on the corner of Jewell and Havana, it features a wide range of Korean culinary treats. Try the bibimbob, a plate of rice covered by marinated sliced beef and vegetables or the la galbi, a plate of marinated barbecue short ribs. Even better is the variety of spicy and fresh side dishes that comes with every meal.

**Readers' choice (tie)**

Silla  
3005 S. Peoria St.  
303-338-5070  
and  
Korea House  
10293 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-696-0011

**Best Korean BBQ****Critics' choice**

House of Korean BBQ  
2680 S. Havana St. #B  
303-752-1338

This may be the tastiest corner of Havana — our pick for best Korean barbecue sits right next door to perennial fave, Sir Loin Meat Shoppe. But as good as Sir Loin is with the raw stuff, House of Korean BBQ is its equal in smoking and serving their own brand of goodies — and most dishes guaranteed to leave you happy and waiting for a trip back.

**Readers' choice**

Korea House

**Best Vietnamese Cuisine****Critics' and readers' choice**

Pho 75  
2050 S. Havana St.  
Aurora, CO 80014  
303-695-5438

While they specialize in the Vietnamese beef noodle soup known as pho, Pho



75 offers a large variety of Vietnamese fare from rice combination plates to dry noodle specials. The best item on the menu is a traditional spicy beef noodle soup called Bun Bo Hue. Be warned, it's not for those who are squeamish about trying something different: the bowl includes congealed pig blood, ox tails and pig's knuckles. But there are plenty of traditional favorites to please every palate.

**Readers' choice (tie)**

Golden Saigon  
2648 S. Parker Road  
303-671-7100

## Best Pho

**Critics' choice**

Pho Duy II  
3371 Peoria St.  
303-367-9884

Ask any pho connoisseur and they'll tell you that good pho is determined by the broth. And Pho Duy II has the best in town. Try the pho dac biet, which features a variety of ingredients such as tendon, rare steak and flank. Or if you're not as adventurous, try the pho bo vien, a simple meat ball and noodle soup.

**Readers' choice**

Pho 79  
1080 S. Havana St.  
303-344-0752

## Best Indian Cuisine

**Critics' and readers' choice**

Star of India  
3102 S. Parker Road #A10  
303-755-1921  
[www.starofindiadenvr.com](http://www.starofindiadenvr.com)

No one knows spices like Star of India owner Gar Gill. Although traditional Indian spices can become overpowering and are misused in myriad Western crossover dishes, Gill has found a way to keep flavors complex, spices effective and dishes delicious in this star of Aurora. House specialties include the vegetable samosa (great as an appetizer, even better as a meal) and the blissfully complex chicken tikka masala.

## Best Italian Cuisine

**Critics' choice**

Armando's Ristorante & Pizzeria  
16611 E. Smoky Hill Road  
303-690-6660

Firm pastas and rich sauces make this the standard to beat in Aurora for Italian restaurants. With about 70 different pasta dishes, they're bound to have something for everyone. And if you aren't in the mood for sassy sausages or roasted meats, there are ample vegetarian choices. When you're done, check out the menu of imported Italian desserts.

**Readers' choice**

Olive Garden  
2390 S. Havana St.  
303-745-9945  
[www.olivegarden.com](http://www.olivegarden.com)

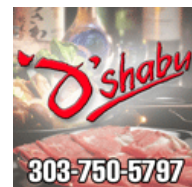
## Best pizza

**Critics' choice**

Lil Ricci's  
15352 E. Ida Drive  
303-693-9196  
[www.lilriccis.com](http://www.lilriccis.com)

Located on the very southern end of Aurora, a trip to Lil Ricci's is a lot like going out East. Some former New Yorkers swear they are back home in the Big Apple when they sit in the casual restaurant adorned with New York sports memorabilia and bite into a slice of thin crust with just the right combination of crispy and chewy. Tender crust, tasty red sauce and a plethora of topping options — or trust in three combinations — makes Lil Ricci's pie the best around.

**Readers' choice**



Associated Press  
Video Headlines

Anthony's  
Multiple locations

## Best Greek Cuisine

**Critics' and readers' choice**

The Athenian  
15350 E. Illiff Ave.  
720-449-0224

A key tip-off to a good Greek restaurant is ambience, an asset the Athenian has in spades. In addition to delicious gyro dishes, tasty souvlaki and sweet spanakopita, the restaurant's helpful staff and colorful decor — straight out of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" — help to complete the appeal.

## Best Eastern European Cuisine

**Critics' choice**

Elite Deli  
15413 E. Hampden Ave.  
303-400-9902

"Exotic" and "inexpensive" don't always find their way into the same sentence when describing ethnic markets, but Elite accomplishes this feat. The main market area is extensive with a great variety of all types of Eastern European fare. But the "can't-miss" part of this store is the delicatessen, where the meat pies are succulent and many of the items won't destroy your diet.

