

AAA Inspector Picks: Favorite Historic Restaurants

As Memorial Day approaches, AAA inspectors looked back at the history, atmosphere and offerings of time-honored restaurants in their territories to select their favorites. Read descriptions of their selections below, or peruse all 620 restaurants with this esteemed classification on AAA.com.



AAA listed restaurants classified as historic are:

- On the National Register of Historic Places
- A National Historic Landmark or
- In a National Register Historic District

[United States](#) [A-F](#) [G-M](#) [N-P](#) [S-W](#)
[Canada](#) [Caribbean](#)

UNITED STATES

A-F (▲[top](#))

ARIZONA

[Peacock Dining Room](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/American, Prescott

After downtown Prescott burned down almost 100 years ago, the community decided to build the luxurious Hassayampa Inn and Peacock Dining Room. The dining room has inviting art deco décor and a cozy lounge that displays the original curved wood ceilings. The cuisine has definitely been updated with contemporary American menu items such as Alaskan salmon, filet mignon, orange roughy and Maryland crab cakes. However, the uniformed, refined staff continues to give the dining room an old world feeling. **Inspector Tip:** If visiting for breakfast or lunch, enjoy a great view of the bustling downtown through the floor-to-ceiling windows.

[El Charro Café](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/Mexican, Tucson

Tucked away in a historic barrio on the edge of downtown Tucson, El Charro Café claims to be the oldest continuously operating family-owned Mexican restaurant in the U.S. Originally built as the family residence, the building was converted to a restaurant in 1922. One specialty is the chimichanga, reputedly invented here when the chef accidentally dropped a burrito into a skillet of boiling oil. **Inspector Tip:** Another favorite is the *carne seca*, made of beef strips dried under the sun atop the restaurant and seasoned with secret ingredients. This dish alone is worth a visit.

CALIFORNIA (▲[top](#))

[The Firehouse](#), AAA Four Diamond, Fine Dining/Continental, Sacramento

Housed in a former firehouse built in 1853, this Old Town Sacramento restaurant has been in operation for over 45 years and has hosted some of California's governors. The excellent food, ambience and knowledgeable, professional staff enhance your dining experience. Over 20,000 bottles of wine are offered from the restaurant's amazing wine cellar. The elegant dining room is decorated with large Victorian works of art and mirrors. **Inspector Tip:** Enjoy delightful courtyard dining in season.

[Samoa Cookhouse](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Samoa

Built in 1890 to feed hungry loggers, this cookhouse has become a fun dining destination for individuals as well as parties of 10. You sit at communal tables and food is served family style. There's only one menu, just like Sunday dinner at Grandma's. Homey, hearty and all-you-can eat. **Inspector Tip:** After you're done eating check out the museum and gift shop.

[El Adobe de Capistrano](#), AAA Two Diamond, Family Dining/Mexican Steak & Seafood, San Juan Capistrano

Established in 1948 and housed in the historic Miguel Yorba Adobe landmark near the Mission of San Juan Capistrano, the casual restaurant presents an appealing menu with authentically prepared steak, seafood, tacos and enchiladas. Since its restoration in 2003, this restaurant's features take you back in time while the food keeps you currently satisfied.



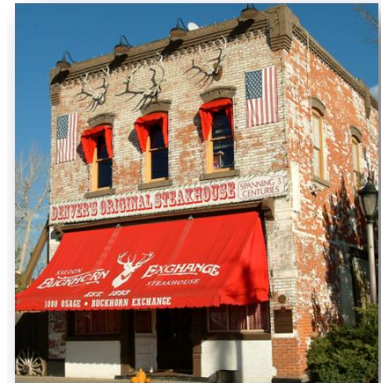
[The Ahwahnee Dining Room](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/Continental, Yosemite National Park

This magnificent establishment opened its doors in 1927. Whether you are first struck by the 34-foot high open beam ceilings, the granite pillars or the floor-to-ceiling windows, you will be amazed. Dining options include breakfast, lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch. Casual attire is permitted during breakfast and lunch, but proper attire is requested at dinner. The dinner menu will treat you to such delicacies as grilled salmon, braised pork, roasted lamb or prime rib. **Inspector Tip:** Be sure to take advantage of the many selections available from the wine list.

