

Lüke • Central Business District • French Brasserie

Celebrity chef John Besh made his name with the ambitious fare at August. At Lüke, his latest venture, he built a place where people can relax with a custom-brewed beer, a colossal platter of raw and boiled seafood, or a satisfying plate of choucroute garni (sausage and pork bellies over sauerkraut). Lüke is a dead ringer for a Parisian brasserie with its pressed-tin ceiling, antique-looking fans, and décor of dark wood and brass. At lunch, it's become a favorite spot for businesspeople to table-hop. At night, the crowd is a bit more subdued but still having fun. *Daily 7am-11pm.* \$\$ ≡ 333 St. Charles Ave. (Union St.), 504-378-2840, lukeneworleans.com

Mr. B's Bistro • French Quarter • Creole

This classic Creole bistro, run by members of the Brennan family, was one of the last old-line restaurants to reopen after the storm. Other places make fine chicken and andouille sausage gumbo or barbecue shrimp, a local specialty of jumbo shrimp sautéed in a pool of butter. No one, though, does those dishes as well as Mr. B's. Now that it's back, both the socialites and downtown businesspeople have returned to this favored destination for long, cocktail-fueled Friday lunches that last all afternoon. *Mon-Sat 11:30am-2:30pm, 5:30-9:30pm, Sun 10:30am-1:30pm, 5:30-8:30pm.* \$\$ ≡ 201 Royal St. (Iberville St.), 504-523-2078, mrbsbistro.com

Classic New Orleans Nightlife

French 75 • French Quarter • Bar

The cocktails are strong, ice cold, and properly mixed at this plush bar that looks like a holdover from the Jazz Age. The light is low, animal prints cover the couches, and art from the 1930s decorates the walls. Attached to Arnaud's, one of New Orleans' oldest restaurants, French 75 has an air of sophisticated decadence. As you sit here sipping a Sazerac, it's hard to believe that the bad cover bands and "cheap ass" beers of Bourbon Street are only a block away. The smart set will avoid those tacky thrills and linger at French 75 over a second—or even third—cocktail. *Daily 6pm until close.* 813 Bienville St. (Bourbon St.), 504-523-5433, arnauds.com

Closures (please make a note in your Black Book.)

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NIGHT+DAY NEW ORLEANS

Ins and Outs

Noteworthy Additions, Changes and Closures from publication date through June 30, 2008

Key to Night+Day Symbols

Restaurants

Singles-friendly

- Communal table
- Food served at bar

(G) Gourmet destination

Nightlife

Includes bars, clubs, and entertainment

- Cover or ticket charge (otherwise, entry is free)

Restaurants + Nightlife

Prime-time noise levels

- Quiet
- A buzz, but still conversational
- Loud

Venues followed by an * are those we recommend as both a restaurant and a destination bar.

Key to Pricing

Hotels

Best deluxe room

- \$ \$100-\$199
- \$\$ \$200-\$299
- \$\$\$ \$300-\$399
- \$\$\$\$ \$400 and up

Restaurants

Main course

- \$- less than \$10
- \$ \$10-\$19
- \$\$ \$20-\$29
- \$\$\$ \$30-\$39
- \$\$\$\$ \$40 and up

Attractions

Entry or service

- \$- less than \$10
- \$ \$10-\$19
- \$\$ \$20-\$29
- \$\$\$ \$30-\$39
- \$\$\$\$ \$40 and up

The Night+Day promise

Night+Day writers and editors use the same high standards in selecting and researching venues to be included in our Ins and Outs updates as we do for our books. Our local correspondents determine which new hot spots are the real deal and which are simply hype—just as you'd expect from Night+Day—to provide the kind of reliable information you need to make the best possible choices.

pulseguides.com

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Underline indicates entry made in most recent calendar quarter.