**Readers' choice**

Helga's  
14197 E. Exposition Ave.  
303-344-5488  
[www.helgasdeli.com](http://www.helgasdeli.com)

## Best Middle European Cuisine

**Critics' choice**

Dumitri's  
1911 S. Havana St.  
303-752-0553  
[www.dumitris.com](http://www.dumitris.com)

Sure, this is one of the best places in town for breakfast and gyros, but there's another side to the endless variety at Dumitri's you've got to experience for yourself: a taste of the old country. Dumitri's offers old-style leg of lamb in thick slices complete with thick, mashed potatoes and dark gravy, just like "mutter gemacht." The German plate comes with a real smoked pork chop and potato pancakes, and the best of the best is the Hungarian Stuffed Cabbage that tastes like you should be eating it from a street-side table in Budapest.

## Best Middle-Eastern Cuisine

**Critics' and readers' choice**

Cafe Paprika  
13152 E. Mississippi Ave.  
303-755-4150

From Baba Ghanouj to vegetarian mchermel kabobs, Cafe Paprika is the best place in Aurora to get a taste of Mediterranean Africa. The Moroccan restaurant near East Mississippi Avenue and South Uvalda Street has all the favorites that become memorable when the kitchen pays attention to details. The details are perfect with their version of bistella, with just the right blend of sweet and savory waiting impatiently under a crispy phyllo crust.

**Readers' choice (tie)**

Gyros King  
15102 E. Hampden Ave., Ste B  
303-693-6755  
and  
Darya  
10890 E. Dartmouth Ave.  
303-750-4326

## Best Colorado Mexican Cuisine

**Critics' choice**

Guadalajara Family Mexican Restaurant  
1001 S. Abilene St.  
303-696-0903



Rescuers Pull Teens From Collapsed Ice Cave

▶ Play



Obama: 'I've Made the Selection' for V.P.

▶ Play



Raw Video: Public Bus Slams Into Apartment

▶ Play

Tender carne asada can be a rare find in suburban Aurora, and Guadalajara's consistent quality in producing fresh-grilled meat is an achievement in and of itself. Add to that the restaurant's full menu of traditional staples and creative takes on Mexican favorites, friendly service and a bright atmosphere, and Guadalajara's top rank is self-explanatory.

## Best Taste of a Mexico

### Critics' choice

La Cueva  
9742 E. Colfax Ave.  
303-367-1422

There are a lot of reasons to visit the city's beginnings along Colfax where Aurora bumps up against Denver, but La Cueva is still top among them. Long known for its iconic traditional Mexican cuisine, killer margaritas and tender homemade tortillas, there's one dish you can get here that you otherwise must go to Mexico to get: Norma Nuñez' Homemade Tortilla Soup. It's the real thing. Norma serve's this speciality in a wide, shallow bowl, brimming with a slightly spicy chicken broth. Inside that are chunks of chicken, Monterrey cheese and skinny strips of crispy tortilla. Chased with a buttery flour tortilla, the mixture of salty, crunchy, creamy sopa is a shiny diamond in the city's rough and not to be missed.

### Readers' choice

Las Hadas  
15264 E. Hampden Ave.  
303-693-9519

## Best Food from South of the Border

### Critics' choice

Real de Minas II  
3341 Peoria St.  
720-859-0666  
[www.realdeminasrest.com](http://www.realdeminasrest.com)

Tucked away in the most northwest part of Aurora along Peoria Street is a direct transport to the best of what hundreds of years of cooking tradition in Chihuahua and Monterrey have brought the world. Here, chalupas are something you paddle around a lake, not order from a menu. The tacos are served up with handfuls of fresh onions and cilantro on tender corn tortillas and shower in ample squeezes of lime. The pork adobada has just the right tang and the barbacoa is tender and juicy. Pozole comes steaming in giant bowl with plenty of room for cabbage and oregano. If your tastes run even farther south to Central and South America, the Sopa de Siete Mares is a Peruvian dream come true. A crock full of the best of what every ocean offers in a bright, slightly piquant broth is like a trip to the sea. If you've come in search of your Taco Bell favorites, you're going to be disappointed. If you miss the taste of Ciudad or a holiday discada, your home away from home is just a short drive away.

## Best Guacamole

### Critics' choice

Casa Vallarta  
4002 S. Parker Road  
303-617-4957

Most come for one of the happiest happy hours in town, but almost everyone comes back for the creamiest, dreamiest guacamole in the city. Casa Vallarta thoughtfully leaves the requisite chunks of ripe-but-firm avocado, the right spritz of lime juice and just enough cilantro to make you feel that cool Puerto Vallarta breeze splash against your face.

