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Best of Business Kansas City 2007

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WINING & DINING

Best Barbecue

Ahh, the smoky tang. The spicy red that just grabs you in the back of your throat and releases you, smiling. As you hunker down in front of a plate of Kansas City barbecue, you realize those other towns, say, Memphis or Austin or Lexington, don't know a bean from a rib. But you do, and once again, you've selected **Fiorella's Jack Stack Barbecue** for the grand **Gold** prize. Now with four locations, they've converted barbecue lovers all over town to their multiple versions of beef and meaty beans. **Oklahoma Joe's BBQ & Catering** with their pulled pork sandwiches and the best fries in town wins the **Silver** again, with their original location in a gas station off Mission Road and their newest in Olathe at 119th and Strang Line. Bellying up for the **Bronze** is **Gates & Sons Bar-B-Q**, their six locations carrying on the tradition begun at 19th and Vine in 1946.

Best Business Breakfast

At a minimum, the best places for conducting business over breakfast should bring the coffee immediately and keep it hot no matter how long you stay. Of course, Ingram's readers are quite discriminating and they voted, in the exact same order as last year, for the **Gold** to settle on **First Watch** whose omelets and muffins and coffee pot on the table always are winners. Next in line for the **Silver** is **The Classic Cup Café** where the food is more chi-chi, the people watching, both inside and out, more entertaining. Take it over easy to the **Bronze** where **EGGtc.** established just last year, again makes the list with a scrumptious list of home-made goodies spanning breakfast pizzas to bur-ritos to eggs benedict.

Best Business Lunch

A great business lunch—like, say, golf—is meant more to “build relationships,” than to accomplish bottom line goals. Consequently, the right place is ever-so-important. The atmosphere and the food are always right at **Gold** champion **The Capital Grille**, who last year tied for the honor with this year’s **Silver** winner **Plaza III – The Steakhouse**. Our vote? You can’t go wrong at either. Or try our **Bronze** tie: **The Classic Cup Café** or **Panera Bread**, the latter more casual, more kid-friendly, more wired (which is free).

Best Business Dinner

Now, a business dinner is a cow of a different color. But, strangely, with the same outcome as above for the coveted Gold and Silver. **The Capital Grille** succeeds from the first Stoli Doli on; have another and you won’t remember the luscious rib-eye, the veal chop or the lobster, all perfectly done. **Plaza III – The Steakhouse** is an institution that retains its delicious integrity, impeccable service, and soothing atmosphere. Try their other worldly buttery hash browns with your steak. **The Bronze** is a tie: **McCormick & Schmick’s** for their fabulous seafood including wondrous and varied oysters (business dinner you said?) and **Grand Street Cafe** where they’ve emphasized pleasing their guests since 1991.

Best Caterer

The Catering Company, now known as Inspired Occasions, takes the **Gold** prize again for serving up some of KC’s most creative food—from corporate brown baggers to the most elegant wedding. It’s designer food alright, but it’s delicious, beautifully arrayed, and stylishly served. A little more down home but certainly no less tasty is another winner, this time a **Silver**, for **Fiorella’s Jack Stack Barbecue**. Nothing is more satisfying than a stack of ribs and some of their great cheesy corn. The **Bronze** is newtimer oldtimer, **Grandma’s Office Catering**, which delivers what, when, and where you need it, breakfast, lunch, or dinner for your small or large office.

Best Dessert/Presentation

Is it for the infamous chocolate “bag” (it’s really a box) filled with whip cream and berries or the tartish key lime pie? Who knows, but **McCormick & Schmick’s** sweetened up for the **Gold**. Across The Plaza, and down on 119th Street in Overland Park, The **Cheesecake Factory** claims the **Silver** with trophy-sized prizes such as a 4” high Oreo cheesecake from a menu of about 40 different desserts. Another tie for **Bronze**, between **The American Restaurant** whose elegant and unusual desserts can usurp even the greatest of meals and The Peppercorn Duck Club whose Chocolate bar is legendary among us chocoholics. Try the bread pudding, if available.

