

Mandi Goodsett and Amanda Koziura

Dining in Cleveland

A foodie destination

Over the past few years Cleveland has become a foodie destination, full of award-winning chefs and locally sourced restaurants.¹ Known for the diversity of its ethnic options and the restaurants of several high profile chefs, Cleveland dining is admired by residents and visitors alike. Whether you're a vegetarian, an adventurous eater, in the mood for comfort food, or simply looking for a convenient bite to eat, the Cleveland food scene has you covered.

\$ = under \$10/person
 \$\$ = \$10–30/person
 \$\$\$ = \$31–60/person,
 \$\$\$\$ = over \$60/person



Near the convention center

Looking for something close by? Check out these nearby options. All are about a 10-to-20 minute walk from the convention center.

- **The Burnham Restaurant (\$\$).** Located on the Cleveland Mall, this restaurant prides itself on using Ohio-sourced ingredients to craft familiar dishes with a Cleveland flair.

- **Mallorca (\$\$-\$\$\$).** This eatery offers a cozy, romantic atmosphere and authentic Spanish (Iberian) dishes, perfect for diners looking for some more exotic flavors.

- **Nuevo Modern Mexican and Tequila Bar (\$\$).** Conveniently located along the waterfront, this bar and restaurant is an ideal option for diners hoping for modern Mexican fare and a sizable tequila list.

- **Pizza (216) (\$\$).** Not all pizzas are alike, and Pizza (216) offers a unique take—wood-fired, thin-crust, New York-style pizza with unique topping options, including a vodka cream sauce base, a pierogi-themed pie, and a buffalo chicken option.

- **Johnny's Little Bar (\$\$).** Hidden behind the more upscale Johnny's Downtown, this dive bar is a great place to grab a burger and fries.

- **Zanzibar Soul Fusion (\$\$).** In the mood for soul food? Zanzibar Soul Fusion presents diners with Southern favorites in a sleek, modern venue.

Vegetarian and vegan selections

Many Cleveland restaurants offer delicious vegetarian and vegan options—take it from one of the authors, a vegetarian herself. However, some restaurants in the area do an especially good job of serving those who are interested in more exciting meatless options.

- **Pura Vida (\$\$).** Located off of Cleveland's Public Square, Pura Vida is a favorite

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for vegetarians looking for sophisticated, delicious options.

- **Greenhouse Tavern (\$-\$-\$-\$).** A comfortable local favorite and celebrity chef Jonathon Sawyer's flagship restaurant, Greenhouse Tavern prioritizes sustain-

- **Barrio (\$).** Almost always packed, Barrio's busy environment and Dia de Los Muertos decorations are a favorite among Clevelanders, not to mention their mouth-watering tacos, chips, and salsa.

- **Ohio City Burrito (\$).** A little



East 4th Street is home to many dining destinations, including Greenhouse Tavern, Lola, and Mabel's BBQ. Photo credit: ThisIsCleveland.com.

ability in its dining options, offering both local meat and vegetable dishes, along with popular desserts.

- **Taza Lebanese Grill (\$\$).** Taza is an upscale Lebanese and Mediterranean restaurant with a beautiful, chic interior and lots of flavorful options.

Economical options

You might be attending ACRL on your own dime, in which case the cost of your dining experience might be of utmost importance. Fortunately, you don't need to sacrifice taste for a more affordable dining option. Cleveland has lots of inexpensive restaurant favorites.

- **Al's Deli (\$).** Deli sandwiches and Lebanese favorites at reasonable prices are the heart of the menu at this local lunch spot.

farther afield, Ohio City Burrito's menu is simple, yet affordable. A local favorite and tasty option for lovers of tacos and burritos.

- **Pho Thang Café (\$).** Great Vietnamese food in a casual setting featuring a selection of pho and much more.

- **Winking Lizard Tavern (\$-\$).** This northeast Ohio staple features classic American bar food and a large number of beers—including several local selections—on tap.

Fine dining restaurants

Cleveland is very fortunate to be the home to several well-known chefs, including "Iron Chef" Michael Symon, Jonathan Sawyer, and Zack Bruell. For a memorable and one-of-a-kind dining experience, consider making

a reservation at one of these upscale restaurants, some of which feature the talents of these masterful chefs.

- **Adega (\$\$\$).** This trendy, modern restaurant features a Mediterranean-inspired menu, wood-fired oven, and a wine list with selections from all across Europe.

