



D.C. Around the World

Ethnic Eats in the Nation's Capital

by arnesa a. howell

The image is vividly painted in your mind: jetting around the world to the most exotic locales and back again, sampling the tastiest of cuisines at stops along the way. Sound like a far-fetched dream that will send shivers down your purse strings? Not necessarily. A visit to the far corners of the earth is as close as a jaunt to Washington,

D.C., where memorable dishes with an international flair can be discovered in neighborhoods across the city.

Second Stop, Mexico

■ OYAMEL COCINA MEXICANA

(oyamel.com)

401 7th Street, N.W.

Penn Quarter

The energy of this modern Mexican restaurant is clear as soon as you step

through the door—the walls are a bright tangerine with hints of electric blue. Mobiles of Monarch butterflies, which migrate to Mexico's Oyamel tree, hang playfully from the ceiling. But the fun has just begun! Tableside guacamole service (seasoned to taste, of course) is a good start before moving on to the antojitos, or little dishes, like quesadillas with black Mexican truffle that are a nod to the country's street food. The

Oyamel
Taco de
Pescado
Mexicano



Oyamel
Cocina
Mexicana

bites are plentiful; try the fish tacos on for size. And for the adventurous palate, there are tacos made with sautéed grasshoppers!

American Southern Hospitality

■ GEORGIA BROWN'S

(georgiabrowns.com)

950 15th Street, N.W.

Downtown

Get a taste of South Carolina Low Country—especially historic Charleston—where the iced tea is sweetened

with a hint of vine-ripened peaches and the food is reminiscent of Grandma's kitchen. Visit this popular Southern-style brunch spot where the buffet is filled with down-home faves like hand-beaten biscuits, warm peach cobbler served in an

oversized cast iron skillet and fresh stone milled grits so creamy that a couple sitting next to me asked, "What's the secret?" The best part of this brunch: There's a second entrée for the taking (the Southern buttermilk fried chicken with braised greens is a top pick). Dare to take another bite? Munch on some fried green tomatoes while listening to the sounds of Chaka Khan or Sade from the live jazz trio.



Georgia
Brown's

The Vibe of Africa

■ MESKEREM RESTAURANT

2434 18th Street, N.W.

Adams Morgan

Journey to the heart of this ethnic neighborhood to find Ethiopian food served with traditional touches. (The waitresses here wear Ethiopian dress.) The best seats are in the communal-style dining area on the second floor, where guests sit on leather tufts before tables of small woven, multi-colored baskets. Go with friends or family when choosing this dining experience—you'll be breaking bread (literally!) when sampling the platters of beef, lamb, chicken, seafood and veggies. The utensil: a large pancake called injera. Newcomers to Ethiopian fare should sample the combo specialties: Meskerem messob or vegetarian messob for the veggie-centric.

Jet Set From Asia to France

■ OYA RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

(oyadc.com)

777 9th Street, N.W.

Penn Quarter

The elements come together at this modern and chic spot, where white snakeskin and crocodile leather accent the interior. White faux roses bloom from the walls, a waterfall mesmerizes the senses and flames dance in the natural gas fireplace at this restaurant that seamlessly fuses Asian with French cuisine in dishes like scallops with pad thai noodles and truffle jus. The vibe here is nothing less than dress to impress, and the sushi rolls are a standout,

too. The "Typhoon" boasts crispy shrimp tempura topped with spicy crab, while the Tuna Tempura Roll offers crunch with a kick from the seven pepper sauce served on the side. And while noshing on these delicacies, you may even get in some celeb watching; actresses Jasmine Guy, Tracee Ellis Ross and Alfre Woodard have all been spotted here.

Amore for Italy

■ FILOMENA RISTORANTE

(filomena.com)

1063 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.

Georgetown

It's easy to linger in the front window of this old Italy-style eatery, watching the "pasta mamas" roll dough into morsels that will later adorn your plate. But there's more to discover after entering this underground dining room. The décor—like a cozy Italian home—is filled with rustic wooden chairs, oversized hanging ferns and lace-patterned placemats. Classic Italian tunes, like "That's Amore," are piped throughout the dimly lit restaurant, where attentive waiters offer up recommendations with ease. The shellfish cannelloni—smothered in a rich lobster sauce—isn't skimpy on the seafood, and the homemade desserts are big enough to share. So grab a seat, and savor your last stop before heading home! ♥

Arnesa A. Howell is a devout foodie who has traveled from the beaches of Costa Rica to the bistros of Paris to enjoy the culture and cuisine of the regions.



Oya Restaurant