### Readers' choice

Las Hadas

## Best green chile

### Critics' choice

Brewery Bar IV  
6482 S. Parker Road  
[www.brewerybar3.com](http://www.brewerybar3.com)  
303-699-1544

When looking for good green chile, there are several factors that need to be taken into account: flavor, fire and meatiness. Brewery Bar IV's pork green chile meets all of these demands. It's filled with tons of tender pork and mellow chile peppers serve up respectable surge of heat to it. But most importantly, it blows

away its competition in the flavor category —leaving you craving for more. Luckily, they offer four sizes: cup, bowl, pint and quart.

**Readers' choice**

Las Hadas

## Best BBQ

**Critics' choice**

Colston's BBQ & More  
5001 S. Parker Road #115  
720-870-5772

The newest 'cue joint on the map is, hands down, the best. The pulled and chopped pork dishes are the most popular (with good reason), but don't miss the brisket, which simply melts off the fork. The sauce is a good, strong counterpart to the smoky meats that puts the ultra-sweet stuff at other places to shame. This is the way North Carolina style should be — and be sure to top it off with a nice, cold glass of sweet tea.

**Readers' choice**

Jim 'n Nick's  
24153 E. Prospect Ave.  
720-274-5300  
[www.jimnicks.com](http://www.jimnicks.com)

## Best hot wings

**Critics' choice**

Wing Hut  
15473 E. Hampden Ave.  
303-699-9464  
[www.winghutorora.com](http://www.winghutorora.com)

Wing Hut is the true heavyweight in the local hot wing division, with bigger-boned, meatier chicken wings that the competition can't measure up to. The only problem with going to Wing Hut is picking from the 40 flavors of varying hotness, which range all the way up to XXXHot for those with leather gobs. At \$3.99 for a half pound (4-5 wings) or \$5.99 for a full pound (7-10 wings), it's affordable enough to taste several. Sentinel staffers are particularly fond of the Lemon Pepper wings.

**Readers' choice**

Wing Stop  
Multiple locations  
[www.wingstop.com](http://www.wingstop.com)

## Best Fried Chicken

**Critics' choice**

King Soopers  
Multiple locations  
[www.kingsoopers.com](http://www.kingsoopers.com)

No doubt about it, the Colonel would blush on first bite of the crispy crust and juicy tender fried chicken offerings at the King Soopers deli. The consistent, well-spiced crust and plump pieces can't be ignored. While each store's recipe varies with its head chef, the quality is reliable across the board, which makes the supermarket a good stop to make before any large barbecue or family gathering.

**Readers' choice**

KFC  
Multiple locations  
[www.kfc.com](http://www.kfc.com)

## Best Diner

**Critics' choice**

Johnny's Diner  
2323 S. Havana St.  
303-369-8307

Johnny's Diner has served enough homey food to make sure almost everyone in Aurora has had their fair share. The no-nonsense chow is as delicious as it is American. Although thought of as just another stand, Johnny's has been doing things a little bit better for years. If you haven't had a delicious fried egg sandwich from Johnny's yet, then you're just waking up on the wrong side of the bed each morning.

**Readers' choice**

Rosie's  
14061 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-752-3663  
[www.rosies-diner.com](http://www.rosies-diner.com)

**Best Place To Eat Standing Up****Critics' choice**

Taste of Aurora, every fall at the Stampede  
2430 S. Havana St.  
303-696-7686

It's the sheer variety of dishes that make the annual Taste of Aurora the best place to eat standing up. In fact, there are so many choices, you just might have to lay down afterward.

**Readers' choice (tie)**

Saddle Rock Golf Course  
21705 E. Arapahoe Road  
303-699-3939  
and  
America's Bar & Grill  
2340 S. Chambers Road  
303-337-3721  
[www.americasbarandgrill.com](http://www.americasbarandgrill.com)  
and  
Chipotle  
Multiple locations  
[www.chipotle.com](http://www.chipotle.com)

**Best subs****Critics' choice**

Carmine Lonardo's  
15380 E. Smoky Hill Road  
303-699-4532

Many sandwich shops let you create your own sandwiches from tubs of ingredients that may have been sitting around all day. At Carmine Lonardo's, the construction of a sandwich happens right in front of your eyes, as generous portions of meat are sliced fresh and cheese comes straight out of the cooler. Nine specialties are on the menu for the \$6.99 lunch special — highlighted by Carmine's Italian Combo, featuring capicola, salami, pepperoni, ham and provolone, and homemade meatball — or build your own for \$7.99 with your choice of bread.

