



Pine Tavern's famous scones with honey butter preview the fine meal to come.

## dining out

- 76 NEW RESTAURANT SPOTLIGHTS
- 84 BREAKFAST
- 88 COFFEE & PASTRY
- 92 LUNCH
- 98 DINNER
- 108 DESSERT

# Dining Accents: Great Bread

## COMPLEMENT YOUR MEAL WITH SOME TASTY BREAD

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A FEW YEARS AGO, when diners around the country seemed to be firmly in the grip of carbophobia, it seemed the fate of bread in restaurants was in danger. Thankfully, the alarm was unwarranted, and many restaurants still put real pride in giving the best service to guests and serve table bread that is a wonderful prelude to any meal.

Since the dawn of man, bread has nourished and fed civilizations around the world. It identifies cultures and serves wide-ranging purposes, such as sustenance, ritual and currency. Whether bread is flat, sweet, salty, braided, long, round, fried, soft or crunchy, it is as basic and necessary as air and water. Above all, we love bread because it tastes great. The task of bread making is often taken for granted.

However, it is an ancient artisanal practice that is very well respected within the culinary arts.

Bend's exciting food culture is developing rapidly. We are fortunate to have a variety of great "down-home cookin'" and award-winning restaurants and chefs who are introducing new cuisines to the area. Certain restaurants have one thing in common — great bread that provides diners with a memorable bread experience.

At Johnny Carino's, in Bend, many guests have noted that the bread is a threat to the rest of the meal. You can easily consume so much of it that you fail to save sufficient room for your entree. A rosemary bread loaf is served piping hot with enough savory flavors to stand on its own. Yet the delicious dipping >>>



Jackalope Grill's signature sourdough (left) comes from L.A.'s La Brea Bakery; Merenda uses its Pane rustico rustico (right) for sandwiches.

sauce is the real showstopper, with the right blend of olive oil, thyme, basil, dill, salt and pepper, which makes it distinctive and complementary to the rosemary bread.

The Athletic Club of Bend is home to Scanlon's restaurant, which has certainly earned the respect of diners on the lookout for fine cuisine. The pre-dinner bread is a perfect introduction to the fine meal to come. Pastry Chef Ron Bell-Romer prepares a variety of delicious breads in house that rotate daily. Rosemary, raisin-pecan with cinnamon, golden raisin and pumpernickel are the house specialties.

The Pine Tavern has been a Bend landmark since 1936 and signifies all that is great about Central Oregon. The low-key setting is, in reality, all about making a statement. With the live 250-year-old



ponderosa tree center stage in the restaurant, the legendary status it holds in Bend's history and its award-winning menu, it is not surprising that the restaurant's table bread is anything but typical. Dinner guests are served homemade scones — small puffs of hot sweet bread with an incredibly soft texture, some magical midpoint between spongy and creamy, and a flavor reminiscent of Native American sweet bread. As if this weren't treat enough, it is served with honey butter, which is a pivotal ingredient in the amazing combination. The bread and honey butter have become the Pine Tavern's most requested and signature items. The restaurant proudly shares the 40-year-old recipe for both, with one caveat — that no matter how closely you follow the instructions, they will never be as good as at the tavern.

Merenda Restaurant and Wine Bar goes above and beyond the call of duty by serving a generous basket and variety of pane rustico. Ciabiatta, sourdough, focaccia and *pain au levain* come side by side and are memorable for their individual taste and character. The bread is also used to make some of Merenda's delicious sandwiches and entrees.

They say great things come in small packages, and at Jackalope Grill there is nothing better than receiving the gift of the restaurant's bread — a soft and steaming dome of sourdough baked perfectly and tucked nicely inside a basket. The owners have gone to great lengths to find the ultimate sourdough bread to complement the haute cuisine. The bread comes from the renowned La Brea Bakery in Los Angeles.

Garlic bread is, hands down, an all-time favorite. We love it because it is buttery, garlicky, salty, soft, crunchy and always served warm. The secret lies in the fact that everything is already combined and must be eaten as is! The guilt factor is diminished, since we are not actually applying these sinful ingredients ourselves. Guido's and Vito's Italian Eatery in Redmond goes straight for the kill with its great garlic bread, which is buttery, crunchy and super-garlicky.

The days of produce markets, butcher shops and fishmongers are over, yet the one shop that still remains strong is the bakery. Bend has such a bakery, The Village Baker, which produces excellent artisanal bread. The fresh pane rustico — *bastoni*, *striata*, rosemary *striata* and *pandura* and *pain au levain* — has wonderful old-world authenticity. The crust pushes the envelope of crunchiness, sometimes shattering when you bite into it, and it's often slightly burnt, in a way that's not only appealing but also a terrific contrast to the interior, which is spectacularly fluffy and light. Rough and imperfectly shaped, the whole loaves are art in themselves. Sour white *boule*, baguettes, seeded baguettes and whole-wheat loaves are also very popular. This has not gone unnoticed by local restaurants such as Zydeco, Staccato, 28 Degrees and Bronco Billy's, which recognize the excellence of this bread and serve select varieties to their customers.

A meal is not only about the food; it is about the experience. Thus, restaurants that serve "out of the ordinary" table bread stand out and become memorable, and their effort is appreciated. More than anything, the bread lends itself to enhancing the meal, complementing the cuisine and beverages. 3

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