

 STORY

12 Must-Try Restaurants in Steamboat Springs

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT AND SNOW SURROUNDS IT, BUT THIS SKI TOWN'S DINING SCENE IS ON FIRE

Credit: Salt & Lime



August 28, 2017 · by Ruth Tobias

Likely due to the exorbitant cost of real estate, Steamboat Springs' dining scene tends to grow at a glacial pace, especially when compared to that on the explosive Front Range. But over the past few years, it has seen a wave of change, with city-slick hot spots and craft taprooms joining established white-cloth destinations and après-ski watering holes. New or old, these 12 places define what it

means to dine and drink in the ski town right now. (Note: If a quick and casual but killer sandwich or quencher is all you're looking for between runs, consider burger joint **Back Door Grill**, beloved "five-star dive bar" **T Bar**, **Ciao Gelato** for stromboli and a scoop, or charming organic cafe **Rootz**. And remember — always check business hours before you go anywhere off-season.)



Credit: Danielle Zimmerer

Cloverdale Restaurant

This intimate New American boasts its own working farm and an ambitious talent in chef Patrick Ayres, whose ever-changing prix fixe dinners (between five and 14 courses) have had diners swooning since day one. Among his dishes: Arpège-style eggs with sunchoke custard, triticale granola and roasted-pepper espuma; dry-aged, farm honey-glazed roast duck; cured wild trout over black rice with pickled green tomatoes (pictured); and pineapple-weed pudding alongside watermelon radishes three ways. There's a bar that pairs it all with serious cocktails, uncommon beers and wines from an old world-centric cellar. And the setting in a

100-year-old home, with its original hardwood floors, hand-blown glass windows and a garden, is a further delight. In short, this instant destination has it all — keep your ear out for the buzz.

207 9th St.; 970-875-3179



Laundry Kitchen & Cocktails

Housed in an old laundrette, this urbane yet warm and cozy small-plates hideaway is as savvy as they come. African, Asian, Southern, Mexican — the chef's influences are globe-spanning and free-wheeling, which means you might be treated to barbecued pig-ear lettuce wraps or chicken-fried quail with spicy chow chow one day, blue crab and green chile mac 'n' cheese or beer-battered artichoke hearts with black-pepper aioli the next. Meanwhile, the bar works with myriad infused spirits, housemade syrups, tinctures and so on to serve the cocktail of your dreams while maintaining a surprisingly varied wine lineup for what's essentially a gastropub.

127 11th St.; 970-870-0681



Credit: Salt & Lime

Salt & Lime

Splashed with color and sporting a rooftop deck, this Laundry sibling (also pictured top) has quickly become a hub of modern Mexican merriment — so much so that it now also boasts an adjacent, all-day taco shack. Which means it's got you covered from breakfast onward, whether you're craving a quickie burrito, joining pals for an après-ski round of margaritas or going all out with a dinnertime feast of, say, shrimp nachos, brisket in chile Colorado and cauliflower hash in cashew salsa — only to return for a weekend brunch of churro French toast and Bloody Marias.

628 Lincoln Ave.; 970-871-6277



Café Diva

With the feel of an old European bistro but an up-to-the-minute culinary approach, this intimate, refined fixture has earned the lifelong loyalty of residents and visitors alike. Vegan and gluten-free selections aplenty augment the regular menu, where a meal might start with sunflower-and-spring pea panzanella in white balsamic-mint vinaigrette. Move on to fennel-artichoke ravioli with morels in almond-basil butter, or diver scallops over quinoa risotto with sauce verte and tomato jam. Then end with mascarpone gelato-filled carrot-cake sandwiches. In keeping with Diva's beginnings as a wine bar — and despite its dining cachet — the extensive bottle list covers a wide range of price points as well as regions (though France and California are especially well represented).

