

Japanese Conquer Capital in New Zagat Dining Survey

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More and More US Cities in Line with Far East Taste Trend - Makoto Hailed for Best Food in D.C., Inn at Little Washington Drops to No. 2 - Citronelle Voted Most Popular, Locals Go Green and Online

Democrats and Republicans may disagree on who should be the next White House resident, but the quest for good food unites us all, and at Zagat Survey, the results are in. In the Washington D.C. Area, 7,200 foodies of both parties have joined a national trend in casting their ballots for a Japanese candidate. The "impeccable" Makoto, with an estimated cost of \$75, was rated number one for its food. The Inn at Little Washington (\$150), last year's frontrunner, dropped to No. 2, followed by the Mediterranean Komi (\$113). Michel Richard's Citronelle (\$104) claimed honors as the District's Most Popular eatery, while his more casual and lower priced Central (\$52) took No. 5 for popularity.

Tim Zagat, CEO of Zagat Survey said, "It's exciting to see Japanese restaurants winning top food ratings in city after city. This was inconceivable five or ten years ago when French restaurants predominated everywhere. The other major trend, reflected by Central, is the popularity of less expensive, casual places."

Prices: The average cost of a meal in Washington rose to \$35.13 -- up only an annual inflation rate of 0.6% since the last survey. In comparison, a meal in New York costs a whopping \$39.46. At the other end of the spectrum is New Orleans, which comes in at \$26.18. With an infusion of less expensive wine bars and neighborhood restaurants, local dining inflation was kept under control with 42% local residents claiming to eat out more often than they did two years ago. In addition, the No. 1 steakhouse this year is Ray's the Steak, with an average meal costing \$44 but beating out the longtime favorite Prime Rib, which bills an estimated \$66. Clearly, Washingtonians appreciate a good deal more than ever these days.

Affordable Fare: Evidence that a good meal doesn't have to break the bank, this year, five of the eight Most Popular restaurants -- Zaytinya (\$41), Jaleo (\$35), Clyde's (\$32), Old Ebbitt Grill (\$39) and 2 Amy's (\$24) are all moderately priced.

Best Buys: Increasingly important in the current bear market, the guide also includes a list of forty Best Buys led by Amsterdam Falafel, Five Guys, Ben's Chili Bowl, Chop't Creative Salad and California Tortilla. Zagat calls these "BATH Restaurants" i.e. they are Better Alternatives To Home.

Winners by Cuisine Type:

American (New) - Inn at Little Washington	Middle Eastern - Amsterdam Falafel
American (Trad.) - Ray's/Classics	Nuevo Latino - Cafe Atlantico
Burgers - Matchbox	Pan-Asian - TenPenh
Chinese - Peking Gourmet	Pizza - Pasta Plus
French - L'Auberge Provencale	Seafood - Kinkead's
French (New) - Citronelle	South American - El Pollo Rico
Indian - Rasika	Southern - Vidalia
Italian - Obelisk	Southwest/Tex-Mex - Sweetwater Tavern
Japanese - Makoto	Spanish - Taberna del Alabardero
Mediterranean - Zaytinya	Steakhouse - Ray's The Steaks
Mexican - El Mariachi	Thai - Thai Square
	Vietnamese - Pho 75

Service: As in past surveys, D.C. locals, by an overwhelming 75%, cite "poor service" as the most irritating part of dining out. All other irritants combined -- including noise, prices, food and parking -- amount to only a quarter of complaints. Still, Washingtonians tip a generous 19.2% which is above the national average of 19.0%.

Favorite Cuisines: Despite the fact that a 22% plurality of D.C. surveyors says they prefer Italian food, none of the most popular restaurants in D.C. (Citronelle, Zaytinya, Jaleo, Kinkead's, and Central Michel Richard) are Italian. Following Italian as favorites are American (17%), French (12%) and Thai and Japanese (each at 10%).

Newcomers: This year's Top Rated D.C. Newcomer is The Source, which is followed by Westend Bistro by Eric Ripert (of NYC's Le Bernardin), Evo Bistro, Proof, and Il Fornaio. In the works are new venues by such celebrated chefs as Alain Ducasse, Art Smith and Todd English.

On-line Reserving: According to this year's survey, an extraordinary 37% of D.C. diners make their reservations online versus 17% in New York and 14% in Los Angeles. Only San Francisco and Atlanta are higher at 43% and 40%, respectively.

Going Green and Health-Conscious: Local residents are continuing to move in a "greener" direction. Seventy percent of surveyors consider eating locally grown food to be important, while 68% favor low-carb, low-fat, heart-healthy menu items. Food preparation is also a concern to surveyors, as 66% want trans fats banned from food preparation and 62% are willing "to pay more" for sustainably raised food. A number of new options offer eco-friendly edibles at fast-food prices. Some of these include Ashburn's American Flatbread Kitchen (\$18), U Street's Chix (\$14) and Tackle Box, an inexpensive off-shoot of Georgetown's sustainable seafooder Hook.

The Guide in Detail: The new Zagat guide contains ratings and reviews of 1,155 of the region's best eateries including Baltimore, Annapolis, Frederick, and the Eastern Shore. All of the ratings and reviews are based on the voting of over 7,200 avid local diners who ate out roughly 1.1 million meals in the past year. The guide is available in book form, on ZAGAT.com

and on the award-winning mobile website, ZAGAT.mobi. Besides featuring expansive ratings and reviews, it breaks out restaurants by location, cuisine and special features, including Business Dining, Historic Places, Power Scenes and Pre-Theater Dining as well as offering neighborhood maps.

The 2009 Washington D.C./Baltimore Restaurants guide (\$14.95) was edited by Olga Boikess, Marty Katz and Shelley Gallagher and is available at all major bookstores, through ZAGAT.com, or by calling 888/371-5440.

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