



The 15 Best Places To Eat And Drink In Santa Fe In 2023



BY MATT KIROUAC / JAN. 9, 2023 10:57 AM EST

From blue corn to green chilies, dining in Santa Fe is like tasting the culinary rainbow. A multi-sensory sensation, fragrant with piñon pine and luminous with art galleries, the **oldest capital city in the United States** boasts a staggering array of dining options for a community of less than 100,000 people (via **Census**). Despite its diminutive size, the northern New Mexican city holds its own alongside larger metropolises as one of the best — and most distinct — food cities in the nation.

Santa Fe is a place where the old and the new thrive alongside one another. Here in this timeworn high-desert town, you'll find generations-old restaurants serving some of the most **quintessential dishes in the state**. At the same time, just down the road, buzzy newcomers sling everything from farmhouse ales and Indian dosas to wood-fired pizzas and rooftop margaritas. Iconic New Mexican ingredients like **green chiles** and **blue corn** are eternally abundant — utilized for classic recipes as much as for innovative novelties. "The City Different" proves there's plenty of room on the menu for timeless staples like breakfast burritos and enchiladas, along with boundary-pushing presentations, techniques, and thoughtful flavors. Dining in Santa Fe is as much a history lesson in age-old comfort cuisine as it is a tour de force of redolent culinary art — exemplified by these 15 great places to eat and drink in Santa Fe in 2023.

Tia Sophia's



A city as historic as Santa Fe is bound to boast its fair share of old-school, family-run restaurants that have endured for generations and decades. Nestled in the heart of the city's adobe-filled downtown district, **Tia Sophia's** — open **since 1974** — is hallowed ground for classic New Mexican dishes like enchiladas, green chile stew, posole, and most especially, breakfast burritos.

In fact, Tia Sophia's is credited as one of the first restaurants to put breakfast burritos on its menu, and it's been heralded as one of the best in the country (via [Santa Fe New Mexican](#)). In true-blue New Mexican style, these behemoths come with meat, potatoes, and egg wrapped in a flour tortilla and smothered in chile sauce and melted cheese. It's all served up in a homey nook of a restaurant, open for breakfast and lunch only, decorated with other New Mexican necessities like [ristras](#), aka strung pods of dried red chiles.

Terra



Nestled in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains looming over Santa Fe, views don't come any more stunning than those from [Terra](#). A fine dining bastion inside the Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado Santa Fe, northern New Mexican cuisine is the bill of fare — served with contemporary flair from an elegant, art-filled dining room overlooking the mountainous terrain outside.

The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, fusing local ingredients and traditions with international influences. Dishes run the gamut from wild mushroom soup with crispy cauliflower and chile oil to pastrami-spiced lamb rack, tempura-battered chile relleno over quinoa pilaf, and green chile bison meatballs. The "signature

dish, meanwhile, is a rotating steak du jour, with optional sides like green chile mac & cheese and green chile and cheddar corn bread. It all pairs perfectly with an expertly curated wine list and toast-worthy sunset views from the expansive patio.

Paloma



The food and cocktails are as vibrant as the decor at **Paloma**, an eclectic, lustrous restaurant on the fringes of downtown. Modern renditions of Mexican and New Mexican dishes are front and center and as locally sourced and seasonal as possible, along with a bar program awash in agave spirits.

With chef Nathan Mayes at the helm, the kitchen diligently prepares everything from scratch, including tortillas and masa-based bites made from heirloom blue corn sourced from local farmers. Dishes are bracing, fresh, and bright, from the smoky salsas and zesty Baja sea bass ceviche to the beet tostadas with ancho-pecan salsa, crispy fish tacos, and burly bison short rib birria with blue corn tamal. Cocktails compliment the meal perfectly, spotlighting agave spirits like mezcal and tequila in margaritas, Negronis, and of course, palomas. No matter where you're seated, be it the kaleidoscopic dining room or the courtyard patio, the atmosphere is as entrancing as the cuisine.