Best Ethnic Restaurant

Our readers, epicureans all, span the globe with their taste buds. They went to Italy for the **Gold**, choosing **Garozzo’s Ristorante** with its three Kansas City locations serving fabulous chicken spiedini (get it Garozzo style, amogio) and of course, much, much more. Then it’s off to South America where **Piropos Argentinean Restaurant**, now in Briarcliff, continues to delight palates for the **Silver** with its unusual fresh spices and wonderful meats (and empanadas). Where next? Why, the Far East for the **Bronze** for **Thai Place Restaurant** in its five locations where Thai chilies give new meaning to the word spicy.

Best Outdoor Dining

Once again, **The Classic Cup Café** on the Plaza proves its durable attraction for the **Gold**. The tiny strip of outdoor tables right on 47th Street proves irresistible for gourmet people watchers, and the “backyard” patio is perfect for a more relaxed setting. But does the food really matter if the crowd is cool, the drinks cold, and the flowers create a small oasis in the midst of a busy corner? Devotees of **Baja 600** awarded it the **Silver** for its perfect combo of the right ingredients. And for the **Bronze**, a tie between **McCormick & Schmick’s** umbrella clad patio and

upper story breezes and **Aixois French Restaurant** in Brookside where green grass, trees, runners and bicyclists offer a different ambiance for well prepared favorites.

Best Place to eat with a Group

“Konichiwa,” say our readers as they vote the **Gold** to **Hibachi Japanese Steak House** where sitting around the grill as the skillful chefs toss food is always convivial. A different atmosphere but one in which you can actually hear someone at the other end of the table is found at our **Silver** winner, **Plaza III – The Steakhouse**. Another tie for **Bronze**—at **Fiorella’s Jack Stack Barbecue** and The Melting Pot where drips and drabs and messy mouths create only laughter and camaraderie.

Best Place to Take Out-of-Town Guests

What? Again? That same companionship apparently comes into play as **Fiorella’s Jack Stack Barbecue** revels in its **Gold** star rating and **Plaza III – The Steakhouse** captures the **Silver** because it has so well captured old town Kansas City flavor. The **Hereford House** does that well, too, its **Bronze** plaque indicating that when you have visitors, you want to show them what makes Kansas City a true cowtown.

Most Romantic Restaurant

That **The American Restaurant** so often takes this category with the **Gold** is an indication that a truly classy joint with a great piano player, discreet service, and only perfect food and drink serve as the perfect backdrop for love. But, then again, what could be more romantic than entwined arms, hearts smoldering as hands nearly touch—as they gently prod, push, and swirl cubes of bread or meat or fruit in a fondue pot? Clearly, **The Melting Pot** appeals to both couples (as well as the above totally enamored groups), taking the **Silver** in this category. Tying for the **Bronze** are **Piropos Argentinean Restaurant** and **Skies** at Hyatt Regency which have in common excellent views and food, too.

Best Seafood

A new menu is a requirement every day because so many different fresh fish come in every day at **McCormick & Schmick’s**. This solid **Gold** winner has won this category for the last five years—beefeaters, try it! (Actually, they have an extensive non-fish menu as well.) If you’re open to venture to Leawood, you’ll find our **Silver** winner—once again, it’s the **Bristol Bar & Grill** who since the 80s has perfectly selected and cooked a grand collection of seafood and whose bar is always crowded with seafood (and more) lovers. Swimming together for a **Bronze** tie is the **Bonefish Grill** with its two locations, both north and south, and **Trezo Mare Ristorante**, newly perched in Briarcliff which combines seafood with Italian flair.

Best Steak

Through the years, this category’s winners have moooved around like nervous heifers. Ferocious voting showed **Plaza III – The Steakhouse** to have regained its ownership of the **Gold** while the **Hereford House** this year ambles to the **Silver**. A **Bronze** tie goes to **The Capital Grille** and **Ruth’s Chris Steak House**—but the point to all this is that you can chow down on great, and we mean great, steaks at any of our readers’ carnivorous selections.

Best Wine List

Kansas City’s oenophiles have given **JJ’s** the **Gold** goblet once again. National publications always agree with their selection, too. Sipping up for **Silver** is **The Capital Grille** whose extensive list and knowledgeable sommeliers are always helpful. It’s an even finish for the **Bronze** for Plaza venerable **Starker’s Restaurant**, where you may eat surrounded by comforting bottles and newcomer, JP Wine Bar & Coffee House, a downtown favorite which highlights flights of wine (and cheeses, too) to tempt and teach your palate.

