

A Monumental Feast

AAG Annual Meeting Restaurant Recommendations

Those readers currently planning to visit Washington D.C. for the 2010 AAG Annual Meeting might wonder what the city has to offer beyond an impressive array of monuments and museums. One answer to that question is that it is quite possible to eat one's way through the nation's capital, happily and tastily. In fact, any member of the AAG staff or the AAG's Local Arrangements Committee would undoubtedly testify to DC's well-deserved reputation as a foodie's paradise. Still the problem: *where to go?* Well, since you asked...

Below, AAG staff and LAC members offer their recommendations for fabulous local eats. But be aware, these aren't the *only* places or necessarily even the *very best* ones – just some suggestions for great meals that immediately come to mind – Washington, D.C. and the surrounding environs (from Alexandria, Virginia to Silver Spring, Maryland and beyond) is filled with dozens more. Many of these are of course authentic ethnic restaurants that reflect the area's burgeoning mosaic of cultures from around the world, while others are simply time-honored local institutions that shouldn't be missed. What they share is that they all help to make Washington, D.C. what it is: a fascinating and ever-changing cosmopolitan mix of peoples and traditions and a truly unique place we locals hope to share with all of you when you visit us next spring. Enjoy!

Alero Restaurant and Lounge

Everything you are looking for in a neighborhood Mexican restaurant including specials on margaritas served with freshly made tortilla chips and authentic salsa. But the best part is the attentive wait staff, fun atmosphere, and relatively low prices. Just one metro stop away from the conference hotel. Alero is in Cleveland Park at 3500 Connecticut Avenue NW. www.alerorestaurant.com.

Amsterdam Falafelshop

A great place to grab a quick lunch. Delicious falafel pita sandwiches with an array of garnishes that you can choose. Also serves some of the best french fries around (actually, Dutch-style fries). Located in Adams Morgan (in the heart of the local bar and music scene) at 2425 18th Street NW. www.falafelshop.com.

2Amys Neapolitan Pizzeria

Delicious rustic pizzas and other Italian specialties. Their Neapolitan pizzas are formally recognized as authentic by the Italian government. Always bustling but definitely worth it! Located at 3715 Macomb Street NW, near the National Cathedral, between Wisconsin and Massachusetts Avenues. Not far from the conference hotel. www.2amyspizza.com.

Ben's Chili Bowl

A DC institution since the 1950s. Best chili dog and fries anywhere and a can't miss stop for visitors to the popular U Street corridor and music scene. Photos of stars and politicians like Duke Ellington, Bill Cosby, and Jesse Jackson cover the walls. This place is the real deal. 1213 U Street NW. www.benschilibowl.com.

Bistro du Coin

Trestle tables covered over with white paper and a zinc-topped bar stocked with all the aperitifs of the Old Country help to lend authenticity to this decidedly French bistro in the DuPont Circle neighborhood. A raucous environment fueled by good, cheap house wine, late hours and boisterous proprietors set the lively tone. Classic bistro fare such as steamed mussels, cassoulet, and steak frites comprises the menu. House specialties include tripes a la nicoise and steak tartare. 1738 Connecticut Avenue NW. www.bistrotducoin.com.

BlackSalt

Enter via the fish market and pass the bar to find what one member of the AAG's local arrangements committee calls the best fish restaurant in town. A little on the pricey side but worth every penny. Its owners are environmentally aware and actively support sustainable aquaculture and harvesting practices. Reservations recommended. 4883 MacArthur Blvd NW. www.blacksaltrestaurant.com.

Bohemian Caverns

In 1926, a little jazz club opened in the basement of a drugstore located at 11th and U Streets called Club Caverns. Washington's elite dressed in their most formal attire to be entertained by Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway,

and many other jazz greats. Today, Bohemian Caverns houses a restaurant named Mahogany. Together this jazz club and restaurant form one of the U Street corridor's most unique attractions. www.bohemiancaverns.com.

Busboys and Poets

Busboys and Poets is more than a restaurant: it's a bookstore, a fair trade market, a gathering place and an environment that encourages discussion of social justice and progressive politics. Wednesdays are open mike nights for poets. Check the website closer to the AAG Annual Meeting date to see which authors are on tap for open discussion nights. Recent guests have included Ralph Nader and Cornell West. www.busboysandpoets.com.