COLORADO ([▲ top](#))

[Buckhorn Exchange](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/Steak, Denver

When Henry H. "Shorty Scout" Zietz, a performer in Buffalo Bill Cody's famous shows, opened the Buckhorn in 1893, he probably didn't imagine it would become one of Denver's oldest continuously operating restaurants 120 years later. More surprising, Shorty Scout would recognize Gramma Fanny's pot roast, which has stayed on the menu all these years. A meat lover's dream, the menu features a variety of USDA steaks, elk, Colorado lamb, quail, bison, duck and even alligator tail. **Inspector Tip:** The decor features Old West memorabilia including a 150-year-old hand carved oak bar and an extensive taxidermy collection of local and exotic animals.



FLORIDA

[Sundy House Restaurant](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/Continental, Delray Beach

Housed in a small boutique hotel and surrounded by lush botanical gardens, this eclectic restaurant features "all world" cuisine. Open for both lunch and dinner, the mood is ideal for a casual bite to eat with friends to a romantic meal with a loved one. Evening dining tends to be more romantic with the moon shimmering overhead and the botanical gardens accented beautifully with illuminated lanterns. The herb roasted salmon is a signature dish and will come highly recommended by the staff. **Inspector Tip:** The Sunday brunch is among Palm Beach County's most popular.

[Bern's Steak House](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/Steak & Seafood, Tampa

Bern's Steak House is renowned for its broiled steaks, fresh fish and shellfish, and for their use of farm fresh vegetables and herbs grown locally at Bern's Farm. Foie gras, caviar and escargot are also popular choices. The second-floor Harry Waugh Dessert Room, a popular stop since 1985, is "must" after a fine dinner, with a choice of some 50 desserts and nearly 1,000 after-dinner wines. **Inspector Tip:** An interesting tour of the wine cellar includes a view of a bottle of 1947 Chateau Latour valued at \$30,000.



G-M ([▲ top](#))

GEORGIA

[Grand Dining Room](#), AAA Three Diamond, Casual Dining/Continental, Jekyll Island

Located in the Jekyll Island Club in the historic district, the Grand Dining Room truly lives up to its name. Its décor and ambiance exude the aura of the "Gilded

Age,” reflecting the Victorian style and tastes of the turn of the century, ultra-rich industrialists who founded and built the island resort. Surrounded by windows, guests can enjoy views of the beautifully landscaped grounds while dining on the diverse menu of beef, seafood and vegetarian dishes all prepared in a continental style with a distinctly Southern flare. A pianist accompanies the evening dining. **Inspector Tip:** Jackets and collared shirts are expected for gentlemen.

[The Historic Green Manor Restaurant](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/Southern, Union City

Established in 1910, the restaurant is built on an early-1800s foundation and cannon balls from the Civil War have been found on-site. The structure includes multiple fireplaces, two lovely staircases and a large basement that has been converted into a wine cellar. **Inspector Tip:** The wraparound porch is a great place to sit and wait for the delicious buffet, which includes tasty Southern treats such as fried chicken, barbeque pork ribs, collard greens, speckled butterbeans and sweet tea.

ILLINOIS ([▲ top](#))

[Grandpa John's Café](#), AAA One Diamond Restaurant, Family Dining/American, Nauvoo

Open since 1912 and located in a National Historic Landmark District, this café has stood the test of time as one of the area's favorite places for breakfast, sandwiches and classic ice cream desserts. Desserts feature sundaes, shakes, floats, Italian sodas and – last but not least – the Hot Chocolate Supreme (which combines cinnamon, butterscotch and chocolate sauce for an epic experience). **Inspector Tip:** The café offers guests of the AAA Two Diamond Nauvoo Hotel, directly across the street, 25 percent off breakfast.



MASSACHUSETTS ([▲ top](#))

[Union Oyster House](#), AAA Two Diamond, Family Dining/Regional Seafood, Boston

As the city's oldest restaurant and reputedly the nation's oldest continuously operated restaurant, this popular establishment serves up New England favorites. The oysters, steamers, chowders, haddock and lobster (and even some landlubber fare) satisfy seafood lovers looking for traditional preparations.

