

# EAT DRINK

The foodies guide to the best local eating  
in Sarasota, Manatee and Venice

**Keep Cool!**

*SUMMER DINING BRINGS ON THE CHILL*

**Out Late**

*EAT AND DRINK TO  
MIDNIGHT AND BEYOND*



**Herald-Tribune**  
media group

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**On the Cover:** Cocktails at The Crow's Nest in Venice.

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# Keep Cool

## SUMMER DINING BRINGS ON THE CHILL!

**Y**ou've probably heard the joke that in Florida there are two seasons: hot and hotter. While this is not completely true, with summer just around the corner strategies for beating the heat are welcome.

When it comes to our favorite activities – eating and drinking in restaurants and bars – there are plenty of ways to stay cool. But first, let's define the term. Officially cool means 'of or at a fairly low temperature' and this article surely addresses cooling elements like climate control outside, delicious dishes served cold, frosty drinks and more.

But 'cool' goes beyond temperature to a meaning that is about attitude, like having a calm style or something that is totally on trend. To all those definitions this article says 'yes.'

### Cool Locations & Climate-Control

Getting to dine out on the decks and patios of restaurants, especially those with water views, is cool in the fun and trendy way. But in the summer it can be really hot out there. That is why restaurateurs have outfitted their al fresco areas with equipment that cools guests down, including special shading and devices that mist areas around outside tables.

This kind of outdoor climate control was a priority for the Beach House on Anna Maria Island ([groupersandwich.com](http://groupersandwich.com)). The restaurant recently completed a three-year renovation

## KEEP COOL

project (with the place staying open that whole time). Last to be finished but first in cool is the new outside deck, says William Manson, Beach House Chef and 25-year Chiles Group employee (the Chiles Group owns the Beach House, the Sandbar on Anna Maria and the Mar Vista on Longboat Key).

"A lot of thought went into climate control for the outdoor areas," says Manson.

The restaurant installed transparent vinyl curtains and overhead heaters and misters that allow diners to sit outside with unobstructed views of the Gulf of Mexico in any type of weather, rain or wind condition. The new state-of-the-art overhead awning system rotates 180-degrees to allow for total sunlight or closes to allow for complete cover and shade. "Guests can dine with confidence that they won't get even a drop of rain on them," says Manson. "Tables with 'toes-in-the-sand' seating options are still available," he adds.

Staying cool is a concern for other dining locations with outside areas. Most offer some climate-control cool down. Waterfront spots like Fins at Sharky's on the Pier ([finsatsharkys.com](http://finsatsharkys.com))



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# KEEP COOL



THE ANNA MARIA OYSTER BAR SERVES OYSTERS, OF COURSE. HAVE THEM RAW OR COOKED.

in Venice; PIER 22 Restaurant - Patio - Ballroom (pier22dining.com) in Bradenton and Anna Maria Oyster Bar (AMOB, oysterbar.net) on the Anna Maria Pier are fitted with different configurations or variations of the same devices as Beach House including misters, fans, shades, awnings and overhead fans.

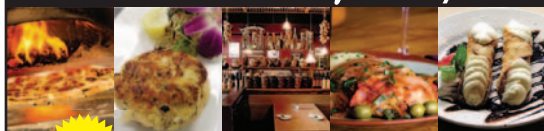
"At PIER 22 outdoor seating is popular even in the summer months," says Director of Marketing Tabatha Davis. "The cool coastal breeze skims by both the terrace and patio sections, and it is very refreshing." The Patio At PIER 22 also offers covered shade, sliding doors and fans to keep the rays of the summer sun away. Here's another plus: dogs are welcome to join their owners on the covered patio every day.

## Cool Foods: Oysters & Sushi

Many seafood lovers know that there is nothing as sublime like a dozen raw oysters to meet every cool criterion in the book. "There are few things that compare to how wonderful cold oysters can be served on a hot day with a chilled beverage," says PIER 22's Davis.

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## KEEP COOL

"We offer oysters by the dozen on special every Sunday for \$10 along with \$4 bloody Marys and mimosas," she adds.

