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BELLINI'S AND THE BLACK TULIP PHOTOS BY CLAY JACKSON; MALONE'S PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLUEGRASS HOSPITALITY GROUP; PORTOFINO PHOTOS BY ED KOLLER

- 1) Savor a cocktail in Bellini's stylish bar or stay for dinner and enjoy prosciutto-wrapped halibut.
- 2) Bright artwork and high windows enliven Portofino.
- 3) Chefs David Cupolo, Aaron Welch and Chris Spillman prepare entrees such as surf and turf at Malone's.
- 4) At The Black Tulip, try chef Spencer Van Den Dool's Hawaiian Walu, paired with a glass of wine.

# Welcome to the Table

Dining here is not an eat-and-run affair. Take time to savor a meal made with care from fresh, local ingredients.

by **Marian Cowhig**

Southern hospitality — and Kentucky hospitality in particular — is legendary. Imagine packed tables, rollicking conversation, full platters of food, cold glasses of iced tea and always room for one more chair. Most legends are too good to be true; but this one isn't. Hospitality, after all, is all about being made to feel welcome. And what could do that better than a friendly greeting, a cozy atmosphere and a meal that blends the familiar with the unexpected in a way that makes you want to come back again and again? Whether you're having pasta at Bellini's, brunch at the Holly Hill Inn, steak at Malone's or chicken and dumplings at Ramsey's, the message is the same: Take your time and enjoy. We'll be here to suggest the perfect meal, refill your glass — and, of course, find a way to fit one more chair at the table.

**A La Lucie**  
 159 North Limestone  
 859-252-5277  
[www.alalucie.net](http://www.alalucie.net)  
 The name means "in the style of Lucie," and after a meal here you'll want to adopt chef Lucie Meyers' style for yourself. Chicken a La Lucie, for example, is a fried chicken breast topped with artichoke au gratin and bordelaise sauce. Or try the braised lamb shank, served with creamy polenta. It's warm and inviting with a touch of the unexpected, and it may be just your style.

**Bellini's**  
 115 West Main Street  
 859-388-9583  
[www.bellinis.us](http://www.bellinis.us)  
 For lunch or dinner, indulge in chic, upscale Italian fare. Begin with cocktails in the warm, inviting bar; then move into the dining room for a nightly pasta special or the much-loved veal saltimbocca. Save room for dessert; you'll be dreaming about the chocolate torte, garnished with raspberry glaze, for days.

**The Black Tulip**  
 133 East Main Street, Midway  
 859-846-9923  
[www.theblacktulipmidway.com](http://www.theblacktulipmidway.com)  
 At this casual bistro, which calls itself "Midway's favorite gathering place," enjoy the best of local ingredients. Try a veal chop with a blue-cheese souffle, country-marinated cucumber and tomatoes and a cognac-white truffle sauce. Finish with a light touch in the Tulip Cup: seasonal berries, whipped cream and a trio of fruit coulis.

**Holly Hill Inn**  
 426 North Winter Street, Midway  
 859-846-4732  
[www.hollyhillinn.com](http://www.hollyhillinn.com)  
 With a structure dating to the early 1800s, the Holly Hill Inn offers old Kentucky hospitality. Linger over a three-course Saturday brunch with

Daddy Fred's Bellini (a splash of Cointreau is the extra ingredient); or come for dinner and enjoy a rotating menu that includes farmhouse cheeses, housemade pasta, and locally raised meat, poultry and fish.

**The Glitz**  
4205 Fords Mill Road, Nonesuch  
859-873-6956  
www.irishacresgallery.com

Sisters Emilie McCauley and Jane DeLauter, who operate both this restaurant and the accompanying antique gallery, Irish Acres, offer a prix fixe luncheon menu. Entrees and appetizers rotate, but the house dessert is a constant: The Nonesuch Kiss is a baked meringue filled with coffee ice cream and topped with almonds, fudge sauce and whipped cream.

**Joe Bologna's**  
120 West Maxwell Street  
859-252-4933  
www.joebolognas.com  
This restaurant's home, an 1890s structure that's now on the National Register of Historic Places, has served as both a church and a synagogue. Start with a drink in the pulpit — now the bar area — then enjoy chicken parmesan or a six-cheese pizza while gazing at the 18-foot-tall stained glass windows. Finish the meal with a classic cannoli.

**Jonathan at Gratz Park**  
120 West Second Street  
859-252-4949  
www.jagp.info  
Chef Jonathan Lundy, a Kentucky native, crafts lunches, dinners and brunches full of relaxed charm and fresh ingredients. Try burgoo, a Kentucky stew with beef, pork and bison; or Rock Salt Roasted Chicken with asparagus and roasted-garlic mashed potatoes. Look for special events, such as this month's Maker's Mark Dinner on Father's Day.

**Malone's**  
3347 Tates Creek Road  
859-335-6500  
1920 Pleasant Ridge Drive  
859-264-8023  
3735 Palomar Drive  
859-977-2620  
www.malonesrestaurant.com  
Beef is king at this classic steakhouse, whose original location celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. Eleven selections of Prime Chicago beef along with Wagyu Kobe-style beef create an impressive array of options; but seafood lovers won't be disappointed, with offerings like the Colossal Shrimp Cocktail or Country Crab Cakes.

**Merrick Inn**  
1074 Merrick Drive  
859-269-5417  
www.murrays-merrick.com

Wines and restaurants get better with age; and at the 30-year-old Merrick Inn, diners can experience both. Set in the manor house of a former horse farm, the inn offers classic entrees with a twist, such as Pecan-Crusted Pork Tenderloin, topped with Maker's Mark apple chutney and maple chipotle sauce.

**Metropol**  
307 West Short Street  
859-381-9493  
www.metropolfin dining.com  
The name comes from a chain of Swiss hotels, and its menu carries a bit of that European charm, with dishes like Filet Bordelaise (filet mignon with potatoes au gratin in red wine sauce) and Côte de Veal Provençale (veal chop with potatoes au gratin and haricots verts in a provençale sauce). The structure is pure American: a former post office that's on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Portofino**  
249 East Main Street  
859-253-9300  
www.portofinolexington.com  
Seafood takes the stage at this Italian eatery, with dishes such as Prince Edward Island Mussels, steamed in a lemongrass-coconut broth, and Ruby Red Trout, panfried with citrus-pinenut brown butter. Pasta lovers will find plenty to savor, too: Try the Chicken Arrabbiata or the Gnocchi di Casa (spinach gnocchi, English peas, cherry tomatoes and arugula in a mushroom sauce).

**Ramsey's**  
496 East High Street  
859-259-2708  
Get your fill of down-home food at this Lexington institution. Several locations around the area serve Bluegrass classics such as chicken and dumplings, pot roast or the classic Kentucky Hot Brown. End your meal with a slice of Derby Pie — a pecan pie base topped with chocolate chips.

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malonesrestaurant.com