**Readers' choice**

Subway  
Multiple locations  
[www.subway.com](http://www.subway.com)

**Best Joint for Corn Dogs****Critics' choice**

Hot Dogs on a Stick  
Town Center of Aurora mall  
303-343-3825

This taste of Americana is worth having to navigate the busy food court and mall. All-beef franks and damned-good veggie dogs, if you prefer, fried to golden perfection sporting a crunchy corn batter poked with a stick just right for rollin' in the mustard. The dogs are done up in fresh canola oil and never greasy and always made to order. Wash 'em down with honest-to-gawd real fresh-squeezed lemonade that'll only make you wish there was a boardwalk or midway nearby the make day complete.

**Best Joint for Brats****Critics' and readers' choice**

Bender's Brat House  
15343 E. Sixth Ave.  
303-344-2648

Ach du meine gute! Even the choosiest German lines up with the rest before 11 a.m. to get the best brats in the metro area. Juicy, plump, crispy on the outside and never greasy on the inside, Benders serves 'em up hot and fast and slathered in the perfect sauerkraut or brown mustard. Not only are the dogs the best in town, the krautburger is something you'll talk about for weeks.

## Best Upscale Dinner

### Critics' choice

Wine Experience Cafe & World Cellar  
6240 S. Main St.  
303-928-7630  
[www.wineexperiencecafe.com](http://www.wineexperiencecafe.com)

This newcomer to Southlands, stole the show — and our palates — with an expertly prepared menu to accompany its dizzying wine collection. After opening last year, Chef Matthew Franklin has been dazzling diners with a downtown menu in the heart of suburbia. Roasted duck breast, Marscapone polenta and a expertly-layered coq au vin are just some of the fare that Franklin has offered from the Southlands restaurant — we're just anxious to see what another year brings this Aurora masterpiece.

### Readers' choice

The Summit Steak & Seafood House  
2700 S. Havana St.  
303-751-2112  
[www.aurorasummit.com](http://www.aurorasummit.com)

## Best Takeout

### Critics' choice

Outback Steakhouse  
Multiple locations

After a long day at work, a steak and baked potato sounds great to most of us. But if spending an hour or more slaving over the grill or hot oven sounds like too much work, Outback is a more-than-adequate substitute. Who else can deliver a Bloomin' Onion to you via curbside service? Outback's online system can also remember your previous orders so you can click and pick it up. Surprise your husband or wife with this take-out treat and collect the points.

### Readers' choice

Colston's BBQ & More

## Best drive through or drive-in

### Critics' choice

Jim 'N Nick's BBQ  
24153 E. Prospect Ave.  
720-274-5300  
[www.jimnicks.com](http://www.jimnicks.com)

Looking to feed the family or just have a hankerin' for a ridiculous amount of barbecue, but don't have the time to go out? Jim 'N Nick's lets you call in and order a meal for six, 12 or 18, and then drive on through and pick it up. You'll never sit in front of a static-y burger-joint speaker again.

### Readers' choice

Sonic  
Multiple locations  
[www.sonicdrivein.com](http://www.sonicdrivein.com)

## Best American Cuisine

### Critics' choice

Bent Fork Grill  
12191 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-337-6600  
[www.bentforkgrill.com](http://www.bentforkgrill.com)

Like everyone who eats here, we always come back. You can only stay away so long from homey delicacies like juicy black-pepper and Bleu-cheese burgers, tender meatloaf complete with creamy smashed potatoes or a rewarding cobb salad. But the Fork also offers sumptuous variations on a theme, like tender crab cakes not rolling in mayo but teased by a piquant aïoli and the other-wordly, creamiest mac-and-cheese sporting spicy elk sausage, or shanks of lamb baked until they're nearly stewed in a mixture of pungent rosemary and roasted peppers. Glasses of hearty California Zin rule here. Take it easy on the hefty entrees, folks. Dessert varies, but there are plenty who've made the trek for outrageous pear creme brulees or deadly things done with chocolate.

### Readers' choice

Apple Creek Restaurant & Grill  
10600 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-306-6300



## Best Burgers

### Critics' choice

Johnny's Diner  
2323 S. Havana St.  
303-369-8307

There's more to a great hamburger than we'll ever know. It goes way past our backyard grill and that three pound mess we call "specially seasoned ground beef." It's about the seasoning in the griddle, the soft squishiness of the buns, thick-sliced tomatoes, crisp lettuce and the cut of the jib working the iron giant in the kitchen. Thankfully, Johnny's combines all the necessary ingredients — and some we can't put our finger on — into Aurora's best burger. No doubt, there's plenty of places in this suburb that can throw a unique spin on the old favorite, but Johnny's can claim the best pound-for-pound American meat sandwich title this year. We're expecting a serious fight next year.

