Food and Shopping Guide

Section Outdated
This information is outdated and needs to be updated. This has been tagged since August 2007.

Section Possibly Misformatted
This section was autoconverted from pdf and edited by a rushing grad student. The formatting may not conform to the usual standards. This has been tagged since August 2007.

Food

Following are reviews of the restaurants in the area. As you may expect, they can't be more than personal opinions, but we hope they'll be useful. The initials at the end of each review indicate the author. Keep in mind though that restaurants open and close at an alarming rate, so this list may not be very up to date.

[IC] Ian Chai
[DLH] David Hull
[LI] Ledi Imeraj
[DI] Deb Israel
[DEL] David Lemson
[MM] Mario Medina
[MO] Michael Ortega
[LT] Luis Tavera
[FWW] Bill Walker
[DB] David Bunde
[HR] Hari Ramasamy
[HVZ] Hanna VanderZee
[KL] Kiran Lakkaraju
[AK] Apu Kapadia

[PGSGTL] Physics Grad Student's Guide to Life
[MDH] Matthew Hicks
[KT] Kamilah Taylor

The restaurants are divided into two sections. Campus Restaurants will be restaurants roughly on campus, mostly comprised of the restaurants on Green St. Off Campus Restaurants are, well, off campus. The line for on vs. off campus is a bit blurry, but basically on campus is all restaurants south of university, east of 2nd st, and west of Goodwin. You can walk to Campus Restaurants from Siebel Center without much trouble.

For the vegetarians, http://www.vegchampaign.com has a pretty thorough list of vegetarian restaurants and items in the Champaign-Urbana area.

Campus Restaurants

A-Ri-Rang

This place has mostly Korean food, or as authentic as it gets. The portions are huge, and come with soup. Its very close to Siebel Center and has good prices. The place can be filled during lunch, so get there early. [MO]

Basil Thai [New Location]
Located in what used to be La Bamba and then La Paloma, this is a fast-food Thai place. The food is quite good, though the portions are not very large. Their Thai iced coffee is the best I've had ever. Its located in front of Pizza Hut on Green Street and Fifth. [MO]

At some point, Basil Thai opened a location near Krannert, 701 S Gregory St. The quality of the food at this location was generally better than the Green Street location, and the Green Street location has since then been closed. [KT]

**Cafe Luna**

Serves salads and sandwiches. Lunch and dinner. 313 E. Green St. Chmp - 344-1895

**Bombay Grill**

A recent addition to the Indian restaurants on campus. Serves mostly North Indian food, has some lunch specials that are nice. For dinner Bombay Grill is a sit-down more formal type of restaurant. On Green St., 414 Green St. Chmp.

**Bread Company**

A bakery and sandwich shop on Goodwin close to Oregon, in Urbana. Some of their bread is OK, but not their baguettes. [LT] For something different, try their pizzas. [MM]

**Fast Food Chains**

Arby’s, Blimpie, Burger King, Hardee’s, McDonalds, Subway, Taco Bell: yup, we’ve got ’em.

**Garcia’s**

Pizza is the most important food here in Champaign-Urbana, and Garcia’s is one of the most venerable purveyors of the stuff. They sell both full pizzas and individual slices. Garcia’s stops accepting checks in May, to avoid getting screwed by students leaving town. Ralph and Joe Garcia, the owners, are often seen in the Fourth of July parade in the passenger basket of their hot air balloon, the Flying Tomato. [FWF]

Some consider Garcia’s stuffed pizza to be better than (gasp) Papa Del’s. [DEL]

Two locations, Dine In and Carryout on 108 E. Green Chmp (359-1212) and Delivery and Carryout on 313 N. Mattis Ave Chmp (352-1212)

There traditional style pizza is nothing special. Pizza Hut would be a better option for quick cheap pizza. [MDH]

**Geovanti’s Bar and Grill**

Calzones, Pizza, Pastas, sandwiches, and salads. 401 E.Green St. Champaign.

**Happy Wanderer**

Serves a variety of food, sandwiches (including vegetarian garden burgers) and some pasta. 4th and Green, Champaign.