Best New Restaurant (locally-owned)

Restaurants come and go, especially the local eateries without deep-pocket national chains behind them, so we're always thrilled when a local place springs forth so successfully. Kansas City is a great restaurant town. But it'll only stay that way when local restaurants thrive. This year readers honored **Trezo Mare Ristorante**, where an elegant interior matches elegantly prepared Italian fare—both traditional and innovative.

Best New Restaurant (National chain)

We certainly do not discount the intentions and quality of the chains, who've figured out all the vagaries of the restaurant business and can create a superior product almost anywhere in the country. **Granite City** takes the prize here; three of its 18 locations (northeast off 291, west at the Legends, and south in Olathe) serving up home-brewed beers and lunch and dinner selections of enormous variety.

Best Service

Great service can make all the difference in the quality of a dining experience. Three Kansas City favorites divvy up the honors for that sometimes elusive high quality in service, where intention and just the right amount of attention really matter. The **Gold** here goes again to **The Capital Grille**; the **Silver** again to **The American Restaurant** and the **Bronze** again (though it was a tie last year) to **Plaza III – The Steakhouse**. Believe us, you'll be well cared for, even pampered (but not suffocated), at all of them.

Best Overall Restaurant

It's time for the trumpets. The coveted **Gold** in this category goes to **The Capital Grille** because whether you eat in the more smoky bar or in more tranquil and classically appointed dining area, you're positive to have a marvelous meal. **Plaza III – The Steakhouse** takes the **Silver** for mastering its trade as well as its ideally concocted and prepared dishes. Entering the fray for the first time and winning the **Bronze** for it, sits **Marina Grog 'n' Galley** where wanting a lot of the best is satisfied at this Lake Lotawana institution.

Best Restaurant (Clay & Platte counties)

Two old school long-time Kansas City favorites and a relative newcomer take home the prizes in this category. It's nice to see venerable restaurants continue to thrive and provide customer-pleasing fare and service. Likewise it's fun when a new place takes root and becomes a part of the community's cultural landscape. Even though they've moved from Parkville to Briarcliff, they retained a fabulous view and the atmosphere and Brazilian food that inspired our voters to again reward **Piropos Argentinean Restaurant** the **Gold**. Sadly, while southern gourmands mourn, there's still only one **Stroud's Restaurant**, and readers still heap awards upon it, this time the **Silver** for the best pan-fried chicken in town. The **Bronze** is well deserved by **Cascone's Italian Restaurant**, where their northland location has prospered since 1954 and where over two million orders of their famous lasagna has been served to discerning Italian foodophiles.

Best Restaurant (Johnson & Wyandotte Counties)

A winner ever since it opened, **40 Sardines** off 119th and Roe retains its **Gold** status for its inventive menu, scrumptious special events and daily fresh, fresh fare for lunch and dinner. And whatever you order, do get dessert here. When it moved from its long-time Plaza location several years ago, many critics predicted that the **Bristol Bar & Grill** would never be the landmark eateries it once was. Au contraire. The Bristol bellies up for the **Silver**, its sophisticated menu satisfies whether its patrons seek fish, fowl, or flesh. The **Bronze** winner is once again **Tatsu's French Restaurant** where French fare is served up with delicious panache.

Best Restaurant (Jackson County)

It's no accident that these three appear in so many categories. They clearly have earned it. And they earn it year after year. **The Capital Grille** captures this category again for the **Gold**. What can we say? The same is true for the **Silver** winner, **The American Restaurant**, and the

Bronze, Plaza III – The Steakhouse. If you've not been to any of these three this year, eschew the trendy and make the trek to the Plaza and Crown Center, now!

Best Restaurant (Kansas Suburban)

Well, maybe we could consider Lawrence a suburb, though we probably shouldn't ask their city council, but our readers seem to for they resoundingly chose **Pachamama's World Cuisine** as the Golden winner. It has moved to downtown on New Hampshire but still serves delectable upscale dishes in a lovely, friendly setting.