

# Eats Meets West

With the unveiling of new upgrades to its already-spectacular resort, The Venetian invites guests to join in on Sin City's ascension to the Michelangelo-style heavens of Las Vegas—with its dining options at the forefront of luxury. **BY LESLIE K. HUGHES**

IT IS LUDICROUS TO IMAGINE THAT you can experience an idyllic Las Vegas vacation without stepping outside of your hotel. However, all the glittering lights, glimmering hopes and glistening notions of escape from reality that are embodied by the legendary Las Vegas come to an apex at The Venetian. A stay at this palace will have you convinced that this one resort wins all the chips at every table.

When at The Venetian, what happens in Vegas does not stay in Vegas. Everything feels photo-worthy and snapshots of the stunning décor will have friends back home believing you are truly roaming the streets of Italy—as long as you keep the keno machines out of the frame. The card tables are there to lure you into an obligatory Las Vegas hand of Blackjack or two, but the true entertainment lies elsewhere, in places not reliant upon luck but rather upon extensive, intentional planning by the resort.

The area that The Venetian has undoubtedly mastered is that of culinary creations. The city of Las Vegas has evolved into a cooking kingdom, and The Venetian wears the crown. Far gone are the days of five-dollar all-you-can-eat mystery-meat buffets. Gourmet fare now feeds the hunger of foodies from all over.

Providing such a variety of dining options, it is seemingly impossible to try every restaurant that calls The Venetian home. That is, however, unless you attend The Venetian's annual Carnival of Cuisine where guests

are members of the ultimate one-bite club. Roaming from booth to booth set up around The Palazzo Pool Deck, miniature versions of each restaurant's choice foods are displayed for eating (and photographing). From watermelon Aperol spritzes served out of a fresh watermelon to perfectly crafted silver-dollar-size lamb pancakes, the inescapable gluttony will leave you excessively satisfied.

The belle of this year's culinary ball was famed chef, Mario Batali. Donning not glass slippers but his legendary orange Crocs (with a matching orange scrunchy, nonetheless), Batali took pleasure in the morsels of all the carnival's restaurants, including those of his own Venetian eateries: Carnevino, B&B Ristorante, OTTO Enoteca Pizzeria and B&B Burger & Beer.

While the Carnival of Cuisine (2016 dates are to be determined) is an ideal taste test, a visit to the individual restaurants themselves shows the chefs' true culinary visions. The meticulous details are so methodical that it is a great struggle to determine whose work is most impressive.

Brunch at Yardbird is a wonderfully pleasant surprise for those who typically would not consider themselves connoisseurs of Southern cuisine. From mile-high deviled eggs to silky smooth house-made biscuits, the appetizer offerings serve as a delicious preparation for Yardbird's specialty: Chicken n' Watermelon n' Waffles—a trifecta that no



BOUCHON



FRIED GREEN TOMATO BLT FROM YARDBIRD



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DB BRASSERIE



STEAK FRITES FROM DB BRASSERIE



CHICKEN N' WATERMELON N' WAFFLES FROM YARDBIRD

other could ever possibly outdo. With a motto that reads “don’t matter, Preacher gonna heal you come Sunday,” it is impractical not to indulge in Vegas’ take on a good ole Southern bar. Flavor-infused ice hand-carved with what looks like a spiked machete circa 1810, Yardbird’s cocktails are truly unparalleled. The Old Fashioned with bacon-brewed bourbon and perfectly spherical ice would wow even Don Draper himself.

Although all the restaurants in The Venetian avoid rivalry by each offering something different to foodies looking for a luxurious fix, one restaurant does earn perfect marks in every category: Bouchon. Sitting adjacent to the gorgeous poolside gardens of the Venezia Tower, the stunning décor is perfectly Parisian. The service is impeccable and truly makes you feel as if you have been swept off your feet into culinary heaven. The pastries are pure magic—impossibly fluffy, moist and gorgeous. The truffle fries are so delectable that you will have no problem pushing aside the pangs of guilt that typically go hand-in-hand with eating fries for breakfast. From the Saumon Fumé (smoked salmon) to the Moules au Safran (mussels steamed in saffron) to the Croque Madame, the tastes experienced at Bouchon are so beautiful that no words are sufficient in describing them.

It is obvious that The Venetian is brilliant when it comes to provisions. Aside from the introduction of new restaurants, The Venetian has recently had some additional upgrades, most notably in their rooms. The Venetian and its sister resort, The Palazzo, are the sole resorts in Las Vegas that provide guests with a suite-only option. The newly renovated basic rooms at both The Venetian and The Palazzo give a whole new idea to “basic”—measuring in at 690 square feet, they were awarded the “world’s largest standard guest room” by the Guinness Book of World Records.

Despite the opulent rooms, it would be quite a challenge to stay put for too long with all the additional options. After exerting all your energy on the intake of such impeccable food, a trip to the Canyon Ranch Day Spa is guaranteed to revitalize your entire being. One of the largest day spas in the world, Canyon Ranch follows The Venetian trend of lavishness. And you could never call yourself a true Venetian guest without a ride around the Grand Canal Shops in a gondola captained by a serenading Italian.

Throwing to the curb the concept of “less is more,” The Venetian takes the notion of excess to new heights. The thought of staying anywhere else on The Strip will fade into the past, leaving a resort so spectacular, you will swear it is merely a mirage—far too satiating to possibly be reality.



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