

# LUCKY



FROM CRAFT COCKTAILS TO DYNAMIC  
DINNERS, THE BEST RESTAURANTS  
INSIDE ATLANTIC CITY'S CASINOS  
DO A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING—  
**AND THEY DO IT ALL WELL.**

BY PETER PROKO

**ATLANTIC CITY HAS LONG BEEN A DESTINATION** for gambling, entertainment and, of course, fine dining. But in recent times, the city has renewed its stake as a food destination, thanks to a collection of new restaurants and familiar favorites—not to mention plenty of culinary star power—that are helping change the way folks think about casino dining. Sure, there are still the buffets and the walk-up noodle bars, but more and more the dining scene in A.C. is taking new shape and cementing itself as one of the country's great food towns with modern spaces and inventive dishes. We ate our way from the Boardwalk to the marina and chose the meals (and a few drinks) that we feel showcase the best the city has to offer and found our luck is much better at these tables.



CAVATELLI  
WITH SUNDAY  
MEAT SAUCE  
AT ANGELINE

### AMADA, OCEAN RESORT

Jose Garces' flagship restaurant went dormant when Revel closed its doors a few years back, but we were thrilled to learn that it survived the resort's transformation to Ocean. The approachable menu has many highlights from the extraordinary charcuterie selection to the grilled meats and seafood. But there are few dining experiences as special as partaking in the chef's tasting menu, where a handpicked selection of small plates can be paired with the robust wine selection for a truly memorable evening.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** Any trip to Amada must include an order of the perfectly seasoned spicy potatoes, better known as *patatas bravas*. Take our advice, order a couple plates. The clams with chorizo are another guaranteed order as should be the lamb meatballs with shaved *manchego* and the parmesan artichokes. The *pernil asado*—roasted pork with white beans, arugula and orange—is another winner.

**SWEET ENDING:** The *crema catalana* is a traditional Spanish custard that somewhat resembles *crème brûlée*. It's sweet and decadent and a dessert that you won't soon forget.

**EXTRA BITE:** If you are dining with a group—and are plenty hungry—order the slow roasted suckling pig for the table. You'll get all the goods from snout to tail, but you'll have to order this one a couple days in advance.

### ANGELINE, BORGATA

Celebrity chef Michael Symon is known for his bold takes on meat-centric cooking, but at Angeline he channels his Sicilian roots to create a menu full of thoughtfully chosen dishes that show both familiarity and finesse. From the Italian wedding soup to the wood-fired fennel crusted pork chop, there's no doubt that Symon does his *nonna* proud.

**GRAB A DRINK:** The Sergio Leone paloma is a creative spin on the classic cocktail made with Casa Noble Crystal tequila and fresh grapefruit for a citrusy tartness that is finished with an Italian brandy liqueur.



PERNIL  
ASADO  
AT AMADA,  
OCEAN  
RESORT

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** After starting with the shaved fennel salad that is finished with a touch of mint and dressed with a lemon vinaigrette, go for something a little heartier and order the cavatelli with a “Sunday” meat sauce and a large dollop of ricotta.

**SWEET ENDING:** Make sure to save room for dessert, because the moist strawberry cassata cake with shaved almonds and custard is not to be missed.

### **BUDDAKAN, THE PLAYGROUND PIER AT CAESARS**

The A.C. outpost of Stephen Starr’s sophisticated trip through the Far East continues to thrive in the ever-crowded dining landscape. A mix of Chinese, Japanese, Thai and Korean dishes makes up the expansive menu and sets the bar for elevated Asian-inspired cooking.

**GRAB A DRINK:** The intimate vibes of this restaurant along with its playful cocktail list make it a great place to snag a libation before you’re seated for dinner. Try the Serenity—a blend of sake, lychee liqueur and pomegranate juice.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** The tea-smoked spare ribs with a hoisin barbecue glaze and pickled slaw will only heighten your expectations for what will follow. The dim sum menu shines with the edamame ravioli in a wine and shallot broth along with the oxtail dumplings with

green apple. The wasabi-crusted filet mignon with mashed sweet potatoes is a showstopper as is the *kung pao* lobster in a spicy Szechuan sauce with peanuts.

**SWEET ENDING:** The almond brioche bread pudding with bananas, macadamia ice cream and a whisky-infused white chocolate is about as good as it gets when it comes to prime-time dessert options.