NIGHT + DAY NEW ORLEANS ADDITIONS

The distillery itself is a rag-tag operation cobbled together with old stainless-steel milk tanks and refashioned beer-brewing equipment. Celebration has installed a comfortable tasting room, however, where you can linger over a glass after the tour. Ask to sample the limited-edition 10-year-old blend made with rum that sat safely about the water when Katrina flooded the distillery. *Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, evenings and weekends by appointment.* \$ 2815 Frenchmen St. (Abundance St.), 504-945-9400, oldneworleansrum.com

Classic New Orleans Restaurants

Bistro at Maison de Ville • French Quarter • French Bistro

A world of well-heeled eccentrics, sophisticated artists, and international travelers manages to live in the French Quarter while avoiding the throngs of tourists. The Bistro at Maison de Ville is the kind of place where they meet. The intimate restaurant attached to the Hotel Maison de Ville strikes a European pose with its art collection, wood-paneled walls and red leather banquettes. Chef Greg Picolo is one of New Orleans' often-overlooked treasures. He cooks in a classical French style with a detour through the Louisiana countryside. His frog legs are famous among serious diners, his skill with fish is unmatched, and his crème brûlée is the best in town. *Tue-Sat 11am-2pm, 6-10pm.* \$\$\$ ☐ 727 Toulouse St. (Bourbon St.), 504-528-9206, maisondeville.com/dining

Gautreau's • Uptown • American

Gautreau's isn't easy to find. That's how the regulars, the city's upper crust, want it. Located on a quiet corner in a neighborhood of giant Uptown homes, even the front door of this old converted drugstore is hidden behind trees. The dining room, filled with people who still dress for dinner, is dark and subdued. The waiters attentive. And the menu a sophisticated take on contemporary American cuisine, like bacon wrapped pork tenderloin with a pork balsamic reduction or sautéed turbot with pancetta and lemon parsley beurre noisette. This kitchen has launched the careers of many of New Orleans' most celebrated chefs. *Tue-Sat 6-10pm.* \$\$\$ ☐ 1728 Soniat St. (Daneel St.), 504-899-7397, ebiz.hibernia.com/gautreaus

La Provence • The Northshore • French

Chefs start the day here gathering eggs from behind the restaurant. Lettuce and strawberries grow in rows beyond the parking lot, and pigs happily wallow in pens before appearing on the menu as bacon and chops. The French menu includes classics like pork rillettes, bouillabaisse, and salt cod brandade. Just before founder and Marseille native Chris Kerageorgiou passed away in 2007, rising celebrity chef John Besh (August, Lüke) bought this favorite of well-heeled Northshore residents. Besh added modern polish to the warm, rustic décor and partnered with the French-born chef René Bajeux. The hour-long trek from New Orleans makes La Provence a difficult stop for dinner, but it's an excellent excursion for Friday lunch or Sunday brunch. After eating, ask chef Bajeux for a tour of his farm. *Wed-Thu 5-9pm, Fri 11am-3pm and 5-9pm, Sat 5-9pm, Sun 11am-9pm.* \$\$ ☐ 25020 Hwy. 190 (east of Lacombe), 985-626-7662, laprovencrestaurant.com

Bohemian New Orleans Nightlife

Blue Nile • Marigny • Music Venue

A swirling constellation decorates the ceiling and painted Egyptian motifs fill the walls at the Blue Nile. There is nothing otherworldly, though, about the live music here. The club books the best of the New Orleans scene, from funky brass bands to coquettish jazz crooners. On the weekends, a DJ spins tunes in the second-floor lounge. This is a local favorite for live music. The closest thing to tourists are college students venturing down from their Uptown campuses. Best of all, there's plenty of room for dancing. *Wed-Sat 9pm-close.* ☎ 534 Frenchmen St. (Decatur St.), 504-948-2583, bluenilelive.com

Saturn Bar • Bywater • Dive Bar

This Bywater bar is the kind of place where you might run into Tom Waits. Packed with rainbow-hued neon lights and decorated with psychedelic murals of the solar system, the Saturn Bar is a great American dive. Half the regulars are old men who know how to drink. The other half are neighborhood hipsters just learning to hold their liquor. Both crowds start drinking in the early afternoon and stay until late at night. They also prefer the Saturn Bar on weeknights and clear out on the weekends. Back in the day, no-holds-barred fights were featured in the back room. Today, a local rock band is more likely to provide the entertainment. *Daily 4pm-close.* ☎ 3067 St. Claude Ave. (Feliciano St.), 504-949-7532, myspace.com/saturnbar