Esquina Pizza



Compared to cities like New York and Chicago, Santa Fe doesn't typically come to mind as a pizza mecca. Still, newfangled eateries fusing local ingredients with wood-fired techniques are changing the local game in a big way. Case in point: **Esquina Pizza** is a buzzy new pizza spot slinging artisanal blistered pies, plus snacks and salads, in an intimate, charming space for a casual comfort food feast.

Ingredients are sourced locally from New Mexico and Italy, fusing the best of both worlds to create an ever-changing, seasonally driven menu that goes well beyond pepperoni. All pizzas are wood-fired and cooked to order, with classics like Margherita sharing menu space with pistachio pesto, garden pies strewn with kale, and chile-spiced versions flecked with Italian sausage and tomatoes. Beyond pizza, there are starters like wood-fired garlic bread and Caesar salad with focaccia croutons, and it's all available for takeout or dine-in on the cute mural-clad patio.

Dolina Cafe & Bakery



In a pleasantly surprising plot twist, Santa Fe is low-key a hub for some of the best Hungarian pastries, dishes, and desserts in the country. It's all courtesy of **Dolina Cafe & Bakery**, a charming farm-to-table love letter from owner Annamaria Brezna, who bakes up traditional dishes from her Hungarian homeland, like **makos dios**, a poppy seed and walnut cake with raspberry preserves, serving them in a cozy, convivial cafe a stone's throw from historic downtown Santa Fe.

Many ingredients hail from a local farm, all used to marry New Mexican traditions with Eastern European inspirations. The result is a truly singular spread of sweets and savories. This is the one-of-a-kind place where New Mexican breakfast burritos are offered alongside chicken paprikash, Hungarian goulash, and langos, a kind of Slovakian fried bread with garlic butter, arugula, tomato confit, and burrata. Whatever you order, don't sleep on the pastry case, brimming with a dynamic assortment of Polish tea cookies, sour cream coffee cake, strudel, pie, and flaky fruit-filled pockets.

Whoo's Donuts



Donuts come in a cornucopia of flavors, colors, and textures at [Whoo's Donuts](#), a funky little bakery perched just outside downtown, where local ingredients are employed for a laundry list of scratch-made pastries. It may look humble and frills-free from the outside, but this charming cafe lays claim to some of the most exciting and original sweets (and savories) in town.

True to donut form, American classics like Boston cream and chocolate-glazed are offered alongside an always-changing medley of Whoo's originals. Uniquely New Mexican staple options include blue corn blueberry lavender, green chile apple fritters, and red chile bacon toffee. They're all complimented by seasonal specialties, like sweet corn, apple cider, and pear ginger fritters, plus non-donut features like brownies, bear claws, pumpkin bread, and of course, breakfast burritos. As indulgent as it all may seem, you can rest easy knowing all dairy, eggs, nuts, and blue corn are locally sourced, resulting in donuts that are as wholesome as can be.

Betterday Coffee



Don't be fooled by the nondescript facade — one of the better coffee shops and sleeper-hit cafes in Santa Fe is hidden away in a bustling strip mall-style plaza by the Santa Fe River west of downtown. Sure, the coffee at **Betterday Coffee** is indeed superb, featuring Coava coffee out of Portland, Oregon, along with an assortment of lattes, teas, cold-brew, and even a perfectly balanced cafe au lait. But don't overlook the food, which far exceeds coffee shop expectations.

Breakfast burritos are a dime a dozen in Santa Fe, served in all manner of styles, but Betterday Coffee serves a stellar version. The classic comes with scrambled eggs, Jack cheese, fried potatoes, and chiles in an organic, buttery flour tortilla. Additional options include bacon, sausage, house-smoked beef brisket, and even a California burrito stuffed with grass-fed steak, guacamole, pico de gallo, and sour cream. Dine in or take your breakfast to go — the nearby Santa Fe River trail is an idyllic place for a picnic.