### **CAPRICCIO, RESORTS**

Capriccio is perhaps one of the city’s most underrated Italian restaurants, but its dazzling dishes are anything but second rate. Playing to its strengths, the menu is full of Old World classics with a few modern twists to create a harmonious dining experience that puts the focus where it should be—on the food.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** Take control from the beginning and create your own *antipasto* plate choosing from items like mortadella, roasted long hots and assorted cheeses. Veal and chicken options run the gamut, but if you desire something a little flashier, go for the *osso bucco alla Milanese*. The braised veal shank is served over an extremely fragrant saffron risotto for a dish that plays to multiple senses.

**SWEET ENDING:** While there are other options, the individual chocolate soufflé is the ultimate

way to treat yourself.

**EXTRA BITE:** Capriccio has recently introduced a special small bites menu available at the bar.

### **THE CHART HOUSE, GOLDEN NUGGET**

Sure, this place has Instagram-worthy views overlooking the marina, but it’s so much more than just a pretty dining room. A pleasant mix of land and sand options can be found across the menu, making sure everyone at the table can find something they like or perhaps try something new.

**GRAB A DRINK:** It’s a bit on the gimmicky side, but the tableside torched Manhattan is something you need to experience at least once.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** The crab, avocado and mango stack is a bright, well balanced appetizer that we could eat over and over. The snapper Hemingway is parmesan crusted and topped with lump crab with lemon shallot butter and coconut ginger rice. Meanwhile the seared tomahawk lamb chops are marinated and then seared to create the perfect exterior to lock in the flavor of the tender meat.

**EXTRA BITE:** Happy hour runs from 4 until 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, as well as on Sunday. Expect a collection of light bites ranging from \$5 to \$8 as well as \$7 drinks,



**TUNA  
CRACKER  
AT IZAKAYA,  
BORGATA**



**WOOD-  
GRILLED  
LOBSTER  
AT OLÓN,  
TROPICANA**

\$6 wines by the glass and other assorted drink specials.

### **COUNCIL OAK FISH, HARD ROCK**

This newcomer to the A.C. dining scene has already made a splash, no pun intended, thanks to its seafood-heavy menu that hits on all cylinders. Locally sourced catches that are well executed along with a gorgeous dining room and attentive service have quickly turned this into one of A.C.'s more coveted reservations.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** There's definitely a buzz in the dining room whenever you see one of the shellfish pots being delivered to a nearby table, and rightfully so. The version with blue lump crab meat, king crab, andouille sausage, potatoes and corn is particularly notable. However, the grilled swordfish steak with a puttanesca sauce is complemented wonderfully with an order of the preserved lemon broccolini and au gratin potatoes.

**EXTRA BITE:** If you're in the mood to celebrate and want to do it in style, the restaurant's tableside caviar service is a fitting way to do so.

### **DOLCE MARE, OCEAN RESORT**

You're going to want to request a window seat so you can bask in the picturesque views of the Atlantic provided in this stunning dining room that certainly doesn't lack in ambiance. And the food matches the scenery with a menu comprised of beautifully plated dishes that taste even better than they look.

**GRAB A DRINK:** The specialty drink list here pays homage to the standards so you can't go wrong with an aperitif like the Aperol spritz or a classic Negroni.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** The seared octopus with chickpeas and farro, not to mention red pepper hummus that's finished with a ginger pistachio vinaigrette is a no-brainer. For the pasta course, the tagliatelle with pesto and Gulf shrimp is a perfect intermediary dish as you prepare for an entrée of day boat scallops topped with shiitake

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## ATLANTIC CITY'S BEST CASINO RESTAURANTS

mushrooms sitting on a bed of peas and corn with a carrot puree and balsamic reduction.

**SWEET ENDING:** You'll find plenty of Italian specialties like cannoli, tiramisu and *affogato* at Dolce Mare, but we swoon just thinking about the buttermilk *panna cotta*. Silky, yet firm, and undeniably sublime, the sweetened cream is blended with a strawberry *consommé* and an addictive mango gelato.

### GORDON RAMSAY STEAK, HARRAH'S

Television's favorite angry chef turns up the heat at his slick steakhouse that puts prime beef front and center. Love him or hate him, Ramsay is one of the more respected chefs in the world, with the Michelin stars to back him up, and his attention to the finer points of food are on full display.

**GRAB A DRINK:** The Jane Doe is a real mind-bender consisting of absinthe, gin, fresh lemon juice and chardonnay with egg white and grapefruit bitters.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** Seared *foie gras* served atop a circle of Grand Marnier French toast and plated around a ring of pecan granola with hits of strawberry jam and a sumac gastrique is a shining example of Ramsay's advanced palate. But, really it's all about the steak and the team here hand selects each cut and ages the beef for a minimum of 40 days. And aside from your typical filets, porterhouses and ribeyes, you can

also splurge for the coveted A5 grade of Japanese steak at \$35 an ounce.