Bohemian New Orleans Attractions

Backstreet Cultural Museum • Mid-City • Museum

On Mardi Gras morning, crowds gather outside the Backstreet Cultural Museum in the historic Tremé neighborhood hoping to see an Indian emerge. Each year, the African-American members of the Mardi Gras Indian tribes sew elaborate costumes overflowing with beads and brightly colored feathers. With no fixed route and no schedule, even locals are lucky to find a tribe walking the streets. At the Backstreet Cultural Museum, however, you are guaranteed to see a collection of the intricate headdresses and costumes worn by groups like the Flaming Arrows, the Wild Magnolias, or the Black Hawk Hunters. The small museum, the personal obsession of Sylvester Francis, feels almost like a scrapbook of the unique traditions of New Orleans' African-American community, featuring artifacts from jazz funerals and brass bands to Mardi Gras Indians and second-line parades. *Tue-Sat 10am-5pm.* \$- 1116 St. Claude Ave. (Ursulines Ave.), 504-287-5224, backstreetmuseum.org

Celebration Distillation • Mid-City • Distillery

The oldest rum distiller in the United States has been handcrafting single-barrel rum for well over 15 years. The craft distilling movement has just begun, but Celebration and its prize-winning Old New Orleans Rums are leading the U.S. rum renaissance. The distillers happily let visitors see, and taste, every step of the process, from the almost beer-like fermented molasses in the first stage to the smooth liquor aged three years in Bourbon barrels that emerges at the end.

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Cool New Orleans Restaurants

Café Amelie • French Quarter • Creole

Café Amelie's courtyard, studded with candles and surrounded by a French Quarter mansion, looks like a movie set. It's no surprise that a Hollywood producer owns the place. Young gay and straight couples whisper to each other over glasses of wine and plates of upscale New Orleans fare with a little Caribbean flair. Try the crab cakes drizzled with citrus sauce or the blackened rack of lamb spiced with Scotch bonnet peppers. Friday nights, local R&B crooner and heartthrob John Boutte plays. On New Orleans' few cold days, book a table elsewhere because the inside dining room is tiny. Any other night, Café Amelie is the city's most romantic spot. *Wed-Fri 11am-9pm, Sat 9am-midnight, Sun 9am-3pm.* \$\$ ☎ 912 Royal St. (Dumaine St.), 504-412-8965

The Country Club* • Bywater • Contemporary American

In a neighborhood of funky shotgun houses and dive bars, this well-manicured mansion—the private, gay-friendly pool where clothing is optional—has always been infamous. Recently, the front of the house opened to the public as an ambitious, but well-priced restaurant. Bywater hipsters and the gay regulars lounge in rattan chairs on the palm-shaded porch while nibbling on coriander-crusted crab cakes or hanger steaks with truffled mac and cheese. The slightly unfocused menu rarely misfires, but the bar, which might mix the best Pimm's cup in town, never quite does. The immodest can work off their meal with a quick dip. *Daily 11am-10pm.* \$ ☎ 634 Louisiana St. (Royal St.), 504-945-0742, thecountryclubneworleans.com

Grand Isle • Warehouse District • Seafood

Grand Isle looks like a fishing shack built by a guy with a big budget and a team of designers. The airy room, the walls of blond-wood beams, and the black-and-white photos of fishermen and oyster shuckers give the Warehouse District restaurant a style that could be called rustic chic. Located next to Harrah's Hotel, Grand Isle draws its share of tourists. Plenty of young locals, though, make the trip downtown for the duck po' boys, made-from-scratch gumbo, and Gulf shrimp with popcorn rice. The after-work crowd often jams the bar for happy-hour specials of raw oysters and boiled shrimp. *Sun-Thu 11am-11pm, Fri-Sat 5pm-midnight.* \$\$ 📍 575 Convention Center Blvd. (Poydras St.), 504-520-8530, grandislerestaurant.com

Gelato Pazzo Caffè • Riverbend • Dessert/Deli

The brightly colored décor of this tribute to Italy is matched by the case of rain-bow hued gelati. The housemade gelato is the closest you'll find in New Orleans to the Italian original. At lunch, the restaurant attracts grad students and area workers eating panini made with imported meats and cheeses. At night, neighbors stop by for dessert and crowds of chic music fans fortify themselves with espresso before heading to nearby clubs. *Tue-Thr 11:30am-8pm, Fri-Sat 11:30am-8pm, Sun 11:30am-8pm.* \$ 📍 8115 Oak St. (Carrollton Ave.), 504-304-6908, gelatopazzo.com