**Home of Gourmet**

A tasty Chinese restaurant on Daniels Street between Sixth and Wright. It doesn't seem very appealing from the outside, but they probably have the best Chinese food in campus town. [LT]

**IHOP**

Prepare to be crammed into small booths, sometimes a little too close to some sweaty students who just pulled an all-nighter. Most of the food is over-priced, but consistent. On Campus, on Green west of Fourth. [DEL]

**Illini Union Ballroom**

Located on the second floor at Illini Union. Is open only for lunch between 11:30am and 1:00pm. It is a buffet type that provides a variety of fresh salads, bread, ham, cheese, and a main course. You can also find fruit salad and fruit jello. You may order a desert as well. Show your student ID for a discount.

You may want to make reservations early in the day as it tends to become very crowded. Do not attempt to re-arrange the tables if you do not want to upset the supervisor! [L]

They also have one vegetarian soup and one vegetarian entree every day. [KL]

**Jerusalem**

One of the closest restaurants to Siebel Center, Jerusalem is located at 601 S.Wright St. They have a large menu of Middle Eastern food. I haven’t tried it all yet, but I like what I’ve tried. Jerusalem also has quite a few vegetarian options. [DB]

They carry some Indian items too, including Mango Lassi and Samosas [KL]
**Jimmy John’s**

The best subs in town, served on in-house baked bread. They deliver to Siebel Center. [LT]
601B Green St Chmp.

**La Bamba**

La Bamba claims to have "Burritos as big as your head." Although not that big, they certainly are very large. A past editor called them "very spicy, and very tasty." I don’t care for them personally. They recently moved to Sixth St. between Green and Springfield. [DLH]

Very good cheap, fast "mexican" food. [MDH]

**Mandarin Wok**

This Chinese restaurant is on Green Street. Their Chinese menu has an unbelievably large number of items. Don’t panic if you don’t know Chinese. You can specify the ingredients, the spiciness you want, and they can make it as per your needs. Reasonable price. Great taste. If you go there, check out their awesome two person dishes. [HR]

Has my vote for BEST Chinese restaurant in Chambana. They have a HUGE vegetarian selection, and you can ask the extremely nice hostess, Tina, for suggestions on items! Also, they have tables for large parties (10-15 people) in the back. On Green, between fourth and fifth. [KL]

**Murphy’s**

Possibly the best hamburgers on campus. Also try the Teriyaki chicken sandwich on Thursdays. [WFW]

The home of the best burgers in town has Guinness and Bass on tap. This is the only place in town to make Black and Tan’s properly. Football and alumni weekends find this place packed as alums return to their favorite hangout to find the names they scratched into the tables twenty years ago. [DEL]

This is the bar with the logo for the Mosaic browser (developed at NCSA) etched into one of the benches. [KL]

On Green, between Wright and sixth.

**The Palette**

A cafe and bookstore in the Krannert Art Museum. Pastries, coffees, espresso, and some lunch fare.

**Panera Bread**

A Sandwich and Soup chain restaurant. Also carries pastries (danishes, brownies) and bagels. Pretty good, has vegetarian sandwiches and soups. Can get crowded during lunch though. [KL]

510 E. John, Chmp

**Papa Del's**

In this author's opinion, Papa Del's is the best pizza in the universe, including all those self-important yuppie dives in Chicago that serve so-called "Chicago-style pizza." Alumni who return to campus invariably head straight to Pop's (also known as Del's) upon arrival. Papa Del's delivers, but you should be prepared to wait a long time (it's worth it). Papa Del's does not accept checks. Before you leave the hallowed halls of Illinois, try Pop's, and remember these words of wisdom: "It's Pop's for pizza or no place at all." [WFW]

206 E. Green St., Chmp

My favorite is the deep-dish pizza with pepperoni, sausage, and bacon. The best pizza I have ever had, but the most expensive pizza also. I take all my guests to Papa Del's. [MDH]

**Pita Pit**

Serves Pitas, like subway you can tell the server which toppings you want. Green St. between Wright and 6th. They also have falafal (vegetarian) pitas [KL]

**Wonderdogs**

Recently reopened on Wright Street (between Green and Springfield) after being forced to move from their old location by the work on Boneyard Creek. Serves tasty "Chicago-style" hot dogs - mustard, onions, hot peppers, sweet relish, dill slice, cucumber, tomatoes, and seasoned salt. Try this somewhat unusual combination and see why this is a popular lunch spot! [DB]