Cashion's Eat Place

Great food at good prices in a relaxed neighborhood restaurant. Stylish and inviting with a great wine list. A great go-to place for any occasion. Not open for lunch. We recommend the Sunday brunch. 1819 Columbia Road NW. www.cashionseatplace.com

El Chalan

If you are looking for a quiet, cozy, out-of-the-way authentic Peruvian restaurant, try El Chalan, just one block from the World Bank. Known for their Ceviche and Lomo Salgado. Try the non-alcoholic chicha morada or the alcoholic pisco sours. The entrance gives the impression that you are entering an elegant old home. Once inside, you will be delighted by the beautifully decorated and comfortable environment as well as the high quality of its fine dining. Near the Farragut West exit on the Blue and Orange lines of the Metro or the Farragut North exit on the Red Line. 1924 I Street NW. www.elchalanrestaurant.com.

Comet Ping Pong

The place to go in DC for excellent pizza and beer in a casual environment that features – yes – ping pong tables in the back. An added bonus is the close proximity of Politics and Prose bookstore, one of DC's best-known independent bookstores, two doors down. 5037 Connecticut Ave. NW. www.cometpingpong.com.

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Delhi-Dhabe

A Punjabi grill with authentic North Indian style lunch buffet and dinner seven days a week. Locations at 4455 Connecticut Avenue NW in Washington D.C., Bethesda, Maryland and Alexandria, Virginia. www.delhidhaba.com.

Dukem

Washington is a wonderful place for Ethiopian food. Many good spots abound on 18th Street in the Adams Morgan neighborhood. Dukem, at the corner of U Street and 12th, is arguably the most authentically Ethiopian and boasts an excellent menu including both meat and vegetarian options. Dukem has a nice sidewalk patio for outdoor eating and an outstanding beer selection. One block east of the U Street Metro station on the Green Line. www.dukemrestaurant.com.

The Front Page

Located overlooking the DuPont Circle East stop on the Metro's Red Line, The Front Page is a relaxed American-style bar/grill featuring steaks, pasta, seafood, and good beer. Framed newspaper headlines announcing famous events of the 20th century adorn the exposed brick walls. 1333 New Hampshire Avenue NW, at DuPont Circle. www.frontpagerestaurant.com.

Griffin Tavern

If you find yourself out in the direction of the Shenandoah Valley, do yourself a favor and stop at the Griffin Tavern. Located at 659 Zachary Taylor Highway in Flint Hills, Virginia. www.griffintavern.com.

Grill from Ipanema

Consistently rated as one of the city's best, the Grill from Ipanema's menu offers a wide variety of Brazilian dishes, from seafood stews with palm oil and coconut milk to *frango a copacabana* (grilled chicken served with grounded yuca roasted with garlic and butter, and served with rice, black beans, vegetables). 1858 Columbia Road NW in Adams Morgan. www.thegrillfromipanema.com.

Hawk and Dove

Dark, mysterious, and divey, the Hawk and Dove is the archetype of the DC bar. A favorite of Congressional staffers, this is where politics happens and history gets made, all over the best corned beef sandwich in town. Near Eastern Market and a

short walk from Capitol Hill. www.hawkanddoveonline.com.

Indique

A fantastic Indian restaurant with warm, inviting ambiance that excels at both traditional Indian flavors and modern small plate/tapas style interpretations. In the Cleveland Park neighborhood at 3512 Connecticut Avenue. 3512 Connecticut Avenue NW. www.indique.com.

Jaleo

A great Spanish tapas restaurant, one of several in the Chinatown neighborhood. The chorizos and stuffed peppers are "amazing, though I've yet to order anything there I didn't like," according to one member of the AAG's local arrangements committee. 480 7th Street NW. Located one block south of the Gallery Place/Chinatown stop on the Red, Yellow, and Green Lines. Close to local theaters for those taking in a show. www.jaleo.com.

Lebanese Taverna

The Lebanese Taverna is a local favorite among AAG staffers and local arrangement committee members alike. High domed ceilings, lush upholstery, and hand-carved walnut accents add to the lush atmosphere. Serving a variety of authentic Mediterranean dishes and only a short walk from the conference hotel. 2641 Connecticut Avenue NW. www.lebanesetaverna.com.

Mama Ayesha's

Mama Ayesha's is a family-owned and family-operated Middle Eastern restaurant in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood serving traditional Middle Eastern dishes with vegetarian options. Everything on the menu has a homemade taste. The recipes are hand-me-downs from the restaurant's founder, Mama Ayesha Abraham. 1967 Calvert Street NW. www.mamaayeshas.com.