### Readers' choice

Fatburger  
Multiple locations  
[www.fatburger.com](http://www.fatburger.com)

## Best French fries

### Critics' choice

Carl's Jr.'s  
Multiple locations  
[www.carlsjr.com](http://www.carlsjr.com)

Carl's Jr.'s has a reputation for massive, restaurant-sized burgers that make calorie counters cringe, but the real star at the chain with a yellow star mascot is its CrissCut French fries. In a food category with thousands of contenders in all shapes and sizes, Carl's Jr. rises to the top with crispy crunchy treats that look standard, but don't taste that way. The crisscut fries aren't too greasy and offer an easy grip, vital to eating in a car, which statistically is where most consumption takes places. Best of all, an order of CrissCut fries has nearly half the calories and sodium content of the restaurant's regular medium fries.

### Readers' choice

McDonald's  
Multiple locations  
[www.mcdonalds.com](http://www.mcdonalds.com)

## Best cheesesteaks

### Critics' and readers' choice

Chester's  
3301 Peoria St.  
303-367-9778

Chester's cheesesteaks are super rich and cheesy, and oh-so good. Their cheesy concoctions are an explosion of flavor with each bite better than the last. Get Chester's special, which features steak and cheese smothered in the shop's special sauce.

### Readers' choice (tie)

The Rock Restaurant & Bar  
22934 E. Smoky Hill Road  
303-690-7934

## Best Vegetarian Cuisine

### Critics' choice

Masalaa  
3140 S. Parker Road  
303-755-6272  
[www.masalaausa.com](http://www.masalaausa.com)

Going to Masalaa might be as close to traveling to the shores of Mumbai as most people will ever get. The chefs at this vegetarian oasis have been serving some of the best, hidden vegetarian Indian dishes in Aurora for years. With a symphony of blended, traditional Indian spices and cooking techniques the offering at Masalaa ranges from the daunting to the delicious. It's easy to dedicate months discovering the flavors of Masalaa — the menu is that big — but we just keep coming back to the mouthwatering dosas. Give your palate a vacation and try the Pondicherry Masala Dosa, it's that good.

### Readers' choice

Sweet Tomatoes

14015 E. Evans Ave.  
303-745-4664  
[www.sweettomatoes.com](http://www.sweettomatoes.com)

## Best Seafood Cuisine

### Critics' choice

Sonoda's  
3108 S. Parker Road  
303-337-3800  
[www.sonodassushi.com](http://www.sonodassushi.com)

Typically thought of as a great sushi restaurant, Sonoda's offers much more. Seafood Udon is a good initiation to the seafood selection that Sonoda's can offer, that's if you haven't had your fill of baked jumbo clams as an appetizer. There's plenty to choose from this traditional Japanese menu, and although the tempura is a great choice no matter your mood, the mako shark is succulent enough to give you a second thought.

### Readers' choice

Red Lobster  
10854 E. Alameda Ave.  
303-343-6161  
and  
6139 S. Southlands Parkway  
720-870-4117  
[www.redlobster.com](http://www.redlobster.com)

## Best Steak

### Critics' choice

The Summit Steak & Seafood House  
2700 S. Havana St.  
[www.aurorasummit.com](http://www.aurorasummit.com)  
303-751-2112

It's all about age. And aged, perfect cuts of beef handled with care and loving attention make for not just a wonderful steak, but a great steak. The Summit is aptly named as the top of mountain when it comes to making sure everything comes together for that perfect bite of juicy T-bone or sumptuous slice of tenderloin. With a host of hefty red wines to pick from, the Summit makes for a truly memorable dinner.

## Best Chain Restaurant

### Critics' choice

Old Chicago  
16990 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-338-0144  
[www.oldchicago.com](http://www.oldchicago.com)

What's not to like about a place that has more than 100 beers, almost all of them good? Plus, the pizza is outstanding and the menu massive enough to please anyone. And if you end up here with the in-laws, there are always plenty of televisions and video games to keep you entertained.

### Readers' choice

Chili's Grill & Bar  
Multiple locations  
[www.chilis.com](http://www.chilis.com)

## Best Latte

### Critics' and readers' choice

Carino Coffee  
20971 E. Smoky Hill Road.  
303-766-7272  
[carinocoffee.squarespace.com](http://carinocoffee.squarespace.com)

There's enough coffee places dotting Aurora to make anyone's head spin. Done by everyone, but done well by very few, Carino Coffee falls into the latter category. Alina's Latin take on an Italian favorite gives the latte a fresh twist that makes sure that this coffee place won't stray into the ordinary. Alina's a Hinkley graduate, so the Aurora roots go deep, and her coffee art has us hoping that she stays around for a long time to come. If you've got the time, she's got the coffee — and a free library and wi-fi — to keep you relaxed and well-caffeinated.