Also serves vegetarian hot dogs. [KL]

Comes with a Campus-town pricetag for food that is honestly not that great (but greasy). [MDH]

**Y-Eatery**

Located in the McKinly YMCA's Latzer Hall on Wright Street, the Y-Eatery specializes in Thai food, and has great daily specials, including Pad Thai. They also have pretty good fruit-flavored ice-shakes. [LT]
Za's

A new addition to Green between Wright and 6th, Za's serves primarily thin crust pizzas. You can build your own or select from combinations which run and gamut from the safe pepperoni to the unusual apple and sausage. They get quite crowded at lunchtime, sometimes with a line out the door, but they serve quickly and there is extra seating upstairs that the crowds don't seem to have found yet. [DB]
They now serve pasta as well. Has wireless internet if you are so inclined. [KL]

Zorba's

Pita sandwiches are Zorba's specialty, especially gyros, which are made from lamb. Other possibilities include chicken or steak. Located on Green between Sixth and Wright.
They also serve vegetarian black bean pita. [KL]
They offer live jazz every Thursday from 9:30 PM to 12:30 PM. You can see their schedule at http://www.zorbas.com.

Off-Campus Restaurants

Alexander's

A good steak place where you can cook your meat yourself. Meat is good, and the fact that you are the cook adds something extra to this place (you can have it cooked for you for a small extra fee). Located at 202 Anthony Drive in Champaign.[LT]

Not a great steak place at all. It is really expensive, it cost over $50 for my wife and I to eat there. The steaks are bland and the sides are the same. If you want meat cooked right at a decent price, go to Lonestar Steakhouse. [MDH]

Bagelman's

The best bagels in Chambana. Also bagel sandwiches and gourmet coffee.[DLH]
The bagels are the best, but the sandwiches are not enough to fill most hungry grad students up, despite their high prices. Buy the bagels and put stuff on them yourself.[DEL]

Basmati

One of the few places in town where you can eat good middle-eastern food and Indian food. On 302 First Street in downtown Champaign. [MM]
It's okay - people say the quality has improved in the last year or so. [KL]

Chinatown Buffet

If you love seafood, I think this is place to go for dinner. Their dinner buffet has an amazing variety of seafood. There is good choice for even vegetarians (who eat eggs, that is !!!). It is located near Meijers (off Prospect Avenue). [HR]
713W Marketview Dr. Champaign - 398-9888

Courier Cafe

Located on Race Street in Urbana, the Courier Cafe is housed in the former headquarters of the Courier newspaper, which went out of business almost twenty years ago. (Champaign-Urbana used to be a two newspaper community: Amazing.) The Courier Cafe has some really good hamburgers, milk shakes, and ice cream. I especially like the potato skins. This place can be very crowded on weekends, especially following performances at Krannert Center. [WFW]
A place with personality, good food, and good prices, that you ought to visit (like Papa Del's) while in Urbana-Champaign. [LT]
They have probably the best Salad bar in town. The milk shakes are also the best in town. Still, what I like the best is the atmosphere of the place. [MO]

Crane Alley

Bar/Restaurant in downtown Urbana. Has a selection of pasta and sandwiches. The deserts are AWESOME, worth the trip by themselves (try the Chocolate Mousse Cake!). See also the listing in the Drinks section. [KL]

First Wok

Not in campustown, but in Sunnycrest Mall at Philo Road and Florida in Urbana. Many students with cars go there for the best lunch specials on the best fast Chinese food in town. Most of their traffic at lunch is eat-in, most at dinner is carryout. You can call ahead if you know what you want and it will be ready before you can get there! [DEL]
1805 S, Philo Rd Urbana

The Great Impasta
Located on Church Street in downtown Champaign, The Great Impasta delivers excellent Italian food at reasonable prices. Tasty steamed vegetables accompany all entrees. Delicious homemade bread and good cappuccino round out the meal. [WFW]
Also has carry-out and a full bar.