Market Lunch

If your visit to DC falls over the weekend, make it a point to visit historic Eastern Market on Capitol Hill. Restaurants abound, including everyone's favorite greasy spoon The Market Lunch, located inside the newly renovated South Hall (closed for two years following a fire in April 2007). Getting up early on a Saturday for a breakfast of bacon and "bluebucks" (blueberry buckwheat pancakes) at Market Lunch

is a DC must-do, or if you arrive for lunch try the oversized crab cake sandwich. Walk off the calories by browsing the outdoor flea market and arts fair showcasing work from local artists. www.easternmarketdc.com.

Martin's Tavern

Established in 1933, Martin's Tavern is one of Washington, D.C.'s most historic family owned enterprises. A renowned fixture in Georgetown, this must-visit establishment is frequented by political figures, media icons, movie stars (when they're in town), as well as local residents and travelers. The historic atmosphere features "named" booths of past presidents who held court in the tavern's environs. The beer is cold and the crab cakes are some of the best in the DC area. 1264 Wisconsin Avenue NW. www.martins-tavern.com.

McGinty's Public House

An authentic Irish restaurant. Try the sampler meal of traditional Irish stews or just opt for the always awesome bangers and mash. Just a short walk from the Crystal City Metro stop on the Blue Line in Alexandria, Virginia (3650 South Glebe Road, Suite 170) or a short cab ride away to downtown Silver Spring, Maryland, at 911 Ellsworth Drive. www.mcgintyspublichouse.com.

Cupcake Crazy

Along with other major urban areas in the U.S., Washington, D.C. has enthusiastically joined the cupcake craze, typified by small bakeries producing a daily menu of gourmet cupcakes *and nothing else*. Even if you're no fan of a cake-to-icing ratio of 1:2, these hubs of cupcake fandom will at least point you towards the oh-so-trendiest of DC neighborhoods.

Georgetown Cupcake

1209 Potomac Street NW
Washington, DC 20007

Hello Cupcake

1351 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036

Red Velvet Cupcakery

675 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20004

Mitsitam Café

"Mitsitam" means "let's eat!" in the native language of the Delaware and Piscataway peoples. Features native foods found throughout the Western Hemisphere, including the Northern Woodlands, South America, the Northwest Coast, Meso America and the Great Plains. Located in the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall. If you don't have time to visit the museum, you can just stop into the restaurant. www.nmai.si.edu.

Nam Viet & Pho 79 Restaurant

Best pho within walking distance of the Wardman. Warm up with a nice hot bowl of soup, have a crepe, or enjoy their curries, black pepper dishes, or seafood. Reasonable prices, comfortable dining room, unassuming exterior. At 3419 Connecticut Avenue NW in Cleveland Park, just up the road from the conference hotel. www.namviet1.com.

Old Ebbitt Grill

An historic DC institution. Even if you just pop in for a beer on tap, this is a place to go see and be seen. Great for happy hours or brunch and in the immediate vicinity of the White House. 675 15th Street, NW. www.ebbitt.com.

Pizzeria Paradiso

Delicious and innovative pizza with an amazing beer selection in the heart of Georgetown. Casual and great for people watching. Make sure to check out the bar, Birreria, downstairs for microbrews and imports. 3282 M Street NW. www.eatyourpizza.com.

Rosemary's Thyme Bistro

A friendly neighborhood eatery where hospitality is king. Aged prime steaks, fresh fish, delicious starters, pidés and kabobs, and much more. Saturday and Sunday brunches are both popular affairs. 1801 18th Street NW. Near DuPont Circle. www.rosemarysthyme.com.

Sushi Ko

With a new second location now open, Sushi Ko is consistently rated one of DC's best sushi restaurants, with an excellent fish selection and a quiet atmosphere. 2309 Wisconsin Avenue NW in DC or 5455 Wisconsin Avenue in Chevy Chase, Maryland (Friendship Heights metro station on the Red Line). <http://sushikorestaurants.com>.

Tabard Inn

Dine on new American cuisine in one of DC's oldest hotels. Nestled on a tree-lined street just five blocks from the White House. Try the pig roast and fried head cheese appetizer. Also known for its fabulous desserts. 1739 N Street NW. www.tabardinn.com/restaurant.

Zaytinia

Amazing Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern small plate-meze style dishes in an inviting urban setting. This would be a great place for some geographic socializing over cocktails and a small, varied meal. 701 9th Street NW, corner of 9th and G Streets. www.zaytinia.com. ■