1855 Ski Time Square Dr.; 970-871-0508



LOW Country Kitchen

Married team Brian and Katy Vaughn followed their hearts and stuck to their roots — he’s from Kentucky; she’s from Tennessee — for this upscale-meets-down-home Southern kitchen (which now has a **LoHi sibling**). In a rustic-chic, recently expanded space whose open kitchen overlooks tables bedecked with mason jars and hot sauces, they turn out all the classics — gumbo, secret-recipe fried chicken, corn-kernel-studded hushpuppies and so forth — as well as some twists thereon, including catfish with crawdad hoppin’ John in charred-lemon vinaigrette and BLTs overloaded with fried green tomatoes, pimiento cheese and avocado dressing, followed by apple crisp or pecan pie made with bourbon-barrel-aged maple syrup. Speaking of bourbon, rest assured the bar stocks it in spades.

435 Lincoln Ave.; 970-761-2693



Butcherknife Brewing Company

Here's your quintessential small-town taproom: chill, no-frills, focused on the fundamentals. Brews range from the hardcore Amputator IPA to the sessionable Rob's Blonde Ale, supplemented by seasonals and single-batch specials such as radler and various barrel-aged experiments. Food trucks make the rounds a few times a week, and patrons line the picnic tables inside and out after parking their bikes to take a mid-ride beer break, because that's just what true Coloradans do.

2875 Elk River Rd.; 970-879-2337



Credit: Storm Peak

Storm Peak Brewing Co.

White or black, session or double, West Coast or New England style: IPA aficionados get their fill at this mountain-meets-industrial taproom — though with up to 20 beers available at any given time, there's plenty of variety to be found as well, be it spruce-tip saison or watermelon gose. Board games galore and free popcorn complete the easygoing community picture.

1885 Elk River Plaza; 970-879-1999

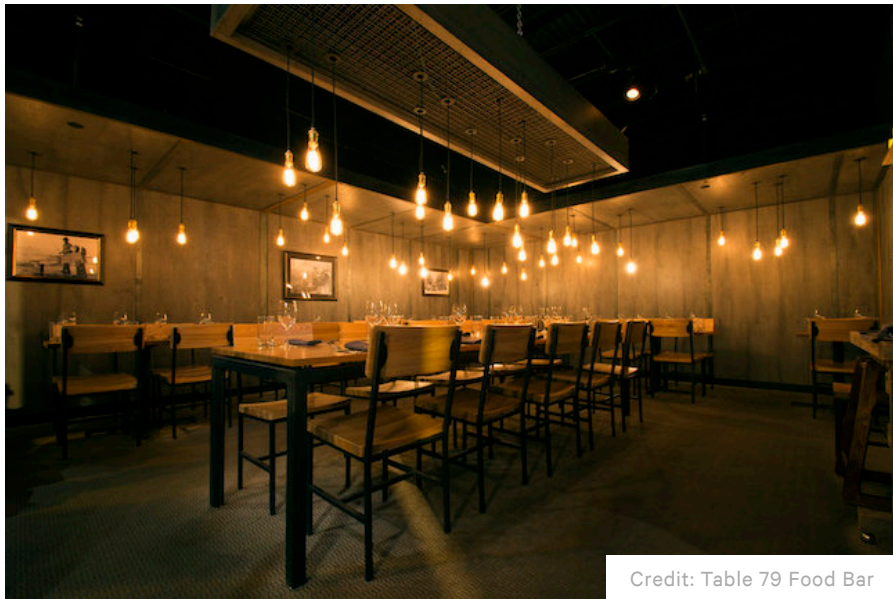


Credit: Aurum

Aurum Food & Wine

If it had nothing to offer but its primo location across the river from Howelsen Hill, this contemporary go-to would live up to its moniker, Latin for “gold.” As a happy-hour haunt, it boasts stellar views from both its artsy, window-lined interior and its gorgeous patio, centered around a large fire pit (not to mention bold cocktails such as the jalapeño shandy). But Aurum also has a farm-focused kitchen, run by chef Patrick Funk, that at its best steals the scene with seasonal New American creations like crispy curried cauliflower agrodolce, buffalo rib-eye with black-eyed pea caviar and sticky toffee carrot cake.

811 Yampa St.; 970-879-9500



Credit: Table 79 Food Bar

Table 79 Food Bar

Where Aurum glitters in the sunlight, its sibling glows in the dark. Romantic decor notwithstanding, the menu's meant to foster a more casual, social atmosphere, offering plates that are both easy to share — portobello fries with lemon aioli, babyback ribs in chipotle barbecue sauce, harissa-crusted chicken kebabs — and easy to pair

with punchy craft cocktails. An eight-seat chef's counter adds to the convivial vibe.