The Crow's Nest Restaurant & Tavern ([crowsnest-venice.com](http://crowsnest-venice.com)) would surely agree. With waterfront views of the Venice Inlet and Crows Nest Marina, this Venice landmark offers fine dining at the main dining room and casual fare at The Tavern (indoor and out).

In either venue the raw bar is outstanding. On the menu are Gulf of Mexico oysters, Pacific and N. Atlantic oysters and Cedar Key Middleneck Clams. Pair your choice(s) with a red or white wine from the Crow's

Nest extensive and award-winning wine list or a frozen or chilled cocktail creation (more on that later!).

Fins at Sharky's also offers raw oysters sourced from many locations, but competing with its



*KEEP COOL WITH SUMMER DRINKS AT THE CROW'S NEST LIKE THESE: SPRING BERRY MARTINI, KEY WEST LEMONADE AND A TOASTED PINA COLADA MARTINI.*

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FINS AT SHARKY'S EXCELS IN INVENTIVE SUSHI SELECTIONS.

raw bar for number one cool is the sushi bar. "I would say that the best cool menu items we have come from our sushi menu," says Fins co-owner Justin Pachota. "For one, our sushi is always super fresh. Also, we do really cool takes on traditional like our surf and turf roll (Maine lobster, asparagus, tempura shrimp and avocado topped with flame seared Meyer all natural filet, sweet soy, hoisin glaze and sriracha mayo) and our vegan roll, which is made

with tofu, asparagus and more," he explains.

Of course there is no talking about oysters without mentioning AMOB, which has multiple locations – AMOB 'Landside' in Bradenton, AMOB on the Pier on Anna Maria Island, AMOB Cortez and AMOB Ellenton. Between them there is sure to be a cool spot near you to enjoy the restaurant's raw or cooked oysters, plus a full menu with items that are sure to appeal to every member of the family.

## Cool Foods: Gazpacho & Smoked Salmon

Cold soups and salads are also a refreshing treat to beat summer heat. Libby's Café + Bar (in Sarasota's Southside Village area) and its sister restaurant, Louies Modern in downtown Sara-






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sota (both at tableside.com) offer a cool-down dream that includes cold soups, salads and other dishes.

At either restaurant enjoy variations on cold-served menu items like house-made gazpacho, cerviche and seafood cold plates plus deviled eggs, Seoul kitchen lettuce cups, wasabi seared tuna and the 'famous' Himalayan salt block burrata with heirloom tomatoes.

At the Beach House Chef McNabb has been overseeing the curing and smoking of its own salmon. Now that is cool! "We procure an eco-friendly product: North Atlantic salmon filet farmed in the Gulf of Maine that has no hormones and no GMO's," he says.

After a three day, simple salt and sugar cure, the salmon is put into a cold mesquite smoker for a few hours, at a low temperature. Then it is sliced thin and served with house-made crustinis, arugula and frisse, tossed in a light dressing with capers, onions and crème frêche on the plate.



*THE SPICY IN LOUIES MODERN'S TACOS CAN COOL YOU DOWN. HAVE AN ICY DRINK TO GO WITH FOR PERFECTION.*

### Cool Cocktails

What is new, delicious and very cold? The frozen wine drinks at AMOB, that's what! Just in



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# KEEP COOL



AT PIER 22 YBOR CITY'S FLORIDA CANE DISTILLERY'S CRAFT VODKAS ARE FEATURED IN MANY SUMMER COCKTAILS.

time for summer AMOB has gotten hold of a very special drink technology that turns wine (and vodka) into frozen drinks. "This way people who enjoy a Sauvignon Blanc and those who like the cabernet can enjoy what they want," says Horne.

At the Crow's Nest, Bar Manager Will McNabb is a veritable fountain of ideas for cool cocktails. This summer he plans on quite a few concoctions. How does a spring berry martini sound, made with muddled strawberries, mint, cucumber vodka, strawberry liqueur and St. Germain elderflower liqueur? Also on its summer drink menu is Key West Lemonade (Absolute Citron and cranberry juice with fresh homemade lemon sour) and McNabb's very own Gulf Coast Sex on the Beach (Midori melon liqueur, rum, banana liqueur, pineapple juice and cranberry juice).