**SWEET ENDING:** Close the evening in style with an order of the sticky toffee pudding with brown butter ice cream.

### IZAKAYA, BORGATA

Before opening Izakaya, chef Michael Schudson spent time in Japan perfecting the dishes that would ultimately become the main attraction at this decade-old eatery tucked right off the casino floor. The sushi rolls are exquisite and the sashimi offerings feature standouts like the bluefin *toro* and *ikura*—caviar made from salmon roe.

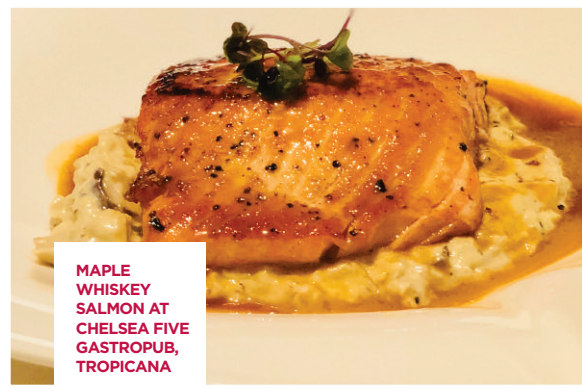
**GRAB A DRINK:** The wide-ranging *sake* list is impressive but so is the very on-trend collection of aged Japanese whisky. Order up a single glass or try one in a Tokyo Sidecar.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** The duck scrapple *bao* buns are a must, but you'll also want to make sure to at least get a sampler of sushi before turning your attention to the *robatayaki* portion of the menu. These skewers of barbecued meats and fishes—think wagyu beef and Spanish octopus—are deceptively polished for what equates to Japanese street food. If small plates aren't your thing then head straight for the charred Chilean sea bass in a brown miso broth with cauliflower.

**EXTRA BITE:** Izakaya offers a special menu on Mondays that features several food items ranging between \$7 and \$14 along with specials on cocktails and carafes of *sake*.



SUSHI AT  
OKATSHE,  
TROPICANA



MAPLE  
WHISKEY  
SALMON AT  
CHELSEA FIVE  
GASTROPUB,  
TROPICANA

STEAK WITH  
DEMI-  
ROASTED  
BONE  
MALLOW  
AT GORDON  
RAMSAY  
STEAK,  
HARRAH'S



# SECOND HELPING

10 OTHER A.C. RESTAURANTS THAT COOK UP SOMETHING SPECIAL

## BOBBY FLAY STEAK, BORGATA

A series of specialty steaks, new American entrées and a lobster bar make the well-known chef's restaurant a definitive dining destination.

## CHELSEA FIVE GASTROPUB, TROPICANA

This newly opened casual-yet-chic spot inside the Chelsea Tower shows simple food doesn't have to be so, well, simple.

## GORDON RAMSAY'S PUB AND GRILL, CAESARS

The fiery chef's first foray into Atlantic City offers stylish takes on classic bites from across the pond.

## GUY FIERI'S CHOPHOUSE, BALLY'S

The in-your-face TV food host can talk the talk, but his culinary twist on everyday food also walks the walk.

## IL MULINO, HARD ROCK

The quintessential Italian fine dining experience, this Shore home of the iconic NYC restaurant oozes elegance.

## KURO, HARD ROCK

The updated approach and masterful techniques from the sushi bar to the kitchen breathe new life into timeless Japanese dishes.

## OKATSHE, TROPICANA

This laid-back joint covers all the bases from the sensational sushi rolls to the complex ramen bowls.

