

Ottawa Restaurant Guide

For many decades, the best dining experience in Ottawa was prime rib with Yorkshire pudding, not that there is anything wrong with that. Still, over the past twenty years the city has expanded its culinary horizons. The goal of this guide is to provide some pointers to a wide array restaurant options in the city, recognizing that everyone has different tastes and budgets. Most restaurants will be within walking distance of the hotel, but some will be farther afield, requiring a bus/taxi ride.

For those of you that want to just wander around and menu shop there are several restaurant districts in the city that I would recommend.

Byward Market. The largest and closest restaurant area is the Byward Market, which is just on the other side of Rideau Street and is roughly bounded by Rideau Street, Sussex Drive, Peter Street and King Edward Drive. There are dozens of restaurants of all types and price points.

Elgin Street. On the western side of the Rideau Canal, Elgin has a large number of pubs and restaurants (just keep walking south).

Rest of Downtown. Downtown lies to the west of Elgin Street. There is a large collection of restaurants and pubs here too, but it is better to have an idea of a place to head for, because the restaurant density is lower.

Preston Street. Moving further west, this area is a taxi or bus ride away and includes a wide selection of Italian restaurants. Most are reasonably priced.

Hintonburg. Even further west of Preston Street is Hintonburg, which is an upcoming area with a very good, eclectic set of restaurants and pubs the stretch along Wellington Street West.

A quick note on breakfast

Not many restaurant guides recommend breakfast places, but here are a few suggestions for the early risers. For the classic greasy breakfast go to the Mayflower, the Manx, or the Elgin Diner (all on Elgin Street). The Elgin Diner is open 24 hours for the insomniacs. Moulin De Provence in the Byward Market has pastries and bread (President Obama eats there) and the French Baker provides a more upscale breakfast. The Sconewitch, which is about a 15 minute walk away from the hotel on the western side of downtown, has the best scones in town. No specialty coffee, but the straight-up coffee is good. There is also a Starbucks and Tim Hortons in the Rideau Centre to which the hotel has a direct connection.

Below are some restaurant and pub recommendations based on my own experience, as well as recommendations from others. For each the average cost of entree is noted: \$ = under \$15; \$\$ = between \$15 and \$25; and \$\$\$ = over \$25

ByWard Market

Play. Small plates (tapas style). Very good, but all those plates add up. Good place to go after the reception to fill up. Close by. (\$\$\$) 1 York Street. www.playfood.ca 613.667.9207

Empire Grill. Steakhouse for the carnivores. (\$\$\$) 47 Clarence Street. www.empiregrill.com 613.241.1343.

Murray Street. Artisanal Canadian. (\$\$\$) 110 Murray Street. www.murraystreet.ca 613.562.7244.

Heart N Crown. Iris pub. (\$) 67 Clarence Street. www.heartandcrown.ca 613.562.0674.

Chez Lucien. Funky place with gourmet burgers. (\$) 137 Murray Street. 613.241.3533.

Elgin Street

Elgin St Diner. Arguably the best poutine in town, and it's 24 hours to boot! (\$) Elgin Street. 374 Elgin Street. www.elginstreetdiner.com. 613 237.9700.

D'Arcy McGees Iris Pub. Classic Irish pub, frequented by MPs and political staffers. (\$) Elgin Street. 44 Sparks Street. 613.230.4433.

Johnny Farina. Casual Italian dining. (\$\$) 216 Elgin Street. www.johnnyfarina.com 613.564.5155.

Pancho Villa. Good Mexican for Ottawa. (\$) 361 Elgin Street. 613.234.8872.

Town. Upscale, artisanal, Italian dining. (\$\$\$) 296 Elgin Street. www.townlovesyou.ca 613.695.8696

Downtown

The Whalesbone Oyster House. Best fish restaurant in town, with a great, casual atmosphere. If you want to go, book well ahead. (\$\$\$) 430 Bank Street. www.thewhalesbone.com 613.231.8569

107 4th Avenue Wine Bar. Great food, and wine of course. (\$\$) Technically in the Glebe (South of Downtown). 107 Fourth Avenue www.107fourthavenue.com 613.236.0040.

Mill Street Brew Pub. Good beer and food and great location in an old mill on the Ottawa river. (\$\$) www.ottawa.millstreetbrewpub.ca. 555 Wellington Street (take a taxi). 613.567.2337

Coriander Thai. Very good Thai food. I highly recommend #47 (Chinese egg plant dish). (\$) 282 Kent Street. 613.233.2828.

Atomic Rooster. Has live music and great food. (\$\$) 303 Bank Street. www.atomicrooster.ca 613.569.1000.

Hintonburg

Wellington Gastro Pub. The GP offers casual fine dining, with menu that changes daily. One of the best restaurants in town. (\$\$\$) Hintonburg. 1325 Wellington Street West. www.thewellingtongastropub.com 613.729.1315

Backlane Cafe. Fine dining. Very good. Probably worth the hike. (\$\$\$) Hintonburg. 1087 Wellington Street West. www.backlanecafe.com 613.695.2999

Tennessee Willems. Best thin-crust, wood oven pizza in town. (\$\$) Hintonburg. 1082 Wellington Street West. www.twpizza.com 613.722.0000

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