## MORE COOL DRINKS FOR SUMMER:

**Locally-sourced cool:** Specialty cocktails using Ybor City's Florida Cane Distillery's craft vodkas at PIER 22, including the Plant City Strawberry, Okeechobee Cherry and Palm Beach Pineapple.

**Berry cool:** Fins at Sharky's is looking to fresh berries for that 'slide into summer' island cocktail feel with its blueberry mohito.

**Not your grandma's iced tea cool:** Tea has been a long time "cooler," particularly in the South and Florida. At Louies Modern mixologist Andi Viohl has created a green tea sangria



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made by infusing Pinot Grigio, brandy, pears, and grapes with green tea then adding house-made mint syrup.

**Pina Coladas and Mai Tais with special twists** will be on the bar at the Beach House. Just saying that is cool.

### Desserts Can Be Cool

When dreaming up cool desserts, the first thing that we conjure is ice cream or gelato: correct? Did you know that local citrus grower and shipper, Nokomis Groves ([nokomisgroves.com](http://nokomisgroves.com)), offers its own citrus soft serve ice cream? Orange, lime and pineapple are its fruit flavors along with standard chocolate and vanilla. In case you wondered, two flavors can be swirled together. The orange/vanilla combo is very popular.

Food writer Erin Jackson ([sweets.seriousseats.com](http://sweets.seriousseats.com)) described this smooth ice cream as “the perfect midway point between soft-serve, sorbet, and frozen yogurt. It’s creamy, but doesn’t melt as quickly as soft serve, has the flavor impact of sorbet (without being icy), and has a texture and tang similar to tart frozen yogurt.”

In South Venice, Bentleys Homemade Ice Cream offers hard packed ice cream, plus sorbet and gelato, the latter of which is a key ingredient in desserts at Fins at Sharky’s.

“Bentleys makes gelato to order: we tell him what flavor we want,” explains Pachota. Last year’s favorite was a chocolate and Guinness gelato. The most heavily rotated flavor is rasp-



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## KEEP COOL

berry and chocolate chunk. Fins also makes its version of a traditional Affogato (Italian for 'drowned'). This is a scoop of vanilla gelato and a 'sidecar' of espresso that gets poured over the top. Can we have some amaretto or a cookie with that?

Louies Modern also makes a super-local Affogato by taking a shot of Buddy Brew espresso (Buddy Brew is a Tampa-based craft coffee concern with a store adjacent to Louies) and pouring it over the restaurant's own vanilla bean ice cream.

If you are craving a hot and cold combination (which is very cool) try Libby's giant warm chocolate chip cookie with ice cream, or its Dutch baby caramel apple with cinnamon ice cream a la mode (baked to order).

Finally, combining the wonder of dessert with the thunder of cocktails, PIER 22 has developed a refreshing dessert martini: a chocolate covered cherry: Florida Cane Okeechobee cherry vodka, white crème de cacao and Godiva white chocolate Liqueur.

### Local Collaborations are Cool too

It is also cool when restaurants collaborate with local and national companies on events, edibles and libations. For example, AMOB recently partnered with Darwin's Brewing Company on a custom AMOB beer now called 'Pier Beer,' says owner John Horne. "We worked on the recipe together and came up with this awesome light lager – a perfect summer beer," he adds.

For the Beach House's Chef Manson, collaborations with local businesses and farms to procure eco-friendly and quality products is the coolest thing of all. "I've worked as a chef in this part of Florida my whole career and only recently have we been concentrating what the local area has to offer as far as produce and seafood. As a consequence these markets are growing and increasing the quality of what they do," he says.



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# KEEP COOL

## The Science of Cooling Ingredients

The “science” of food tells us that there are fruits, vegetables and herbs that have a cooling effect on the body. Area restaurants have taken this into account in their kitchens and bars.