Inspector Tip: This nostalgic spot is a must stop. The narrow stairs and uneven wood-planked floors reflect the history of the structure, which will celebrate 200 years in 2026.

[Bramble Inn & Restaurant](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/Continental, Brewster

This elegant 1861 farmhouse is the setting for a memorable Cape Cod dining experience. Each dish is artistically composed and served by knowledgeable staff. The cozy interior rooms are draped in antiques with Persian rugs on the original wide pine wood floors. The menu has an abundance of local New England fare and fresh seafood served on various patterns of classic china. **Inspector Tip:** Enjoy a cocktail at the intimate bar or, better yet, on the back patio overlooking the blooming flower garden.

MISSISSIPPI ([▲ top](#))

[Mary Mahoney's Old French House Restaurant](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/Southern Seafood & Steak, Biloxi

For nearly 50 years, this family-operated establishment has been a Mississippi Gulf Coast tradition. Housed in one of the oldest homes in the U.S. (built circa 1737 during the French occupation), it retains the original handmade bricks, hand-hewn cypress columns and a roof of slate brought over from France. Its sturdy construction survived both Hurricanes Camille and Katrina. **Inspector Tip:** Enjoy the region's fresh seafood while dining al fresco in the enclosed New Orleans-style open-air courtyard shaded by the canopy of a 2,000 year old oak tree.

MISSOURI (▲top)

[Webster House](#), AAA Three Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Kansas City

Initially constructed in 1885 as the Webster School, this building has a distinct Romanesque Revival style. In 2002 it was restored and repurposed as one of the city's most creative and unique dining locales. The menu focuses on lighter fare, and it is very typical to see several groups of "lunching ladies" here. The Sunday brunch, complete with mimosas, is fantastic. **Inspector Tip:** While most of the dining space is upstairs, the impressive first floor has been artfully restored to serve as an upscale antique shop. Patrons are encouraged to wander and explore the historic building.

N-P (▲top)

NEW MEXICO

[The Buckhorn Saloon](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/Steak, Pinos Altos

At an altitude of 7,000 feet in this historic mining town, the original 1870s saloon makes diners feel like real cowboys as they "belly-up" for a cocktail before dinner. With a fireplace in the dining room, dinner is a little more elegant and romantic, but the service remains very casual and attentive. The specialty is cooked-to-order steaks and just plain good food with portions that are large enough to share. **Inspector Tip:** Many nights feature live music in the bar and adjacent opera house.

NEW YORK (▲top)

[Delmonico's](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/American, New York (Lower Manhattan)

Historic is an understatement at Delmonico's, which opened at its current location back in 1837, claiming to be "America's first restaurant." Some famous dishes that were invented and are still served today include lobster Newburg, baked Alaska, chicken à la King and the house special, Delmonico steak. The dining room was the first in the country to have tablecloths and printed menus, and now boasts a grand formal style. **Inspector Tip:** This is a good stop when touring the many other historic sites at the tip of lower Manhattan and the financial district.

[George Mann's Tory Tavern](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/American, Schoharie

Located in the scenic Schoharie Valley, this area is also known as "the Breadbasket of the American Revolution," where George Washington's troops were fed. The grandson of the original settler and tavern owner, George Mann, changed loyalties and allowed Tories to hold meetings at the tavern. Today, the namesake restaurant has been meticulously restored with original décor and serves a daily changing menu from abundant local ingredients. Seafood terrine, veal scallopini chasseur and Jack Daniels London broil are just a few of the menu classics offered and graciously served by a staff dressed in Colonial garb. **Inspector Note:** Restaurant may be sold or closed when the owners retire in August 2013.