**Hot Wok**

Located in the 1100 block of University in Urbana. Inexpensive Chinese food. Like any number of Chinese fast food places around here, Hot Wok has a selection of entrees on a steam table behind their deli counter. $3.72 gets you a generous helping of the entree of your choice with white rice. You can substitute fried rice or add an eggroll for a bit more. [IC]
1102 W. University Av. Urb

**Jupiters**

Bar and restaurant in downtown Champaign. Serves some of the best thin crust pizza in Chambana. Especially try the Bianca! In downtown Champaign. [KL]

**Jolly Roger**

Hidden in downtown Urbana, don't let the hokey decor fool you. It's a great place for thin-crust pizza, and Italian beef. [MM] 118 W. Water Urb.

**Kamakura**

Teppan cooking at your table. Better than Miko. [DI]
715 S Neil Chmp

**Kennedy's**

Far and away the best seafood in town. Reservations are required, and plan to spend $25 or so per person, including dessert. On the other hand, that's about what you'd spend at Red Lobster, and Kennedy's has seafood that even people from Seattle or Boston could appreciate. Nice atmosphere, too. [PGSGTL]
2560 S. Stone Creek Blvd, Urbana.

**LePeep**

It is located south on Neil Street, past Windsor. There is a good variety of food, and the wait is not long. [HVZ]

**Li'l Porgy's**

Bar-b-que. Best beef ribs (Friday nights only). Sauces range from mild to "hot." Two locations, one on University at Broadway in Urbana, and the other way out west on Springfield in Champaign. [BEC]

Fast-food version of Bar-B-Que. The sauce's flavor doesn't have any character either does the building. For great tasting Bar-B-Que served fast, see the Hickory River Smokehouse located on north Cunningham, just before the interstate. [MDH]

**Miko**

This Asian restaurant serves Japanese, Korean and Thai cuisine. It's a bit expensive but the food is always good. They have a lunch buffet Monday to Friday. It is located at 407 W. University in Urbana. [MM]

**The Original Pancake House**

Sunday mornings this is the best place to be. You'll find the biggest selection of incredible pancakes anywhere. Starve yourself for about a week and then try their famous apple pancake. It's about five pounds of fresh apple pieces baked inside a huge pancake with glaze on top. They also have excellent smaller dishes like regular pancakes and tremendous omelets. They serve lunch too, but I don't think anyone eats anything but breakfast food there. If you go at 11 AM on Sunday, be prepared to wait 45 minutes for a party of four. [DEL]
Don't try to go there for lunch or dinner. They close weekdays at 2:30 PM, Sundays at 3 PM. Late riser that I am, I still haven't been able to sample the Apple Pancake. [MM]
1909 W. Springfield Av. Chmp.
The best place to go for breakfast! [MDH]

**Peking Garden**

My Chinese friends say that this is the best Chinese food in town. Located in the old Robeson's Building on Randolph Street in downtown Champaign. [DLH]

**Radio Maria**
Located in downtown Champaign. Its slightly on the expensive side, but the place has great personality and good food. [MO]

Rainbow Garden

I liked this place for its not expensive, yet good quality Chinese food. They have a lot of variety in their menu and also has a good ambiance. Located at 1402 South Neil, Champaign [HR]

Ribeye

A longtime resident of Champaign, the Ribeye features steak and salad. Popular with alumni who attend football games. Located at 1701 S. Neil in Champaign. [WFV]

Ribeye has a terrific salad bar, which is only $4.95 with bread if you aren't terribly hungry. I once saw a stack of sliced tomatoes six feet high on the salad bar. [DEL]

Silver Creek

This is a upscale restaurant owned by the Courier Cafe people. It's located on Race, just north of the Courier. Silver Creek is an earlier, more pleasant name for the body of water now known as the Boneyard. Silver Creek the restaurant is housed in a former saw mill and has beautiful woodwork, a nice fireplace, an upscale menu, and a nice selection of wines. [WFV]

Strawberry Fields

Offers a full coffee bar, sandwiches, salads, soups, desserts, and more. There's also a health food store next door. 306 W. Springfield Ave., Urbana

Overpriced, bland food in a pot-head/yuppie atmosphere. [MDH]

Timpone’s

Very good Italian restaurant. On the expensive side, but worth it. On Goodwin, just south of the Krannert Center. LT

An Italian friend highly recommends their pizzas.

Drink

Coffee/Tea Houses

In the last few years there has been a host of coffee / tea houses popping up around campus. Nearly all of them have wireless now access now. Some of the coffee houses listed below are actually outside of campus.