**Watermelon:** The key word here is ‘water.’ Hydration is important in the heat. One for sure fresh ingredient for the summer at Fins at Sharky’s will be watermelon. Last year Fins featured a grilled watermelon salad. This year, who knows?

**Mint:** In addition to being ‘minty fresh’ the menthol component of mint can keep you feeling cool. It is also purported to have calming properties to help you chill out. Spearmint is a crucial ingredient in mojitos. Enjoy a few at Mi Pueblo ([mipueblomexican.com](http://mipueblomexican.com)) to go with the spicy (that’s next).

**Chilies:** A hot way to cool down is with chilies and peppers. It’s something about making you sweat that does it. At Mi Pueblo the hot pepper of choice is usually jalapeño.

**Cucumbers:** The expression “cool as a cucumber” didn’t come from nowhere. Cucumbers have a high water content for hydration and they are also chock full of vitamins. Fins at Sharky’s makes a luscious cucumber Caroline cocktail with muddled cucumber, vodka, St. Germain liqueur, fresh squeezed lime juice and a splash of ginger beer.

**Peaches:** A peachy way to stay cool, China calls peaches the “cooling fruit.” At the Beach House, you will find ‘mocktails’ made with Florida peaches and they are featured in dishes like the peach prosciutto salad.



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# Out Late

## EAT & DRINK TO MIDNIGHT AND BEYOND

**F**ourth meal. Snack attack. No matter what you call it, when the desire to eat hits and it's later at night our area choices are increasing and improving. Great dining after 10 p.m. is a snap and even to 2 p.m. is way do-able. Not too long ago it wasn't so easy.

But today, from north to south, east to west, restaurants and bars with food are staying open and catering to all ages and all kinds of crowds. There are places for sports lovers, jazz cats, DJ dancers, Irish pub entertainment lovers and more.

### **Oak & Stone is a 'Happy Place'**

Oak & Stone, in University Park's UTC Square, is a beer lover's happy place. And a pizza lover's, a sports lover's and even a whisky lover's happy place. But oh that beer. . .

Imagine yourself standing in front of a wall of 56 choices of craft beer that you can taste, sip or drink as you wish. You are wearing a wristband that keeps track (and checks you when you reach 40 ounces) and see if you don't do a happy dance. It's a good thing there is enough room over by the beer wall to dance! If outdoors is your thing, there is ample seating equipped with large screen TV's.

Oak & Stone is open Sun.-Wed. from noon to midnight and Thurs.-Sat. from noon to 2 a.m. General Manager Anthony Liakakos reports that from day one the place has rocked. "We are one of the only spots in the area that has a kitchen open to midnight and 2 a.m.," he says. In ad-

# LOVE BITES

dition to artisanal pizza, Oak & Stone has a full menu of it's own twist on American tavern favorites.

A typical evening goes like this. Before 10 a.m. is a dinner and date night crowd. Sometimes they stay on, plus more groups come from other places for a later night drink. "We have such a wide variety of clients: from the nice younger couple hanging out to a group of neighbors in their late 50s



LATE NIGHT AT OAK & STONE, PIZZA IS ALWAYS POPULAR.

who decided to get a pizza at the bar," says Liakakos. Around 10:30-11 p.m. come millennials and Gen X'ers looking for beer, pizza, camaraderie and fun. Liakakos credits the nearby LECOM (Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine) campus for some of that crowd. In the wee hours there is an influx of service people who are getting off work at other restaurants.

"By 12-12:30 a.m. there is such a unique group of people interacting. They are sharing beers and conversation at the beer wall. It is a very social environment," he says. One icebreaker is each beer's LCD screen that displays name, description, flavor profile and more.

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# OUT LATE

## Z's is Not for Sleeping

Downtown Sarasota is a 'hot' spot when it comes to late night action. Z's Restaurant & Bar on Main Street makes its full menu available every day to 2 a.m., says co-owner Lisa Moreles. "We serve only fresh, made-to-order food – nothing is microwaved or premade, no matter what time," she adds.