Il Posto Italian Café • Uptown • Sandwiches

Each of the wooden tables is set with fresh flowers. The menu of excellent panini, salads, and pastries is carefully written on chalkboards above shelves filled with tins of olive oil. The Uptown neighborhoods of New Orleans were built when people wanted a store down the block. Now pockets of small shops still dot areas that are otherwise residential. Il Posto fits easily into its neighborhood, drawing families and couples for lunch, while offering between meals a sunny spot to sip coffee and linger over a newspaper. *Tue-Fri 7am-9pm, Sat 8am-9pm, Sun 8am-2pm.* \$ 📍 4607 Dryades St. (Cadiz St.), 504-895-2620, ilpostocafe-nola.com

La Divina Gelateria • Garden District • Desserts

New Orleans has gone mad for gelato, with new gelaterias threatening to soon outnumber po' boy shops and all-night bars. Among the newcomers, La Divina makes the purest product. It uses local, hormone-free milk, fruit from the farmers' market, and bowls that are biodegradable. Despite the modern concern with organic food, the gelateria has old-world charm. In the afternoons, mothers sample the latest gourmet flavor while their kids play. In the evening, young couples stop in after dinner for dessert or a well-made shot of espresso. *Mon-Thu 10am-10pm, Fri-Sat 10am-11pm.* \$ 📍 3005 Magazine St. (7th St.), 504-342-2634, ladivinagelateria.com

MiLa • Central Business District • Southern

Allison Vines-Rushing won fame—and a James Beard rising star award—cooking Southern food at Jack's Luxury Oyster Bar in New York City. Now she's back in her native Louisiana, along with her Mississippi-born husband Slade Rushing, still cooking Southern food but with a big-city attitude. In a modern but subdued dining room of mosaic tiled columns and deep blue banquettes, the couple serves bold Southern flavors with the delicacy and cutting-edge techniques (and

neighborhood surrounding Dooky Chase has been slow to recover, so visitors should be cautious. *Tue-Fri 11am-7pm.* \$ 📍 2301 Orleans Ave. (N. Miro St.), 504-821-0600

Mandina's • Mid-City • Creole

The Yats, locals with an accent often mistaken for Brooklyn, congregate at this pink palace of Creole Italian cooking. There's nothing fancy about Mandina's. It's the kind of place where you can accompany a meal of turtle soup, speckled trout amandine, or spaghetti with several rounds of Old Fashioneds (and you should). The volume increases at night as big tables of families and friends get carried away. Note: cash only. *Mon-Thr 11am-9:30pm, Fri-Sat 11am-10:30pm, Sun noon-9pm.* \$ 📍 3800 Canal St. (Carrollton Ave. Cortez St.), 504-482-9179, mandinarestaurant.com

New Orleans Cake Café & Bakery • Marigny • Bakery

At the Cake Café and Bakery, everyone saves room for dessert. Owner Steve Himelfarb, also known as the "Cake Man," earned his nickname selling chocolate cake door to door. Now he's settled down in the bohemian Marigny district with a display case full of carrot cake, hummingbird cake, and red velvet cupcakes. Don't expect fussy gourmet creations. These are all-American cakes, like the kind mom would make if she were the best baker on the block. The crowds of gay couples and young hipsters might claim they're coming for breakfast or lunch. But even as they eat French toast on homemade chala bread with orange syrup or the Reuben sandwich with homemade rye, corned beef, and sauerkraut, they're thinking about a slice of cake. *Tue-Sun 7am-3pm.* \$ 📍 2440 Chartres St. (Spain St.), 504-943-0010, nolacakes.com

Willie Mae's Scotch House • Mid-City • Soul Food

When Katrina hit, most people assumed that they'd never taste another batch of Willie Mae Seaton's famous fried chicken. The 91-year-old Seaton, who won a James Beard award in 2005, saw her neighborhood restaurant sit for days under five feet of water. With the help of the Southern Foodways Alliance and an army of volunteers, the restaurant looks even better than before. Everyone from local musicians to politicians crams into the cramped dining room for fried chicken, catfish, and pounded veal chops. Seaton retired recently, but her great-granddaughter has kept the tradition alive. Note: The neighborhood surrounding Willie Mae's has been slow to recover, so visitors should be cautious. *Mon-Sat 11am-3pm.* \$ 📍 2401 St. Ann St. (N. Tonti St.), 504-822-9503