## OLD HOMESTEAD STEAK HOUSE, BORGATA

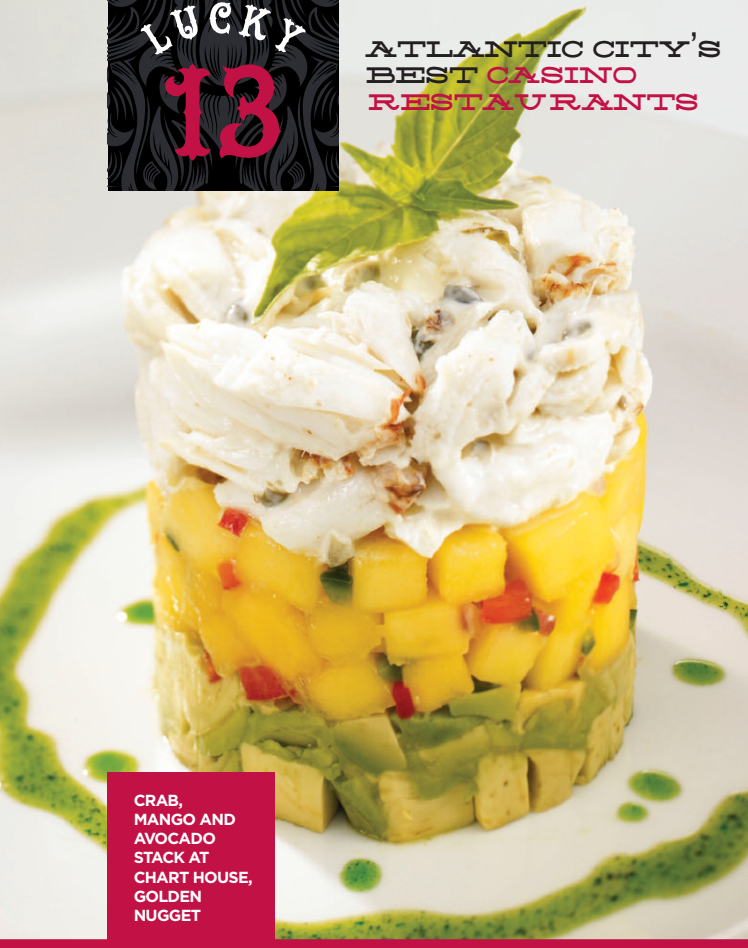
The epitome of the classic steakhouse where flash and grandeur collide, this is the place to indulge over larger-than-life shrimp cocktails and 34-ounce steaks.

## VERACRUZ, HARRAH'S

This Latin hotspot combines Mexican street food with Spanish dishes, creating a cohesive menu that wins over diners time after time.

## VILLAIN AND SAINT, OCEAN RESORT

Pair any one of the number of Belgian beers here with their signature selection of mussels and *frites* or wood-fired pizzas and try not to fall in love.



CRAB, MANGO AND AVOCADO STACK AT CHART HOUSE, GOLDEN NUGGET

### MARTORANO'S, HARRAH'S

South Philly's Steve Martorano may have a bit of a celebrity following, but he remains loyal to the neighborhood, cranking out specialties like his veal parm and linguine with shucked-to-order clams. From the strict no substitutions policy to the TVs overhead playing scenes from his favorite classic films, there is no doubt that Martorano does things his way and it's hard to argue with the results.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** If Italian restaurants were judged on their meatballs alone, Martorano's would stand with the best of the bunch. Served alongside a mound of fresh ricotta and swimming in tomato sauce with a fried long hot, it's the pinnacle of comfort food. The veal tenderloin with mushrooms, spinach and prosciutto in a white wine sauce is divine, but pasta lovers will be drawn to the crab and shrimp scampi with cherry tomatoes and toasted bread crumbs.

**EXTRA BITE:** Martorano's fancies itself as more than just a restaurant, which is why at 10 p.m. it morphs into its own nightlife experience with a state-of-the-art lighting and sound system. And if the chef is around, you may see him step outside the kitchen and behind the turntables.

### OLÓN, TROPICANA

A trip to Olón is a like a journey through chef Jose Garces' childhood, where he combines his memories of eating ceviche on the beach



WASABI-CRUSTED FILET MIGNON AT BUDAKKAN, THE PLAYGROUND PIER AT CAESARS

in Ecuador with his grandmother's recipes to create a one-of-a-kind oceanfront dining experience. From the lively front bar area where you can watch chefs shuck oysters from both coasts to the wood-burning grill where everything from lamb chops to king salmon are prepared, the hardest decision may be trying to narrow down your choices.

**GRAB A DRINK:** While the house-made sangria is enticing and the beer list is authentic, the refined specialty cocktail list could please any discernible boozehound. Case in point, the Victoria Moreno made with chile-infused tequila and mixed with tropical notes from guava nectar and lime.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** The coconut and shrimp chowder with calamari and purple potato is a great opening number, but you'll want to make sure and sample at least one ceviche (we love the Peruvian with corvina, red onion, sweet potato and a chili pepper aioli). Then go for the chef's selection of empanadas before settling on the whole Maine lobster that's been kissed by the grill.