NORTH CAROLINA (▲top)

[Carolina Crossroads Restaurant](#), AAA Four Diamond, Fine Dining/Regional American, Chapel Hill

Located inside the historic Carolina Inn, this is the embodiment of elegance with Chippendale-style chairs, posh fabrics and delicate orchids. Guests can relax over a leisurely lunch of gourmet sandwiches, crisp salads and cold plates, or return for one of the chef's three-, four- or five-course prix fixe menus offered in addition to the à la carte selections. The menu of Southern-inspired cuisine changes seasonally, with creative preparations of seafood, beef, chicken and more. **Inspector Tip:** Sunday brunch is a special treat with an omelet station and homemade pastries, plus a menu of flavorful classic fare.



[Sunny Side Oyster Bar](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/Seafood, Williamston

This seafood shack remains much unchanged since its opening in 1935. Dinner is still served at the long horseshoe-shaped bar by the shuckers, many of whom have been here over 20 years. There is still no

kitchen – just steamers out back and a menu for seafood lovers only. Shrimp, scallops, king crab legs and oysters are served by the peck. The special cocktail sauce is served steaming hot from carafes, and they also have a special hot sauce for the brave. **Inspector Tip:** Check the schedule. The establishment is open only when local oysters are running, generally January through April. On weekends, expect a wait for a spot at the bar.

OHIO (▲top)

[The Golden Lamb Restaurant](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Lebanon

Built in 1803 as a log cabin tavern, this is the oldest restaurant in Ohio. The present red brick building dates to 1815 and has been remodeled and expanded many times since then. Elements that have remained constant are generous portions and good food. The main dining room offers traditional dishes such as fried chicken and grilled lamb loin. All dinners are served with fresh rolls and apple butter. **Inspector Tip:** On the dessert menu, Sister Lizzie's Shaker sugar pie with caramel sauce is a reminder of the area's former Shaker settlement.

OKLAHOMA (▲top)

[Miss Addie's Café & Pub](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Muskogee

In 1915 the establishment was a drug store owned by Charles and Addie Smith. In 1992, the current restaurant owners renamed the restaurant after Addie Smith. It's worth a visit just to see the English-style building, but there are many other reasons they have a loyal following. Quiche is their signature dish, along with salmon and duck. **Inspector Tip:** Customers' fondness for the restaurant's in-house preparations has led to offerings of a cookbook, packaged cookies and bottled dressings for purchase.

OREGON (▲top)

[Huber's](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Portland

Open since 1879, this is Portland's oldest restaurant. Much of the interior décor dates to 1911, including the arched, stained-glass skylights, rich mahogany paneling and terrazzo floor. If seated in the front next to the street windows, be sure and venture farther back to truly feel the history of this place. The restaurant is so famed for its classic turkey dinner, it's almost a sin if someone at the table doesn't order one. **Inspector Tip:** The real show comes after dinner with a round of Spanish coffee, prepared tableside with great flourish, which makes Huber's the U.S.'s largest independent restaurant consumer of Kahlua.

PENNSYLVANIA



[1741 on the Terrace](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/American, Bethlehem

The former "Fountain Terrace Room," built in 1922, now features an incredibly spacious dining room with expansive Palladian windows and a decorative tile floor. Elegant artwork and floral arrangements line the walls between beautiful views of the downtown historic area. The menu focuses on fresh American cuisine and provides refined dishes such as pan seared red tail bass and veal cheek cavatelli. The award-winning wine list provides perfect pairings for each dish. **Inspector Tip:** Every Sunday the restaurant provides a delicious brunch with live music.

[Century Inn Dining Room](#), AAA Three Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Scenery Hill

Swing open the doors of this historic inn and be transported back to Colonial times. Since 1794, this pillared stone house has been delighting patrons with its regional American dishes. First operated as a overnight stop for a stagecoach line serving patrons like George Washington, Andrew Jackson and James Polk, it's now one of the country's longest continuously operating taverns. The dining room makes you feel right at home with its charming décor, antiques, exposed beams and the rich wood tables and chairs.

The availability of fresh ingredients drives the seasonally changing menu. The staff dressed in Colonial clobber is aptly trained to help guide your taste buds through a culinary revolution!