## Best Cup o' Joe

**Critics' choice**

E Steamers Coffeehouse  
360 S. Chambers Road  
303-369-6856

Along with its tempting selection of coffee and espresso blends from the Cafe Cartago bean company, E. Steamers offers customers what any good coffee shop should: a cozy and comfortable atmosphere where you can find a degree of calm and concentration along with your steaming caffeine. With unlikely in-store amenities like a fireplace, board games and even a piano, E. Steamers is an ideal place to curl up with a good book, work on your laptop or try out that new Debussy piece in front of a friendly crowd. Good coffee and good company makes for a good time.

**Readers' choice**

Carino Coffee

## Best Smoothie

**Critics' choice**

Comfort Cafe  
586 Dayton St.  
303-360-7807  
[www.yourcomfortcafe.com](http://www.yourcomfortcafe.com)

Blended fruit, juices and something creamy is a delicate balancing act. Too heavy one way or the other way can send even the best-intentioned smoothie into an ice-cream headache tailspin. Comfort Cafe won our critics over with their mango and strawberry smoothie that were icy cold to the touch but refreshingly cool on the tongue. These aren't summer-only refreshments but a year-long treat that beckons loudest on a fiery hot summer day.

**Readers' choice**

Jamba Juice  
Multiple locations  
[www.jambajuice.com](http://www.jambajuice.com)

## Best Buffet

**Critics' choice**

Sweet Tomatoes  
14015 E. Evans Ave.  
[www.sweettomatoes.com](http://www.sweettomatoes.com)  
303-745-4664

Sweet Tomatoes is the anti-buffet. In a world full of quick, cheap and not-so-healthy options for the do-it-yourself diner, this is your oasis. The salad bar is as plentiful and varied as any in town (with plenty of prepared salads), and the selection of teas, sodas and juices helps you find the perfect complement to their array of piping-hot soups, pastas and bakery items. The menu changes every month, so there's always something new — and be sure to head there after 4 p.m. for the specialty "lava" cake for a sinful dessert.

**Readers' choice**

Country Buffet  
1026 S. Sable Blvd.  
303-745-1844  
[www.oldcountrybuffet.com](http://www.oldcountrybuffet.com)

## Best patio

**Critics' choice**

Emerald Isle  
4385 S. Parker Road  
303-690-3722

Like a conductor, the Emerald Isle patio continues to set a strong tempo for outdoor venues everywhere in the city. Backed by the beautiful Cherry Creek Reservoir, which never loses its luster — especially at sunset — there's no finer place to enjoy a happy hour after work or wile away a few hours with friends at any time. Great deals on margaritas only enhances the experience, and the American-Mexican menu has favorite munchies to round out the view.

**Readers' choice**

The Rock Restaurant

## Best Place to Eat Brunch

**Critics' choice**

The Summit Steak & Seafood House

2700 S. Havana St.  
303-751-2112  
[www.aurorasummit.com](http://www.aurorasummit.com)

The Summit can reasonably be called an Aurora institution. For more than two decades, the restaurant's offered a fine array of steak and seafood, and while the clientele has become a bit greyer in recent years, the atmosphere has remained unique. As an option for brunch, the Summit offers an ideal marriage of ambience and menu - diners can choose between denser dishes like prime rib and lighter options like the tuna stuffed tomato. With its backdrop of tradition and loyal diners, the Summit makes for a luxurious stop on a Sunday afternoon.

**Readers' choice (tie)**

Le Peep  
15311 E. Alameda Parkway  
303-755-6350  
[www.lepeep.com](http://www.lepeep.com)  
and  
The Rock Restaurant

## Best Breakfast

**Critics' and readers' choice**

Sam's No. 3  
2580 S. Havana Street  
303-751-0347  
[www.samsno3.com](http://www.samsno3.com)

An icon near the corner of Havana and Parker, Sam's No. 3 is a frequent Hot Stuff winner, and a frequent winner in Aurorans' hearts. The numerous breakfasts and the countless ways they're prepared gives even the most diehard Sam's fans reason to keep going back. We all know the green chili is among the best in town, but when you couple it with a gyros omelette stuffed to the gills with roasted meat and feta cheese, we'll waddle back for more every weekend.