345 Lincoln Ave.; 970-761-2463



Harwigs

Housed in a onetime drugstore and saddlery from the 1880s, this decades-old, family-run fine-dining institution still wins hearts and minds with a magnificent wine cellar and a supremely eclectic, monthly changing menu: think beet-cured salmon with smoked-ramp jam, deconstructed cassoulet with rabbit-chestnut sausage and trumpet mushrooms, or brown-butter cake accompanied by smoked-chocolate mousse and spruce ice cream. On a more casual note, chef J.J. Jenny offers a bar menu with the likes of sliders with foie gras and smoked aioli, all while planning such fun stuff as Tuesday Thai nights.

911 Lincoln Ave.; 970-879-1919



E3 Chophouse

White tablecloths? Check. Sommelier and bread service? Check. Beef straight from the owners' ranch in Kansas? Check. This steakhouse has got big-city swank to spare. But it's also got the ultimate in Steamboat scenery, blessed with views of both the ski jumps on Howelsen Hill and the Yampa River running right past the patio. (In fact, come summer, inner-tubers enjoy direct access to the restaurant via a staircase from the water's edge.) And the food's as substantial as the panorama. If the braised, cast iron-finished pot roast isn't available, shoot for the herb-crusted prime rib in horseradish sauce.

701 Yampa St.; 970-879-7167



Credit: The BARLeY

The BARLeY

Laid-back yet Colorado-proud, this locals' lair sports an ever-rotating roster of more than 50 craft beers — including 31 on draft — not to mention pours from the only cask engine in town. Its list of libations also favors in-state producers of not only spirits but also bitters, pickles and other garnishes. Whatever your poison, there's an array of snacks to accompany it, from whiskey-IPA fondue with crusty bread to balsamic-drizzled tuna crudo with wontons. And, relaxed as it is, The BARLeY also hosts regular theme weeks to showcase a particular liquor or ingredient — be it an IPA tap takeover or a focus on jam cocktails — just to shake things up a bit.

635 Lincoln Ave.; 970-761-2195

COCKTAILS

FARM-TO-TABLE

BEER

STEAKHOUSE

BREWERIES

MEXICAN FOOD

SOUTHERN FOOD

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

PLACES MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE (8)

BEATRICE & WOODSLEY

American · Speer · \$\$

 **FOOD 4.2** |  **4.2 ★★★★★ (184)**

Woodsy, playful setting for New American small plates & innovative cocktails.

AURUM FOOD & WINE

New American · \$\$\$\$

 **ZAGAT RATED** |  **4.5 ★★★★★ (53)**

Seasonal, elevated American dishes, plus cocktails & wine, in a chic riverfront space with a deck.

LOW COUNTRY KITCHEN

Southern American · \$\$

 **FOOD 4.6** |  **3.7 ★★★★★ (39)**

Southern specialties with a gourmet twist & a full bar are offered in a bright, rustic-modern space.



CAFE DIVA

Cafe · \$\$

 **FOOD 4.6** |  **4.9 ★★★★★ (57)**

Hearty New American dining, with some game & vegetarian options, in a relaxed yet elegant space.

LOW COUNTRY KITCHEN

Bar · LoHi · \$\$

 **ZAGAT RATED** |  **4.3 ★★★★★ (52)**

Fried chicken, bourbon cocktails & other Southern treats star at this homey spot with a roof deck.

HARWIGS

French · \$\$

 **ZAGAT RATED** |  **3.8 ★★★★★ (16)**

Seasonal, locally sourced French dishes with modern twists & a lengthy wine list in a chic space.

TABLE 79 FOODBAR

\$\$

 **ZAGAT RATED** |  **4.8 ★★★★★ (19)**

Contemporary American fare & craft cocktails in upscale, softly lit surrounds with a chef's counter.

LAUNDRY

Eclectic · \$\$\$

Rustic-chic kitchen serving charcuterie & globally inspired small plates, plus craft cocktails.



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