Plus there are 'special' nights to keep things interesting. Thursday is Ladies Night. Starting at 9 p.m. well drinks are free for the ladies. Friday and Saturday nights start with live music - Smokey Session brings their rhythm and blues sets, starting at 7:30 p.m., to an older crowd (in their 60s and 70s). Then, after 11, a DJ is on playing a mix of house, vacation fun and classic rock and dance music. The crowd shifts to being mostly the millennial generation.

As a native of Buffalo New York, Moreles is especially pleased that Z's is an 'Official Buffalo Bills Backer Bar'. Specials for the Bills and NFL games include jumbo wings 50 cents each, Buffalo Bills Sahlen hot dog & fries \$5.95, pitcher of Bud Light or Shock Top \$10.00. Happy Hour is everyday from 4-8 p.m. with \$3 drink specials.

Popular late night menu choices include starters like cheesy bacon ranch fries, signature nachos and sliders.



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## OUT LATE

### Sarasota Brewing Co. is "Micro-Pub"

Back before small batch beer brewing was called 'craft,' Sarasota Brewing Company's microbrewery called the shots. It was also one of the first area places to keep its kitchen open until midnight.

Established in 1989, the Sarasota Brewing Company has been owned and operated by Tony Fricano for the past 16 years (Fricano also has Tony's Chicago Beef Company). But brewer Vincent Pelosi has been on board the whole time 'crafting' beers like Sarasota Gold ale and his award-winning Sequoia Amber Lager.

In fact, the place rotates more than 20 seasonal beers throughout the year with least five unique brews on tap, plus favorites from around the world. On site now (check [sarasotabrewing.com](http://sarasotabrewing.com) for changes, made regularly) are Sarasota Gold, a light golden, easy-drinking blend; Ya Mills Honeymeade Ale made with real wildflower honey; Midnight Pass Porter, a full-bodied roasty dark ale; English Special, originally developed in London; Brouge, which is a fruity red Belgian-style ale, plus the Sequoia Amber Lager.



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## OUT LATE



AHI TUNA WITH ASIAN SLAW IS ONE OF THE MANY STARTERS AT SARASOTA BREWING. ALL GO WITH TASTY MICROBREWED BEER.

Enjoy a late-night happy hour from 10 p.m.-12 a.m. every night along with a day happy hour that is Mon.-Fri. 3-7 p.m. and features discounted well drinks and beer. Often Fricano runs happy hour food specials like 50-cent wings and \$5 burgers during the day until 3 p.m. but he is pretty sure he is going to run the \$5 burger special at late night for the summer. Other popular food items are the zucchini fries, the Italian beef

sandwich and pizza pies (the latter two are Chicago-style, of course).

Beer is the on the menu and beer is part of the ambiance here. The Brewing Company's five holding tanks are located in its dining areas. "It really gives the feeling of original beer," says Fricano.

### T.J. Carney's

The town of Venice, FL is waking up and staying out late and has T.J. Carney's Pub and Grille – open seven days and nights a week from 11 a.m.-2 a.m. – to thank for it. Located in the middle of downtown Venice Island, T.J. Carney's offers entertainment or live music every night in season and at least three nights of the same for summer, says owner Tom Carney. "Football fans can enjoy full NFL ticket games on our many HD TV screens," he adds.



## Pino's

### ITALIAN DINING

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## OUT LATE

Since this is an Irish Pub at heart one well-loved regular performer is the Irish piano player Ken McBride. Mondays are 'the best karaoke in Venice' nights and the Island Boys play 'dance music' from the 50s-the 80s. Shows are usually 6:30-9:30 p.m.

The menu here is large and varied. Popular late-night choices come from the appetizer menu. They include pulled-pork nachos, firecracker shrimp and a ½ rack of T.J.'s awesome, slow-cooked bar-b-que ribs. "We have \$6 drink-of-the-day specials every day," says Carney. "In summer we will have a happy hour from 3-6 p.m. where we will feature six menu items for \$6 at and drinks are two for one," adds Carney.



ACTIVITIES AT T.J. CARNEY'S INCLUDE SPONSORED COCKTAIL NIGHTS (ABOVE) AND (BELOW) LIVE MUSIC.