Cafe Kopi

A smoke free espresso bar. Located in downtown Champaign, they're far enough away from campus that you don't have to share the space with undergraduates, so the atmosphere is more relaxed in the evening than at Espresso Royale - you can play a game of Scrabble or read the newspaper over your double cappuccino and not feel like someone is standing over your shoulder waiting for you to clear the table. They have a selection of munchies (muffins, brownies, scones, cheese plates) to eat with your drink, but my wife and I have found them disappointing at times. [DLH]

Espresso Royale

The Espresso Royale Cafe at Goodwin and Oregon has become extremely popular with the music and theater department crowds. Espresso Royale offers many tasty versions of coffee, espresso, and cappuccino, as well as muffins and croissants. Expensive, but worth it. A second Espresso Royale, located on Daniel and Sixth street, is smoke free. A third Espresso Royale can be found at the Illini Union on the first floor. [LI]

The Etc

This is a really neat facility run entirely by volunteers from the Wesley Foundation. Drop by Goodwin and Green on weekend evenings and you can have a huge mug of tasty hot apple cider, a yummy brownie, a rice krispies treat, or cheese and crackers-for 50 cents each! The candle light and fireplace make for a delightfully mellow atmosphere.

Evo Cafe

A recent entry, this used to be a internet cafe + bubble tea place, but now has become Chinese food/bubble tea. Can get crowded. On 6th, between Wright and John.

Green Street Coffeehouse [Now closed]
Originally from West Lafayette, this is the perfect example of the student coffeehouse. It offers good espresso along with iced tea, muffins. There is a back room that can be reserved for group study, and also some CS professors and grad students who schedule their meetings there. [MM] On Green, between Sixth and Wright.

**Moonstruck Chocolate[Now closed]**

Primarily serves various forms of chocolate: truffles, several kinds of cake, and other goodies. Included in this category because it has a coffee shop feel and serves fancy coffee (and cocoa). A nice place to hang out and read. On some nights, they also feature live music. Located on Wright, just south of Green. [DB]

**Ragamuffin**

Sells bubble tea as well. On Wright st, next to Jerusalem Restaurant.

**Bars**

The Campustown area houses many drinking establishments. Many of them are packed full of undergraduates, rendering them noisy and crowded, to say the least. A few bars remain popular with graduate students.

**Boltini. A new addition to Champaign's bar scene, this upscale bar offers a large selection of beers, wine and liquors. The food menu is rather scarce, but it's a great place to relax and talk with friends (no loud music!)** [MM]

Extensive beer list, gets quite smokey [AK]

**Central Tap**

A blue-collar bar on Springfield west of First Street. Tons of dart boards and some decent beer on tap (including Foster's). Has a 21 entrance age, which keeps the undergrads to a minimum. Decent food. [DEL]

**Chester Street**

Located in downtown Champaign, Chester Street (called "C-Street" by regulars) is Champaign-Urbana's gay bar. Many straight people go there too, since it is basically the only place in town for serious dancers to strut their stuff. The sound and light system is highly conducive to movin' that thang. Theme nights like "Trashy Disco Night" are also popular.

**Cowboy Monkey**

The in-thing during the warmer months. High points on food, good mixed drink selection, reasonable beer list. [AK]

**Crane Alley**

Bar/Restaurant in downtown Urbana. Has a decent beer selection, nice atmosphere. Couple of pool tables and a foosball table also exist. Try their desserts though, they are very good. On Main St., Downtown Urbana. [KL]

**The Esquire**

Definitely a hangout of "older" people: grad students and upscale townfolk. They serve Tucher Hefe Weizen in Weiss beer glasses with lemon wedges and lots of other imported beers. Free peanuts in shells-you throw the shells on the floor. [DEL]

**Fat City**

Located just across the railroad tracks near Neil and Green, Fat City features a healthy dose of non-students and a well-known open mike. Comedy Stop on Wednesday night.

