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2010 dining: New restaurants, new tastes, new trends

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The economy didn't dissuade an intrepid few from jumping into the restaurant pool head first. Whether they opened a brand new venue or revamped an already existing restaurant or even opened another location, they made Utah dining a lot more interesting.

Best 2010 restaurant experience

The Copper Onion • I don't have enough space here to recount all the spectacular dishes I've had in this sophisticated and reasonably priced restaurant. But here's a feeble attempt: ricotta dumplings strewn with candied lemon peel, oxtail ragu over fresh pappardelle pasta, venison flank steak and apple-celery slaw, pork belly salad with parsnips and brussels sprouts, wagyu steak and eggs, cauliflower with anchovy cream, and the Drunken Cow cocktail. 111 E. Broadway, Suite 170, Salt Lake City, 801-355-3282.



Scott Sommerdorf | The Salt Lake Tribune The Copper Onion in Salt Lake City has been named the best 2010 restaurant experience by Tribune restaurant critic Vanessa Chang.

Utah County dining, elevated

Communal • After their success with Orem's Pizzeria 712, chef/owners Colton Soelberg and Joseph McRae added this chic and seasonally minded restaurant in Provo that would hold its own in any food-obsessed metropolitan area. It even comes complete with the namesake communal table where strangers (or large groups) can get to know one another over a Jacob's Cove heirloom tomato salad. 100 N. University Ave., Provo, 801-373-8000.

Finger-licking memorable dish

Grilled Jidori Chicken at the Naked Fish • For Japanese-minded chefs, "jidori" trumps organic and free-range. For Naked Fish diners, it's one of the best ways to savor the smoky flavors of the yakitori grill, though you may need to order two portions. 67 W. 100 South, Salt Lake City, 801-595-8888.

Best ambience

Frida Bistro • The namesake artist's influence abounds in this upscale Mexican restaurant with a retina-burning palate covering the industrial warehouse bones. Adding to the vibe: a vibrant soundtrack and a delicious cocktail menu to match. 545 W. 700 South, Salt Lake City, 801-983-6692.

Best gelato

Vinto • The sparkling new pizzeria has an urbane air, while serving sophisticated pizzas and a mind-boggling selection of gelato. This is the real Italian deal, from recipe to machine to the extra-virgin olive oil and sea salt sprinkled on top of the simple, yet decadent vanilla gelato. 418 E. 200 South, Salt Lake City, 801-539-9999.

Comfort food, with a pint

MacCool's Public House • It's the perfect time of year to tuck into house-made shepherd's pie, Guinness-infused beef stew, corned beef and cabbage and a pint of stout. The weekly live Irish music helps chase away the winter blues, too. 1400 S. Foothill Blvd., #166, Salt Lake City, 801-582-3111; 855 W. Heritage Park Blvd., Layton, 801-728-9111; 11610 S. Main District Drive, South Jordan, 801-727-3111.

Comfort food, New Orleans-style

Spoony & Nata's Down Home Cuisine • Set aside New Year's resolutions. I was looking for fortification in 2010 (and will need it in 2011) with this family-run's offerings of crunchy shrimp po' boy sandwiches, beans and rice, and slices of creamy sweet potato pie and lemony 7-Up cake. The owners, too, always make you feel good for being there. 1810 S Main Street Salt Lake City, 801-467-0400.

Worth the wait

Red Iguana #2 • The idea behind the new joint was to spread the love and decrease the wait time for the crowds. But who are we kidding? This legendary venue is so popular, even this new second location is teeming with people waiting for fiery mole amarillo, soft corn tortillas and a finale of tres leches cake. 866 W. South Temple, Salt Lake City, 801-355-0361.

Best revival

Caffe Niche • New owners added new energy and a revamped menu. Café-goers can still relish one of the best true macchiatos in town and hungry diners have plenty to choose from, but you can never go wrong with the eggs Benedict, complete with the house-made English muffins. 779 E. 300 South, Salt Lake City, 801-433-3380.

Best Meals on Wheels

Chow Truck Haute Asian Cuisine On the Go • Gourmet food trucks have been taking over the food world elsewhere, proffering everything from gourmet desserts to Korean tacos. While the trend hasn't taken off yet locally, SuAn Chow's Chow Truck is leading the way, delivering a high-class, highly mobile lunch of coconut chicken tacos, sliders and salads, not to mention some of the best flash-fried calamari around. Visit www.chowtruck.com for daily locations.

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