[S-W \(▲ top\)](#)

SOUTH CAROLINA

[Middleton Place Restaurant](#), AAA Three Diamond, Casual Dining/New Southern, Charleston

This farm-to-table restaurant is housed in former guest quarters that were modeled after the design of the old rice mill at Middleton Place, a late 1700s plantation and home of America's oldest landscaped gardens. Its cypress-lined dining rooms overlook Rice Mill Pond and Azalea Hillside, adding to the guest's experience and the restaurant's natural ambiance. The menu features contemporary interpretations of classic Southern cuisine, giving equal placement to seafood, beef, fowl and vegetarian offerings, so there's something for all. **Inspector Tip:** Plantation admission must be purchased to be admitted for lunch service.

[TEXAS \(▲ top\)](#)

[The Driskill Grill](#), AAA Four Diamond, Fine Dining/New American, Austin

Since 1929 this establishment has offered fine dining to discerning guests. As you enter, the elegant décor and fashionably preset tables set high expectations. The farm-to-table menu features only the finest seasonal ingredients available daily. The lobster bisque is superior and the signature Dijon lamb chops or filet mignon, also excellent choices, are always perfectly prepared. Complementing the excellent fare is outstanding professional, attentive service.

[Stillwater Inn Dining Room](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Jefferson

The experienced chef makes this eatery in an 1890s home a standout among local options and a worthy pilgrimage. A typical meal includes escargot or a goat cheese salad followed by a grilled duck breast or pecan encrusted trout, and seasonal dishes frequently complement the regular menu. **Inspector Tips:** Prepare to settle in for a leisurely meal by design. Check the establishment's frequent Facebook updates to see what special items the chef has up his culinary sleeve.

[Gristmill River Restaurant & Bar](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/Regional American, New Braunfels

Constructed in 1878 as a large cotton gin in the German settlement of Gruene, now a historic district, this famed restaurant is situated beneath the old Gruene water tower. Enjoy the shade of ancient oak trees and stunning views of the rushing Guadalupe River. Inside, enormous wood beams and period brick walls provide a historic ambience. Popular offerings include the thick-cut steaks, oversized strawberry shortcakes and Jack Daniels pecan pie. **Inspector Note:** Celebrity guests have included John Travolta, Robert Duvall, Bill Walsh, Dan Rather and Mary Lou Retton.



[VIRGINIA \(▲ top\)](#)



[Gadsby's Tavern Restaurant](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Alexandria

The site's two buildings include a circa 1785 tavern, now a museum, and the 1792 City Hotel, now the dining room. A meal here is a step back in time. The Colonial atmosphere comes alive with the aged wood-plank floors, period attire worn by the staff and Colonial options on the menu. Traditional choices include George Washington's Favorite, a grilled breast of duck, and Gentleman's Pye, made of tender cuts of lamb and beef in a savory red wine stew. **Inspector Note:** Renowned patrons have included George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

WASHINGTON (▲[top](#))

[Paradise Inn Dining Room](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Mount Rainier National Park
Built in 1916 in the style of the great mountain lodges, the dining room is long and narrow with windows lining the length of both walls and a huge fireplace at the end. At an elevation of 5,400 feet, the views are always dramatic – and even on the 4th of July you’re likely to be looking at some snow. A hearty lunch might include a bowl of wild mushroom soup and a seared wild salmon burger with fresh dill aioli. And, for a perfect end to a long day on the mountain, dinner includes comfort food like venison shepherd’s pie and buffalo meatloaf.

WEST VIRGINIA (▲[top](#))

[Anvil Restaurant](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/American, Harpers Ferry
Set in a historic district, the décor includes dark color schemes and an attractive bar with historical photos of the area. Among the renowned stead and seafood offerings, the crab cakes are the signature entrée. Real crab lovers will also enjoy the tasty crab appetizers including crab balls and crab cocktail. There are numerous salad and dessert choices. **Inspector Tip:** The location offers a nice before- or after-meal walk featuring historic markers.