- **Luca Italian Cuisine (\$\$\$).** Upscale in both atmosphere and edible offerings, Luca offers a lovely view, beautiful art, and luxurious flavors.

Focusing on sustainable, locally sourced ingredients, this steakhouse produces fantastic meals that celebrate Midwest sensibilities.

Brewpubs, breweries, and wine bars

Like many rust belt cities, Cleveland has its share of local breweries and opportunities to enjoy delicious craft beers. If your taste runs more toward a glass of fine wine or a delicious cocktail, Cleveland bars can accommodate. Whether local beer or high-



You'll find local craft beer at Noble Beast Brewing Company. Photo credit: Cody York for ThisIsCleveland.com.

- **Michael Symon's Lola Bistro (\$\$\$).** One of famed chef Michael Symon's eateries—some would argue the best one—Lola Bistro favors Symon's strong suit: meat dishes.

- **Mabel's BBQ (\$\$).** Another of Michael Symon's restaurants (located right next to his Lola Bistro), Mabel's BBQ has an industrial, trendy feel and a menu full of barbeque favorites and beer options.

- **Ristorante Chinato (\$\$).** Located on the trendy East 4th St., Chinato invokes the flavors and the atmosphere of Florence under the direction of the well-reviewed chef Zack Bruell.

- **Urban Farmer Steakhouse (\$\$\$).**

quality wine are your passion (or even if they're not), you might want to visit some of the following.

- **Bin 216 (\$\$).** Located conveniently close to the Playhouse Square theaters, this 1920s-style wine bar is a good option for appetizers and a glass of wine before enjoying a show.

- **Butcher and the Brewer (\$\$).** Organized communally with long, friendly tables, this venue offers both a varied menu and a lengthy craft beer list.

- **Chocolate Bar (\$-\$\$).** If you're looking for a torrent of sweet, chocolatey mixed-drink selections, the Chocolate Bar is

where you want to go. This bar also offers a full menu and, of course, desserts aplenty.

- **Collision Bend Brewing Company (\$\$).** Located in the trendy Flats district, this Zack Bruell brewpub features its own craft beer along with a wide variety of hearty appetizer options.

- **Masthead Brewing Company (\$\$).** Occupying the historic Bryant Building, this location was originally an automotive dealership in the 1920s. Featuring wood-fired pizza and great local beer, this brewpub is a fantastic place to relax after a long day.

- **Noble Beast Brewing Company (\$\$).** Offering highly praised craft beer and excellent gustatory fare (often prepared with local ingredients), Noble Beast is favorite among Clevelanders.

- **Vault (\$\$-\$\$\$).** This cocktail bar is located in old bank vault beneath the Cleveland Trust Rotunda. Share some small plates and drink handcrafted cocktails in this unique and architecturally stunning venue.

Coffee, snacks, and desserts

Not looking for a full meal, but feeling the need for a quick bite? Does the hotel coffee leave something to be desired? Below are some options if you're looking for something sweet or a hit of caffeine to tide you over until your next session.

- **Heinen's of Downtown (\$-\$\$).** Located in the gorgeous and historic Ameritrust Building, this eatery (and grocery store) is well worth a visit, even if you aren't hungry. If your stomach is growling, choose from among a selection of cold salads, sushi, soups, and more, and eat under the amazing rotunda.

- **Insomnia Cookies (\$).** Looking for a sweet treat late at night? Insomnia Cookies, open until 3 a.m. most nights, has you covered. Don't worry if you prefer not to venture out—they also deliver.

- **Pour Cleveland (\$).** For those who prefer coffee prepared with care, this small-batch roastery is a worthy option.

With sleek, simple design, the coffee shop is also a calm place to enjoy your caffeinated masterpiece.

- **Rising Star Coffee Roasters (\$\$).** Another spot for coffee connoisseurs, Rising Star is a local favorite that specializes in ethically sourced coffees from around the world.

Worth venturing out for

If you're looking for something delicious and are willing to travel a little farther afield, there are more than a few spots in and around Cleveland that we think are worth the trek.

Ohio City

Home to the historic West Side Market and several Cleveland classics, this neighborhood is on our must-visit list, and can be accessed via the RTA train stop at W 25th—Ohio City.

- **Crop Bistro (\$\$\$).** Across the street from the historic West Side Market, Crop Bistro occupies a huge, two-story space. Meals are creative and delectable, using local ingredients from the adjacent market.