Ye Olde College Inn • Mid-City • Creole/Po' Boys

Ye Olde College Inn looks surprisingly new for a place that prominently touts its age. The neighborhood joint dates to 1933, but one of the city's favorite purveyors of po' boys and cold beer lost its original building to Katrina and relocated next door to this renovated spot. Despite the soaring ceilings, fashionable light fixtures, and new sheen on the wood floor, old characters still circle the bar swapping jokes, and music fans fuel up before heading to Rock'n'Bowl to hear zydeco. *Tue-Sat 4-11pm.* \$ 📍 3000 S. Carrollton Ave. (Fig St.), 504-866-3683, colleginn1933.com

Cool New Orleans Attractions

Art Market of New Orleans • Uptown • Art Market

Forget the tacky T-shirts or obscene beads from the French Quarter shops. A better souvenir would be a piece of folk art, a photo of the swamps, or a picture frame made of wood salvaged from a century-old shotgun house. Once a month, the Art Market of New Orleans sprawls across Palmer Park with stalls selling the work of regional artists and craftspeople. As the market has grown, it has become an increasingly major event, with neighborhood restaurants selling food and local bands entertaining the crowds. *Last Sat of each month 10am-4pm. Palmer Park, Corner of Carrollton and Claiborne Aves., 504-523-1465, artscouncilofneworleans.org*

The McKenna Museum of African American Art • Lower Garden • Art Museum

A quirky personal museum, the McKenna sits a block off St. Charles Avenue in a beautifully restored 1850s Greek revival mansion that once belonged to the captain of the steamboat Natchez. Dr. Dwight McKenna's collection of African-American art includes works by both well-known artists, like the Harlem Renaissance painter William Edward Scott and the outsider artist Clementine Hunter, as well as lesser-known New Orleans painters. The handful of stand-out pieces and a regular schedule of interesting exhibits, lectures, and concerts makes the McKenna a required stop for anyone interested in African-American culture. *Thu-Sat 11am-4pm. \$- 2003 Carondelet St. (St. Andrew St.), 504-586-7432, themckennamuseum.com*

Bohemian New Orleans Restaurants

Camellia Grill • Riverbend • Diner

For more than 50 years, college students—and plenty of alums—have stumbled into the Camellia Grill late at night for chili omelets, chocolate freezes (ice cream and ice blended together), and homemade pecan pie warmed on the griddle. The pink neon sign still burns bright above the Grill's white-column facade. Inside, the only seats are the barstools along the snaking marble counter, which makes it easy to meet new friends. The longtime waiters in white jackets are both laid-back and ultra-efficient. They greet every customer with a fist bump, and the regulars all know them by name. *Sun-Thu 8am-11pm, Fri-Sat 8am-1am. \$ [626 S. Carrollton St. \(Hampson St.\)](http://626 S. Carrollton St. (Hampson St.)), 504-309-2679*

Dooky Chase • Mid-City • Creole

Legendary Creole chef Leah Chase hosted civil rights leaders in the 1960s, was celebrated in song by Ray Charles, and after Katrina became the city's most eloquent and plainspoken leader. The 84-year-old's restaurant is a Mecca of African-American cuisine, with a menu of greens, gumbo, and fried chicken. After a long delay and help from many donors and volunteers, Dooky Chase looks better than before. Thankfully, the large collection of African-American art survived the flood and again hangs on the walls. Note: The

manageable portions) of the best chefs from the coasts. Try the “deconstructed” oysters Rockefeller, the rotisserie chicken brined in tea, or the langoustines and braised pig cheeks spiked with pepper vinegar. New Orleanians are notoriously suspicious of outside influences, but MiLa has attracted a growing contingent of fashionable young regulars. *Mon-Fri 11:30am-2:30pm and 5:30-10pm, Sat 5:30-10pm, Sun 11:30am-2:30pm and 5:30-10pm. \$\$\$ [817 Common St. \(Baronne St.\)](http://817 Common St. (Baronne St.)), 504-412-2580, milaneworleans.com*