**Highdive**

Located at 51, Main Street, Champaign, the Highdive is known for its live bands. Rock, reggae, soul, surf, funk, jazz, blues: the bands at Highdive play them all. They also have salsa dance nights occasionally. [HR]

**Jillian’s**

This place opened in 1995 advertising itself as a "total entertainment zone." It is in the renovated old Coca Cold bottling plant on Neil just north of Stadium in Champaign. A 21 entrance age at night keeps it to an older crowd. Tons of full-sized pool tables (not the miniature ones you see in the rest of the campus bars), good food, and a huge bar plus video games makes for fun for everyone. At lunch, they offer free pool while you’re waiting for your food. [DEL]
Joe’s Brewery

Joe’s Brewery is apparently the herald of a new yuppie trend - the “microbrewery.” They brew and serve their own beer. They also feature jazz from time to time. Caters primarily to undergrads later in the evening, especially Thursday through Saturday nights.

Jupiters

Superb pizza and quality pool tables [AK]

Legends

This bar is a recent addition that is becoming popular also among graduate students. It’s a rather large bar so it’s not very cozy. [MO]

One World Cafe

Open during the school year in the McKinley Foundation (corner of John and Fifth), the One World Cafe is a reincarnation of the previous Old World Cafe. The Foundation is a neat place to hang out, and a good place to study.

White Horse

Has a rooftop and backyard beer garden. Specials like buffalo wings and cheap beer on Tuesdays make this a favorite of a variety of people, from undergrad frat members to grad students. Usually a quiet place with a jukebox full of 70’s tunes.[DEL]

Shopping

Campustown

In a two block radius from Green and Sixth you will find four bookstores, record stores, an ice cream shops, two convenience stores, several banks, clothing stores, and numerous restaurants.

Country Fair

Located quite a ways west of campus, Country Fair features an eight screen movie theater megaplex, a huge video rental store, and Radio Shack. You can get there on the Green, Orange or Blue bus lines.

There has actually been a new location opened, on Fourth and Springfield, in the middle of Campustown. This one is smaller than the other and includes a Caribou Coffee (it also seems a bit nicer than the older location).[KT]

Downtown Champaign

Robeson’s, a family owned department store in the grand old tradition, was once the heart of downtown Champaign. When it closed several years ago, Charles Kuralt stopped in town and filmed a CBS “On the Road with Charles Kuralt” story about it. The Robeson’s building now houses smaller merchants. There are other nifty places to shop in downtown Champaign, including Glenn Pool’s (stereos and TVs), Rick Orr (florist), Dragon’s Hoard (jewelry), House of Art (various works by local artists) and The Gallery (really cool clothing, gifts, weird trinkets, jewelry). See also Worldwide Gifts below.

Estate Sales & Garage Sales

If you need to furnish your apartment or wardrobe for really cheap, consult the News-Gazette for listings of garage sales and estate sales. Also check out the USENET newsgroup uiuc.classifieds.

Lincoln Square

Urbana’s original downtown mall seems somewhat revitalized since the opening of Bergner’s, its new anchor store. This mall is smaller than the Market Place Mall, and has been having a hard time keeping its stores. However, one of the niftiest (if overpriced) stores in Champaign-Urbana is located there: the Art Mart, a place to buy cool kitchen doodads, fresh croissants, and expensive imported foods. Their extensive deli section is also impressive. You can get to Lincoln Square on the Green bus line.

Market Place Shopping Center

What town in the Midwest would be complete without a poorly located shopping mall that wrecked an otherwise charming downtown shopping area? Market Place is best reached by car, although the Red and Blue bus lines go there during the day, and the Brown line goes there in the evening and on Sundays. At Market Place you will find the usual collection of retail outlets, anchored by Macy’s, JC Penney, Sears, and Bergner’s. The mall has expanded outward from its original enclosed structure, to include outlying stores like Kohl’s, T. J. Max, Toys RUs, and the lovely Barnes and Noble bookstore.

Orchard Downs
If you arrive early or are around between semesters when many people are moving out, you can find lots of furniture sitting next to dumpsters in Orchard Downs. Some of this furniture is actually good stuff that people can't afford to transport with them. YMMV. There are also abandoned cars, but we haven't figured out how to detect or assume ownership of them yet...

**Prospect Street stores**

There has been a recent explosion of stores of all sort on Prospect, north of I-74. These include Lowes, Circuit City, Target, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, a few factory outlets like Land's End and a great Borders bookstore.

**Worldwide Gifts**

This non-profit gift store in downtown Champaign sells assorted crafts from Third World countries. Profits are returned to the artists themselves as a means of self help. Many beautiful items to decorate an apartment at very reasonable prices.