- **Great Lakes Brewery Brewpub (\$\$).** Great Lakes beers are a staple at any Cleveland gathering. Grab a couple friends and try them out alongside a full menu of Midwestern pub food.

- **Mitchell's Ice Cream (\$).** No visit to northeast Ohio is complete without a visit to one of the locations of this beloved ice cream shop. Both eccentric and classic flavors are available, including vegan options.

- **SOHO Chicken + Whiskey (\$\$).** Fried chicken (or tofu) and classic sides, like fried bologna, deviled eggs, and pimento cheese, make this a destination for anyone seeking a taste of Southern cuisine.

- **Tabletop Cafe (\$).** Enjoy Tabletop's large collections of games (for a small fee), as well as a menu of delicious snacks and a wide range of drinks, both alcoholic and otherwise, to enjoy while you play. The waitstaff will not only take your order, but also teach you how to play games from their collection.

Little Italy

This historic Cleveland neighborhood is known for its celebration of Italian heritage and culture through art and food. The neighborhood is accessible via the RTA train stop at Little Italy.

- **Presti's and Corbo's (\$).** Everyone in Cleveland has an opinion about which one of these two iconic Italian bakeries is the best. We suggest trying the cassata cake at both to help you make up your mind.

- **Mama Santa's (\$\$).** Regularly mentioned in any friendly debate about the best pizza in Cleveland, this Little Italy institution is well worth the trip to enjoy a slice.

- **Mia Bella (\$\$-\$\$\$).** The quality of this cozy Italian restaurant makes it stand out from its peers. It features a wealth of amazing Italian favorites, including several vegetarian options.

Shaker Square and Lakewood

If you're willing to take an RTA train or ride-share farther afield, you might explore Shaker Square to the east or Lakewood to the west. Located near the border of Shaker Heights, Shaker Square is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and a go-to for locals looking for dinner and a movie at the locally owned Shaker Square Cinemas. It's accessible both by car and via the RTA train stop at Shaker Square.

- **Balaton (\$\$).** This Hungarian restaurant has been a local staple since the 1960s. Featuring a menu full of traditional European fare, the spaetzle, paprikash, and schnitzels are delightfully on-point (with one of the author's favorites being the Fuzzy Chicken).

- **Edwin's Leadership a Restaurant Institute (\$\$-\$\$\$).** This French fine dining restaurant is notable not only for its food, but also for its mission. It employs formerly incarcerated adults, giving them a chance to learn new skills and support their long-term success in the culinary and hospitality industries.

- **Fire Food & Drink (\$\$-\$\$\$).** Featuring seasonal menus and local, sustainable ingredients, Fire cooks many of its offerings

in a wood-fired oven and offers vegan and gluten-free options to its diners.

Lakewood

Lakewood is a trendy, walkable city to the west of Cleveland, known for its many dining and shopping offerings. Conference attendees can take a bus, an Uber or Lyft, or a train from the Tower City station downtown. The suggestions below only scratch the surface, so you may want to look further at what Lakewood has to offer before making the trip.

- **Melt Bar & Grilled (\$\$).** A Cleveland favorite, this "gourmet grilled-cheese" eatery provides an incredible range of sandwich fixings, including delicious vegetarian choices.

- **16-Bit Bar + Arcade (\$\$).** If you're looking for a retro experience, try this arcade bar for a drink and a few games of pinball or video arcade classics. All games except pinball are free, and drink options are plentiful.

- **Angelo's Pizza (\$\$).** This pizzeria has a neighborhood feel and some of the best pizza in the Cleveland area, featuring buttery crust and interesting toppings, like baked potato or Philly cheese steak. Angelo's is also one of Tom Hanks's favorite haunts when he visits his old stomping grounds in Lakewood.

If none of these match your cravings, or if we've overwhelmed you with options, please flag down one of our local volunteers during the conference, and we will be happy to give you a recommendation based on your appetite. We look forward to sharing Cleveland's wonderful selection of dining options with you.

Note

1. Michael A. Gardinier, "Why Cleveland's Food Scene Is Low-Key One of the Country's Best and Only Getting Better," *Thrillist*, January 19, 2017, accessed December 28, 2018, <https://www.thrillist.com/eat/cleveland/cleveland-food-scene-hot-right-now>. 