Restaurant Patois • Uptown • French

Hidden in the middle of a quiet Uptown neighborhood, Patois is lively little spot with the charms of Provence. Well-heeled couples of all ages cram into the tight bar to sip signature cocktails, like the B'eautiful Mary (tomato-infused vodka, fresh tomato juice, and spices) or Douceur de Vivre, a take on the pisco sour. At the tables, diners savor dishes like fresh sardines with currants and pine nuts, fennel and lemon crusted chicken, and panéed Mississippi rabbit with pancetta. Chef Aaron Burgau cooks French food with an American sensibility. Before opening Patois, he managed the local farmers' market, and he uses his connections with farmers and fishermen to stock the kitchen at Patois. One of the best new restaurants in New Orleans, Patois is still a locals' secret. Once the word gets out, though, it will be hard for anyone to book a table. *Wed-Thu 5:30-10pm, Fri 11:30am-3pm and 5:30-130pm, Sat 5:30-10:30pm, Sun 10:30am-2pm. \$\$ [6078 Laurel St. \(Webster St.\)](http://6078 Laurel St. (Webster St.)), 504-895-9441, patoisnola.com*

St. James Cheese Company • Uptown • Deli

After training at the famous London cheese shop Paxton and Whitfield, Richard Sutton brought his knowledge of blues, cheddars, and chèvres to New Orleans. St. James boasts the best selection of cheeses in New Orleans and a case full of pâté, sausage, and cured meats. It didn't take them long to realize that they had the fixings for some of the most creative sandwiches in town, like mozzarella with salami and basil pine pesto or Emmental with ham and grilled mushroom. The patio outside has become a weekend gathering spot for families, groups of young professionals, and older couples from the neighborhood. Pick up a bottle from the wine shop next door, and St. James will provide the glasses. A few blocks from the St. Charles streetcar line, it's a great stop for visitors who want something lighter after days of deep-fried New Orleans fare. *Mon-Wed 11am-7pm, Thu-Sat 11am-8pm. \$- [5004 Prytania St. \(Robert St.\)](http://5004 Prytania St. (Robert St.)), 504-899-4737, stjamescheese.com*

Stein's Deli • Lower Garden • Deli

Only in New Orleans would a Reuben be exotic (nearly every sandwich in town is a po'boy, except for the muffuletta, a local Italian specialty of cold cuts and olive salad on a Frisbee-sized bun). Stein's Deli adds some excellent Northeastern items—such as chopped liver, H&H bagels, and corned beef on rye—to the local diet. It looks like a well-established fixture with the faded walls and rows of cheeses and sausages hanging in the window. Stein's is a new addition, though, and the young owner from Philly has made the deli a regular stop for the Lower Garden District's hip young residents. *Mon-Wed 11am-7pm, Thu-Sat 11am-8pm. \$- [2207 Magazine St. \(Jackson Ave.\)](http://2207 Magazine St. (Jackson Ave.)), 504-527-0771, steinsdeli.com*

Stop 9 Refueling Station • Lower Garden • American

This modest café, once a high-end Mexican restaurant, focuses on breakfast, light lunches, and afternoon snacks. Traces of its Mexican heritage can be seen in the chilaquiles at breakfast, the best meal here, or the fresh salsas next to the ketchup bottles. Lunch, which can be lackluster, attracts a business crowd. Better to drop in for breakfast or a quiet afternoon snack of Cuban coffee and a scoop of the amazing grown-up ice cream, like avocado with tequila or strawberry spiked with gin. *Tue-Sat 8am-6pm, Sun 8am-2pm.* \$ ☐ 1432 St. Charles Ave. (Melpomene St.), 504-267-3028, stop9nola.com

Sucré • Garden District • Desserts

The music is loud and perfect for dancing. The energy level is high. It's not a nightclub, but New Orleans' newest dessert bar. Led by pastry chef Tariq Hanna, a Food Network regular, Sucré turns out gelato, exotic handmade chocolates, and exquisitely crafted pastries. The fashionable boutique with its perfectly coordinated décor feels a little more like New York than New Orleans. The crowd gets younger as the hour gets later, particularly on the weekends when the doors stay open until midnight. *Sun-Thu 9am-10pm, Fri-Sat 9am-midnight.* \$ ☐ 3025 Magazine St. (7th St.), 504-520-8311, shopsucré.com