**EXTRA BITE:** Olón's weekend brunch not only offers some of the best regular menu items, but also Latin touches to favorite dishes as well. Think crab benedict with chorizo and a red pepper hollandaise or strawberry waffles with *dulce de leche*.

### ROBERT'S STEAKHOUSE, HARD ROCK

This beloved restaurant was shuttered after the Taj Mahal closed its doors so, when the Hard Rock decided to bring it back, along with executive chef Will Savarese, faithful diners welcomed its return with open arms. And thankfully, it hasn't missed a beat.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** You'll find plenty of traditional steakhouse starters like beef *carpaccio* and

shrimp cocktail, but no trip to Robert's is complete without an order of the tuna tartare where a quail egg adds a creamy richness to the Asian-inspired dish. The ribeye is our preferred steak order here, but the grilled lamb chops prepared simply with garlic and rosemary are equally pleasing.

**SWEET ENDING:** A longtime fan favorite, The Meltdown is a moist chocolate brownie that is topped with a chocolate chip cookie and served with Maker's Mark ice cream for a truly indulgent finale.

**EXTRA BITE:** Robert's calling card remains its on-premise dry aging process, where steaks are kept under Savarese's watchful eye for a minimum of six weeks and only cut by the restaurant's butcher when deemed ready for consumption.

### WOLFGANG PUCK AMERICAN GRILLE, BORGATA

Wolfgang Puck's name is synonymous with fine dining, but you don't have to be a gourmand to fully appreciate the mouthwatering cuisine being pumped out of this kitchen. Whimsical appetizers like the truffled potato chips drizzled with a blue cheese sauce are proof that the food at this restaurant matches the fun-loving personality of its namesake.

**WHAT YOU'LL ORDER:** The spicy tuna tartare is a vibrant starter that sets the stage for what's to come. The cured sushi-grade fish blends brilliantly with the creaminess of avocado while cucumbers provide a nice textural balance. For your main course, the pork chop with caramelized pork belly is meant to be devoured, but so too, is the perfectly grilled New York strip served with a garlicky *chimichurri*. **SWEET ENDING:** The apple strudel with vanilla ice cream pairs wonderfully with one of the several specialty coffees you'll find on the menu.

**EXTRA BITE:** Puck was one of the first to bring gourmet flair to pizza so you'll want to pay attention to the wood-fired offerings here. We're suckers for the house-smoked salmon pizza, but lately we've been overly satisfied with the simplicity of the expertly made margherita. ■

# PROPERLY PAMPERED

When late nights become early mornings in Atlantic City, a little rest and relaxation is definitely required. Here are **five spa treatments to help you rebound.**

## **Beautiful Day Signature Body Treatment, Hard Rock**

This aptly named service stimulates and reawakens your body, providing both balance and energy to have you ready to tackle whatever lies ahead. Ultra-fine sea salts are used to exfoliate the body as a mineral-rich mud infused with essential oils is applied before you are placed in a soothing wrap. The process continues with a head and facial massage and an application of therapeutic oils to help your skin regain its natural sheen.

## **Escape Facial at Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon and Spa, Harrah's**

When you wake up to the realization you aren't as young as you once were, this 80-minute facial will have you glowing once again. Steam is used to exfoliate enzymes and prepare you for microdermabrasion to help renew your skin tone and texture. An eye collagen treatment and a mask are applied as you give way to a face, hand and arm massage and sink into total bliss.

## **Flow Massage at Exhale Spa, Ocean Resort**

If you have ever gotten a deep tissue massage and immediately regretted it because of the pain, then we suggest this effective therapy. Signature kneading techniques help ease the body's tension by waking up the muscles and freeing energy blockages, all the while giving your immune system the kick-start it needs.

## **Purifying Tea-Tree and Lemon Rejuvenation at Bluemercury Spa, Tropicana**

This lavish body treatment begins with a head-to-toe body facial designed to get rid of that dry skin and open up your pores. Then a full-body mask is applied to help rejuvenate the skin before the attention turns to your feet with a peppermint foot scrub, mask and reflexology. It all ends with a full-body massage, leaving you revived and refreshed.

## **Queen B Body Float at Immersion Spa, The Water Club at Borgata**

This royal treatment starts by exfoliating the body with vanilla brown sugar and transitions to an antioxidant-rich propolis—think of it as a skin-firming extract—being applied. From there you will enter the spa's floatation unit where you will hover weightless while the propolis works its magic. The unique experience concludes with a calming massage as you journey to an idyllic place.