



Cleveland, Ohio

BY KRISTIN OHLSON

For all the press it's received, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame isn't the only reason to visit Cleveland. There's great food here too, and after I take visitors to pay their r-e-s-p-e-c-t-s to Little Richard, the Big Bopper and all the other legends, we don't have to go far to find it—downtown has terrific dining. On chilly nights, I recommend **Sans Souci** (24 Public Sq.; 216-696-5600), with its Mediterranean meals and winter views of skaters. Another favorite is **Johnny's Downtown** (1406 W. Sixth; 216-623-0055), an eclectic Continental restaurant that offers such enticing entrées as veal medallions wrapped in phyllo with sun-dried cherries.

On the city's western edge, at **Jeso** (10427 Clifton Blvd.; 216-651-2787), chef Donna Chriszt continues to turn out the global cuisine that pulled crowds into a series of downtown restaurants before she opened her own place. Her staff is charming—they never scold me for fondling the gossamer curtains. **Fat Cats** (2061 W. 10th St.; 216-579-0200) is my favorite of the kicky new restaurants springing up in the Tremont neighborhood, at the rim of the city's old industrial flatlands. With its bargain-basement decor—this is where Formica coffee tables go to die—Fat Cats offers great Italian seafood. At the lovely **Lola** (900 Literary Rd.; 216-771-5652), Michael Symon (a 1998 F&W Best New Chef) routinely tosses out his menus to create new ones with such innovative dishes as skillet-roasted duck breast with butternut squash dumplings, duck confit and grilled apples.



The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, LEFT, a city that has food to rival its rock and roll. RIGHT: Sausages and more at the West Side Market.

Over on the city's east side, I'm a regular at **Sun Luck Garden** (1901 S. Taylor Rd.; 216-397-7676), where Annie Chiu imbues traditional Chinese cooking with western flourishes and serves lavish desserts as well. I love the food, the dragon sculpture and the way Chiu patiently rearranges the stones in her fountain after unruly kids have splashed there. **Sergio's** (1903 Ford Dr.; 216-231-1234) is just a stroll away from the Cleveland Museum of Art and Severance Hall (home of the Cleveland Orchestra). There Sergio Abramof concocts shrimp *baijana* and other delectables inspired by his native Brazil, as his waiters bustle about in cha-cha shirts. The music makes me rumba happily in my seat. At the gracious **Baricelli Inn** (2203 Cornell Rd.; 216-791-6500), where the cuisine has French and northern Italian accents, Paul Minnillo works wonders with everything from soft-shell crabs to sweetbreads. **Moxie** (3355 Richmond Rd.; 216-831-5599), a cheeky new contender on the scene, does deft work with fish. I like the sesame-crusting salmon—and just about everything else.

When I'm in the mood to devote half a Saturday to eating, I head for the **West Side Market** (1979 W. 25th St.; 216-664-3386), a vintage food emporium just blocks from downtown. After squirming through the corridor of fruit and vegetable barkers outside, I make my way in to peruse the meat, dairy, bakery and specialty products at dozens of stands, some operated for generations by the same families. I'll try the smoked goose liver at **Czuchraj Meat** (and pass on the blood *kiszka*). I'll sample a neatly braided pierogi stuffed with sweet-and-sour cabbage at the **Pierogi Palace**, then a bit of the fruit salad with chipotle dressing at **El Paisano**. Finally, I'll jostle my way to one of the best tables in town: the flat-topped, side-flapped garbage can near **Frank's Bratwurst**, where there are always several happy eaters with hard rolls, homemade bratwurst and sauerkraut, sharing napkins and doing a little dance to dodge passing strangers. It's tricky, it's kind of crazy, but everybody manages. ■

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