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# Bites

LOCAL EATDRINK NEWS

## OPEN LOCALLY

### Franchise and family-run places arrive

Too much of good thing? Not when it comes to having multiple locations of the Little Greek Fresh Grill franchise and the family-run Duffy's Sports Grill. In fact, the successes of these diverse eateries only prove that more is better! Each has 30-plus locations across the map and yet feels native. Perhaps that's because both are based in Florida.

### LITTLE GREEK FRESH GRILL

Craving falafel or spinach pie (spanakopita)? How about skewers (souvlaki) of chicken, lamb, steak or salmon? If the answer is 'yes' to any of those foods, you will be happy to learn they're on the menu at the Little Greek Fresh Grill, which just opened its 31st store on Market Street in Lakewood Ranch.

The popularity of this Tampa-based franchise, currently in five states (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, and Texas), is due to the quality of the food and the attention to customer service. "We encourage the values of passion, integrity, operational excellence, constant improvement and



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## BITES

giving back to our franchisees and the company," says spokeswoman Jennifer Bujalski.

Bujalski adds that Little Greek's most popular menu items, across the board and in this order, are the gyro pita, chicken souvlaki and the Greek salad with grilled chicken. Opa!



## DUFFY'S SPORTS GRILL

The numbers are 34, 3, 10. No, they are not football snap counts. 3/10 is the day and month that Duffy's Sports Grill opened on University Pkwy. just east of Tuttle Rd. this year. That makes it the 34th location for this family-owned business based in Lake Worth, FL.

More numbers: 4, 2001, 80. Four is the how many items were on the menu when its founders opened 'Duffy's Draft House' in Lake Park, FL in 1985. 2001 is when the Emmett family patriarch, Paul, bought a controlling interest in the business, changed the name to Duffy's Sports Grill and began expanding. 275 are the number of guests that our local can hold.

"My dad took Duffy's into the 21st century but we retained its core tenets," says co-owner Jason Emmett. "Each spot is local and neighborhood-based and while we have a sports-themed element we are a food-focused restaurant first." The cuisine here is 'American with international flavor twists' and includes starters, salads, grill items, pasta and bowls, wings, sandwiches and burgers.

80+, 20, 1, 2: Duffy's boasts more than 80 TVs with satellite sports packages and has 20 beers on tap. Number 1 and 2 favorite menu items are, in this order, the ½ lb. Duffy's cheeseburger and the baby back ribs. Touchdown!



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## AMOB Celebrates 20 Years

The Anna Maria Oyster Bar (AMOB) is entering its 20th year of business and is "making a big deal about it," says owner John Horne. The first AMOB opened on U.S. 41 near the Sarasota/Bradenton airport in 1997.

"We will be celebrating on the 20th of every month for a year," says Horne. We have selected 12 local organizations that will benefit." For example, AMOB recently partnered with beer maker Dos Equis on a benefit for Sarasota's Women's Resource Center. They invented a birthday cocktail, like the Dos-A-Rita (Dos Equis Lager Especial with tequila, triple sec, sour mix, coarse salt and lime). "Proceeds went to the charity, plus we also held a clothing drive," says Horne.

In June, the celebration will benefit the Denis V. Cooper veteran's foundation Wishes for

Heroes (wishesforheroes.org). July will be for Manasota Operation Troop Support (motsfl.pagevamp.com) and August will benefit the Manatee Education Foundation (mefinfo.org).

## Ahi Sushi offers Asian Flavors

Looking for a restaurant that offers something delicious for everyone in your party: no matter what Asian cuisine they prefer? Then Ahi Sushi is the place. Here you will find an extensive sushi menu that has all the options: sushi and special rolls, sushi and sashimi dinners and sushi or sashimi a la carte.

But even more, this restaurant's Japanese menu options are complete with appetizers that include dumplings, edamame and Japanese salads. For cooked foods there are diverse choices that include many tempura options, fried seafood and garlic or spicy garlic sauce dinners with a choice of steak, lobster, shrimp, calamari, scallops or mussels. Ahi also has a very reasonable lunch menu and options that are just for kids.



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