**Readers' choice (tie)**

International House of Pancakes  
Multiple locations  
[www.ihop.com](http://www.ihop.com)

## Best Waffles

**Critics' choice**

Smokey Jackson's BBQ  
14561 E. Alameda Ave.  
303-344-5400  
[www.smokeyjacksonsbbq.com](http://www.smokeyjacksonsbbq.com)

The waffles at Smokey Jackson's are crispy where it counts, soft in the middle, and fluffily cover almost the entire plate. Take a lead from your friends in the South and order yours with fried chicken where salty, crunchy, crispy and sweet all meet in a gastronomic Nirvana.

**Readers' choice**

Waffle House  
12880 E. Mississippi Ave.  
303-696-1566  
[www.wafflehouse.com](http://www.wafflehouse.com)

## Best pancakes

**Critics' choice**

Dozens  
2180 S. Havana St.  
Aurora, CO 80014  
[www.dozensrestaurant.com](http://www.dozensrestaurant.com)  
303-337-6627

Finding the best pancake in town is difficult. So difficult, in fact, that it's even not on menu of our top pick. During our relentless search, we called a natural possibility, Dozens. What we picked up were exquisite pancakes with the perfect blend of fluffiness and substance, taste and appearance. It's the ultimate pancake. They're not, however, on the menu. So ask for 'em by name and tell 'em the Sentinel sent you.

**Readers' choice**

International House of Pancakes

## Best Omelettes

### Critics' choice

Rosie's Diner  
14061 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-752-3663  
[www.rosies-diner.com](http://www.rosies-diner.com)

It's an unlikely recipe for an omelette: Combine some staples of Greek cuisine (gyros, feta cheese, tomatoes) with the old-fashioned take on an egg breakfast. Rosie's pulls it off deliciously in their Greek omelette, and their recipes for the Denver, the Gouda, the veggie, the ham and cheese and the meat combine fresh ingredients with a solid omelette base.

### Readers' choice (tie)

Le Peep & Sam's No. 3

## Best Doughnuts

### Critics' and readers' choice

Lamar's Doughnuts  
10001 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-743-8585  
[www.lamars.com](http://www.lamars.com)

It's hard to argue that doughnuts aren't the perfect breakfast food. They're handheld, sweet and delicious and no one does them better than Lamar's. The cake doughnuts here hold up to dunking but make the test of melty goodness. Top-notch ingredients and oil make these treats the top in town. Whether your downfall is chocolate, fruit or maple-goodness, the selection at Lamar's will please everyone.

## Best Bagels

### Critics' choice

Latta's Bagels & Coffee  
15290 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-368-1821

Latta's has mastered the art of creating great bagels and then taking them to the next level: Great bagel sandwiches. Quality is not sacrificed with the incredible variety you will find here, and the ease of the drive-thru lane is a great help when you're looking for a quick food-and-coffee fix on the way to work each morning. To top it off, the service has never been less than stellar, and the coffee is certainly superior to your average cup o' joe.

### Readers' choice

Cafe Bagelicious  
16748 E. Smoky Hill Road # 9F  
303-766-4161

## Best Breakfast Burrito

### Readers' choice

Sam's No. 3  
2580 S. Havana St.  
303-751-0347  
[www.samsno3.com](http://www.samsno3.com)

## Best soup and salad

### Critics' choice

Sweet Tomatoes  
14015 E. Evans Ave.  
303-745-4664  
[www.sweettomatoes.com](http://www.sweettomatoes.com)

The best thing about Sweet Tomatoes is that they don't just offer one soup du jour, they have eight. Not hungry for cream of broccoli? Give the deep kettle house chili a try. Then head over to the salad bar where you make it exactly how you want it. Not only is it healthy, it will sate one's palate. It's definitely a place where the quantity of the fare matches the quality.

### Readers' choice

Olive Garden

## Best Place to Cure a Hangover

### Critics' choice

Real de Minas  
11101 E. Colfax Ave.

303-367-1505  
and  
3341 Peoria St.  
720-859-0676  
[www.realdeminasrest.com](http://www.realdeminasrest.com)

Of course the best cure for a hangover is using better judgment about partaking in Blue Curacao/Mezcal shooters after a night of beers and mojitos, but if you had that kind of sense you wouldn't have read this far. Once the damage is done and you can get yourself off the couch, head to Real de Minas, either on Colfax or Peoria. Now you need medicinal capsicum and a tall, cool agua fresca to cure what ails you. Real de Minas offers up bowls of spicy menudo, not a good idea for those fresh from praying to the porcelain gods or uninitiated to the subtle pleasures of tripe and jalapeños in chili-powder broth. For the achin' amateurs, order the chilaquiles or huevos rancheros with grilled peppers. If none of the above make you feel any better, you can always go back to the mojitos.