Coyote Cafe & Cantina



A double whammy of a restaurant and bar, located smack dab in the middle of Santa Fe's historic downtown district, **Coyote Cafe & Cantina** is a longtime staple for both fine dining and casual rooftop imbibing. Coyote Cafe skews upscale and elegant, offering primo date night vibes with elevated New Mexican dishes in an art-filled space. While outside, up the stairs, is the cantina, featuring some of the best rooftop views in Santa Fe, along with a margarita-heavy drink list and Southwestern snacks.

Open since 1987, Coyote Cafe has been a fine dining fixture for decades, thanks to its dynamic menu of locally sourced dishes, upscale recipes, and flashy presentations. Starters include venison carpaccio, fried burrata with Mexican chocolate vinaigrette, and white bean bisque with whipped bacon fat, followed by entrees like grilled lamb chops with calabacita risotto and bacon-date salsa and slow-braised beef short ribs with huitlacoche-shiitake jus. Things are more casual at the cantina, where bar snacks like queso and Frito pie are served alongside beer, sangria, and quenching margaritas. On particularly hot days, frozen margaritas come in prickly pear and blood orange flavors.

Counter Culture



The patio is huge, and the pastries are even more massive at [Counter Culture](#), a cool, casual, and sprawling cafe and coffee shop southwest of downtown. Sporting an artsy, bohemian vibe, the cash-only eatery has been a breakfast and lunch fixture for years, thanks equally to its wholesome, comforting food and the atmosphere of community that it curates.

Beloved both by locals and visitors alike, Counter Culture stocks its larder with locally sourced ingredients and organic products, utilized for a menu that's far more expansive and interesting than typical coffee shop standards. Requisite breakfast burritos are offered along with huevos rancheros, omelets, and pancakes, while lunch adds an array of sandwiches, quesadillas, and tacos. There are some pleasant menu surprises, too, like grilled tofu banh mi, cold sesame noodles, beer-battered salmon tacos, and turkey sausage lasagna. Whatever you do, don't miss the epic pastries, which run the gamut from oversized bundt cakes to cinnamon rolls the size of chalkboards.

Shake Foundation



Breakfast burritos and enchiladas get a lot of the foodie glory when it comes to essential New Mexican dishes, but **green chile cheeseburgers** are a rite of passage all their own. Found on menus all over Santa Fe, some of the best and beefiest can be found at **Shake Foundation**, a casual Americana-inspired burger spot on the southern outskirts of downtown.

The minimalist counter-service restaurant sports a small indoor area and a colossal umbrella-clad patio, ensuring plenty of room for guests to queue up and feast on some of the mightiest green chile cheeseburgers in town. Scratch-made from a blend of ground sirloin and chuck, all burgers are griddled to order and served on buttered buns. The most popular is the version layered with Jack cheese and green chiles, but the latter can be added to any burger or sandwich as well. These include lamb burgers, bison burgers, and spicy fried chicken sandwiches. There's also green chile stew, plus fried portobello mushroom burgers and even fried oyster sandwiches with red chile mayo. As the name suggests, milkshakes are not to be missed either. Made from Albuquerque's Rasband Dairy, ice cream is blended into thick "Adobe Mud Shakes" or used for floats, cups, and sundaes.

La Reina



Rooftop bars, breweries, and watering holes abound throughout Santa Fe, but one of the coolest cocktail haunts in the city is tucked away inside a hip motel on the southwest side. [La Reina](#) is a stylish and hip cocktail nook nestled in adobe-style El Rey Court, where a curated drink list spotlights agave spirits and bracing cocktails.

Awash in hues of white and cacti art, La Reina is an indoor-outdoor space with a fireplace, two ample patios, and a sultry lounge, which only gets cooler as the sun sets and the candles flicker. The cocktail menu is tight but mighty, sporting masterful renditions of margaritas, mezcal Negronis, and fizzy [Ranch Water](#). For something original, try the namesake La Reina, a blend of agua de jamaica (aka hibiscus water, per [Mexican Food Journal](#)), tequila, mezcal, lime, and ginger syrup. The bar also runs weekly events and promotions, like live music on Wednesdays and Sundays, s'more kits on Tuesdays, and queer nights on Mondays, wherein drink sales benefit the [Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico](#).