WISCONSIN (▲[top](#))

[Old Rittenhouse Inn](#), AAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/Continental, Bayfield
This charming dining room is located in an 1890 Victorian-style mansion, now a classic country inn, above Lake Superior. The menu is inspired by plentiful fresh fruits and berries from the surrounding orchards and a daily fresh catch from Lake Superior. It is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. **Inspector Tip:** Lunch is by reservation only and consists of a chef’s three-course menu. Adding to the elegance, the five-course dinner menu is presented verbally by wait staff.

[Karl Ratzsch’s Restaurant](#), AAA Three Diamond, Casual Dining/German, Milwaukee
First opened as a café in 1904 by German immigrants, the establishment was sold in 2003 to a management team committed to continuing the founding family’s rich traditions and authentic German fare. For years “Mama” Ratzsch collected the European-style glassware, porcelain plates and beer steins displayed throughout the dining room. The impressive room also features stained glass, lovely artwork and a domed ceiling with dark wood beams. The extensive menu includes roast duck, goose, sauerbraten, schnitzel, prime rib, steak, fish and German sausages.

WYOMING (▲[top](#))

[The Virginian Restaurant](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/Steak, Buffalo
Located in the Occidental Hotel, the restaurant is named after Owen Wister’s famed novel of the Old West, “The Virginian.” The décor includes high windows, embossed wall paper, high ceilings with trey accents and antique wooden chairs smoothed to a polish from countless patrons. Amid the polite whispers of the guests you can almost hear the chatter and shenanigans of the long gone cowboys. Now, as well as then, buffalo and prime beef steaks are specialties of the house.

[Sweetwater Restaurant](#), AAA Two Diamond, Casual Dining/Regional American, Jackson
In a place where pioneers arrived by covered wagon to build their log cabins, today’s travelers are welcomed by a mountain home featuring shingled eaves and gable-style roof. Tempting dishes include a seasonal vegetable braise with peanut puree and aromatics, Louisiana gulf stew, mustard marinated pork tenderloin topped with Jack Daniel’s jus served with green chili Mac and cheese, potato crusted fillet of trout, barbecue pork belly sliders served with corn salsa, buffalo T-bone, buffalo sloppy Joes and elk burgers. Local wines, beer and creative seasonal cocktails are available. **Inspector Tips:** Call ahead for special brew/wine master events. Lunch is first-come, first-served; dinner is by reservation only (request the patio!). Winter advisories may be in effect from October through early May.

CANADA

ONTARIO ([▲ top](#))

[Aberfoyle Mill](#), AAA/CAA Three Diamond, Fine Dining/Continental, Aberfoyle

Set in a converted 1859 grist mill and furnished with early Canadian antiques, this restaurant provides a rustic country setting, complete with a glowing fireplace. From the moment of arrival, guests feel like they are going back in time. The rural location suits the interior décor featuring farm and country memorabilia. The chef looks for fresh local and regional ingredients to highlight his menu with many farm fresh products. Diners enjoy the tradition of Saturday and Sunday prime rib specials. **Inspector Tip:** Other popular draws include the Sunday brunch and murder mystery dinners.

CARIBBEAN

BERMUDA ([▲ top](#))

[Tom Moore's Tavern](#), AAA Four Diamond, Fine Dining/International, Hamilton Parish

Bruno Fiocca, the owner for more than 30 years, greets guests with a rare graciousness to this 361-year-old building, once the abode of Irish poet Thomas Moore. Today's patrons wax poetically about the exquisite cuisine and finesse of tableside preparations by dapper waiters. While Thomas Moore left Bermuda suddenly and abruptly, patrons dining here will choose to linger with a fine Armagnac or aged Port while deciding whether to have the butterscotch crème brulee or Grand Marnier soufflé.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

[La Briciola Ristorante](#), AAA Three Diamond, Casual Dining/Italian, Santo Domingo

You know you are in for something special when you see the attendant in green livery awaiting you in the stone archway of this 17th-century former house. Located just down the street from Columbus Plaza in the Colonial historical zone, the establishment was restored by the owners of a sister restaurant of the same name in Milan. The dining areas surround an open-air courtyard set amid stone walls and antique artworks. The upscale classic Italian menu features a very good selection including a variety of carpaccio, risottos, pastas and plenty of seafood options and meat for the carnivore. Presentation is quite artful.