**Readers' choice**  
Old Chicago

## Best Sweets from a Bakery

**Critics' and readers' choice**

Daniel's of Paris  
12253 E. Iliff Ave. #C  
303-751-6084  
[www.danielsofparis.com](http://www.danielsofparis.com)

In its unassuming location on East Iliff Avenue, Daniels of Paris has carved out its reputation as the best bakery in the Denver metro area for years. So it comes as no surprise that it's our pick for Best Sweets again this year. Their sumptuous chocolate ganache cakes and luscious pan au chocolate have been enchanting Aurorans for years, and they're not short on creativity either. Sables, the traditional shortbread of France, comes in every shape and color for every holiday in the year.

## Best Savories from a Bakery

**Critics' choice**

Katherine's French Bakery, Cafe & Catering  
2832 S. Havana St.  
303-695-5000  
[www.katherines.org](http://www.katherines.org)

Chefs Mario and Katherine are as prolific as ever with their sweets and savory masterpieces. Cakes and pastries rivaling anything in Marais have long been a trademark. But savory creations made with crusts, pastries, meats cheeses and eggs shine brighter than anything. Katherine's is the perfect place for breakfast and lunch treats, and an even better place to trust for your next catered meeting or party. This is one of the best slices of Europe you can find in the Rocky Mountain region.

**Readers' choice**  
Daniel's of Paris

## Best cookies

**Critics' choice**

The Cookie Company  
6150 S. Main St. 1-108  
Southlands Shopping Center  
303-928-7592

The Cookie Company owners Johnna Lamphere and Frankie Hoff appropriately tout the sumptuous offerings at their new store as "sinfully good." Their massive, moist treats certainly touch on several of the seven deadly sins — most notably inspiring mouth-watering lust and possibly gluttony at the very least. From simple peanut butter to scrumptious pumpkin, The Cookie Company, the latest top-notch addition to the Southlands food arsenal, blows away the competition and should make you pass on mom's homemade creations.

**Readers' choice**  
Daniel's of Paris

## Best Place to Take Kids for Dinner

**Critics' and readers' choice**

Cici's Pizza

14000 E. Mississippi Ave.  
303-597-0080  
and  
18648 E. Hampden Ave.  
303-617-3222  
[www.cicispizza.com](http://www.cicispizza.com)

This place is a dream come true for kids and parents. Hot, crispy pizzas, all you can handle sketti that even the pickiest little tyke will like, fresh salads and everybody gets to choose their own everything all for about six bucks a head, dessert included. No kidding. The pizzas are always hot and fresh and the pop machine is overflowing with all the stuff that makes kids happy, all in an atmosphere that says, "we like that in a kid." And the best part of the trip: hot cinnamon rolls for dessert. What's not to like?

## Best Ice Cream or Frozen Yogurt

### Critics' choice

Not Just Yogurt  
2275 S. Peoria St.  
303-337-0323

Mark Gunn and his staff have been filling Aurora's cones and cups for the better part of 20 years at his location on Peoria. With sprinkles and cookies galore, the treats at Not Just Yogurt are enough to cool off even the hottest summer day. Serving Blue Bunny ice cream and his own sinfully yummy yogurt, Gunn and his crew know what it takes to keep Aurorans melting over the summer staple.

### Readers' choice

Cold Stone Creamery  
Multiple locations  
[www.coldstonecreamery.com](http://www.coldstonecreamery.com)

## Best Dessert

### Critics' choice

Romano's Cheesecake Co. Cafe  
12101 E. Iliff Ave.  
303-671-4777  
[www.romanoscheesecakeco.com](http://www.romanoscheesecakeco.com)

If you can imagine a cheesecake flavor that sounds delicious, chances are Romano's has already beat you to it. With about 40 cheesecake choices like cranberry walnut, eggnog, peppermint swirl or peach amaretto, Romano's has plenty of variety. Each one is a perfect combination of creamy, sour goodness that keeps this icon at the top of the list.

### Readers' choice

Daniel's of Paris

## Best Assembled Meal Service

### Critics' choice

Entrée Vous  
22691 E. Aurora Parkway  
303-693-3139  
[www.entreevous.com](http://www.entreevous.com)

Cooking can be fun again, as the owners of this meal-prep kitchen are known to say. A fast-paced life is not one devoid of healthy, home-cooked food, and Entrée Vous makes it easy with 10-minute meals that you can choose and have assembled, ready to complete for your family. The menu changes regularly, so there's no rut to get into with this easy-to-use service.

### Readers' choice

Supper Solutions  
4250 S. Chambers Road  
720-480-1424  
[www.suppersolutionsinc.com](http://www.suppersolutionsinc.com)

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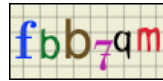
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