Rowley Farmhouse Ales



As with the rest of the country, craft beer and breweries are booming in Santa Fe, and **Rowley Farmhouse Ales** is the local cutting edge of that boom. Located in a kind of quasi-warehouse district, around the corner from famed **Meow Wolf**, this is an effortlessly cool gastropub and taproom in a garage-like space that's built a name for itself with its ever-changing lineup of house-brewed farmhouse-style beers, saisons, and sours.

Along with other craft beers from local breweries and beyond, the draft list at Rowley Farmhouse Ales showcases the latest and greatest in seasonal suds brewed on-site, like Vienna-style lagers, blueberry sours, and saisons made with local Sonoran white wheat. The food is just as seasonal and local, upping the ante on pub grub with snacks and plates like roasted Brussels sprouts with toasted piñon, red chile cheese fries, green chile tuna melts, and bison cheese steaks. And no matter the time of day, there's never a wrong time to order Rowley's roasted salmon green chile breakfast burrito, a unique riff on the local morning meal.

Sazón



Among the most acclaimed restaurants in Santa Fe (chef Fernando Oleo won last year's James Beard Award for Best Chef: Southwest, according to [Santa Fe New Mexican](#)), [Sazón](#) reigns as an essential fine dining experience downtown. Chef Oleo hails from Mexico City, bringing an authentic taste of his homeland to Santa Fe when he opened his decades-old restaurant, featuring stunning Mexican dishes in an upscale space with seasonal tasting menus.

At the heart of Sazón's menu is mole, a spice-based Mexican sauce that frequently appears throughout Olea's nuanced menus. It's such a pivotal part of the restaurant that mole spices star in a huge painted mural in the main dining room. It can all be sampled via a la carte menus and nine-course degustations, with [huitlacoche](#) with queso fresco and mini tortillas, shrimp enchiladas with zucchini blossom sauce, and black pepper-crusted beef tenderloin with cabbage and rice. The tasting menu format can also be applied to drinks, which focuses on mezcal and tequila, and flights of agave spirits.

Paper Dosa



It's a real-deal taste of South India via New Mexico at [Paper Dosa](#), a soulful restaurant with a cozy dining room that feels as relaxed and warm as dining in someone's well-adorned home. The restaurant is a passion project for chef/owner Paulraj Karupphasamy, a native of India, who started out with home-grown pop-ups and catering before debuting a brick-and-mortar dining room in 2015.

The menu is a culinary tour of South Indian traditions, starting with shareable appetizers like spicy mango salad, pappadum with chutney, and fritter-like chile and cauliflower pakoras. The namesake dosas, a kind of [South Indian crepe](#), are the stars of the show, available as a classic masala dosa filled with potatoes, onions, and red chiles or with more original offerings, like paneer and peas, white truffle oil, and ground lamb. This being Santa Fe, the green chile cheese dosa is a singular hybrid of two distinct cuisines. There are also curries, desserts (like passion fruit custard with tapioca and mango), and refreshing, spice-quenching drinks like mango lassis and lemon soda.

Second Street Brewery



Open since 1996, well before the craft beer renaissance began sweeping the country, **Second Street Brewery** is a true Santa Fe original that's been going strong for decades, amassing fans for its reliable roster of artisanal beers and elevated bar fare. Before the three current brewpubs, the original debuted on Second Street, followed in 2010 by a second outpost in the Railyard District, and most recently, the Rufina Taproom in 2017.

Each location offers slightly different draft lineups, but rotators include seasonal ales like the Cream Stout, Boneshaker Amber, Pecos Porter, and Rod's Best Bitter. There are also cocktails, wines, and a huge food menu with a dizzying array of beer-friendly comforts. These include familiar favorites like nachos, Bavarian pretzels, and Reuben sandwiches, plus New Mexican novelties like green chile chicken stew and enchiladas bursting with molten cheese and chiles. Finish up with an epic brownie sundae strewn with chile-spiced pecans.