Cool New Orleans Nightlife

Dragon's Den • Marigny • Music Venue

A crew of artists and outcasts haunts the Dragon's Den. To find the second-story lounge, head down a narrow alley and up a rickety, twisting staircase. Inside, it looks a bit like an opium den. The entertainment, which is the real reason to come here, might be experimental noise, an ultra-cool DJ, or a troupe of belly dancers, and the audience is never more than a few feet from the stage. For a breath of smoke-free air, climb out onto the balcony above the crowds heading up the block to other Frenchmen Street clubs. *Nightly 9pm-close.* ☐☐ 435 Esplanade Ave. (Frenchmen St.), 504-949-1750, myspace.com/dragonsdennola

Hi-Ho Lounge • Marigny • Music Venue

Before Katrina, the Hi-Ho was a class-A dive. After a post-storm renovation, the small club emerged with an antique bar, a high, wood-planked ceiling, and a stage with decent sightlines. The Bywater hipsters who frequent the Hi-Ho might sometimes wonder if the club got a little too classy for its own good. But the music, which consists of plenty of emerging local indie-rock along with some avant-garde jazz, makes it clear that the Hi-Ho has kept its edgy appeal. *Nightly 8pm-close.* ☐☐ 2239 St. Claude Ave. (Elysian Fields Ave.), 504-945-4446, myspace.com/hiholounge

Le Phare Bar • Central Business District • Lounge

Don't look for a sign outside. Don't bother asking people on the street for directions. Only a fashionable young crowd knows about this hidden lounge inside the equally hidden boutique hotel Loft 523. The well-dressed partiers pack Le Phare for nights of themed music like Tuesday night salsa, early hip-hop on Thursday, and the sounds of London on Friday. The bar claims to make cutting-

edge cocktails, but they won't impress anyone familiar with the best drinks in bigger cities. The trendy set, though, heads here anyway for the exclusive in-the-know scene. *Mon-Sat 5pm-2am.* ☐☐ 523 Gravier St. (Camp St.), 504-636-1890, lepharenola.com

Monkey Hill Bar • Uptown • Bar

Only a few blocks from the zoo and named for what was once the highest point in New Orleans (a mound of dirt amid the animal cages), Monkey Hill Bar serves the needs of more evolved creatures. Settle into a leather armchair with a single malt Scotch or flirt with other well-dressed young professionals around the pool table. In most New Orleans bars, grit is preferred over high style. This swank Uptown spot offers a more sophisticated setting for sipping fine spirits and wine. *Mon-Sat 3pm-close, Sun 6pm-close.* ☐☐ 6100 Magazine St. (Webster St.), 504-899-4800, crescentcitytattoooco.org

Ohm Lounge • Central Business District • Lounge

This ultra-cool lounge seems more in tune with New York than New Orleans: Electronic beats play on the sound system, and above the bar, computer-generated patterns pulse in time to the music. Sheets of gold leaf and abstract paintings decorate the walls at this trendy Asian-themed bar. Every Friday, the room shakes with House music. On Saturdays, the Big in Japan night brings tunes from Tokyo. Late at night, you'll find hipsters whispering in the corners while staring out the curving wall of windows into the empty streets of the business district. *Daily 4:30pm-5:30am.* ☐☐ 135 St. Charles Ave. (Common St.), 504-587-1330, ohm-lounge.com

The Republic • Warehouse District • Music Venue/Nightclub

The cavernous converted warehouse has a split personality. A mass of sweaty fans packs the place when an indie-rock band like Bright Eyes or Death Cab for Cutie plays. When a DJ spins tunes, the club fills with a diverse crowd of well-dressed young professionals on the make. In this laid-back city, the Republic is one of the only clubs with a velvet rope, reserved lounges for partiers willing to part with \$250 for bottle service, and an upstairs VIP section where connected customers and women with the right look mingle. Despite the fancy trappings, the bartenders are far from skilled, so order a beer or a highball instead of a fancy cocktail. *Thu-Sat 9pm-close.* ☐☐ 828 S. Peters St. (Julia St.), 504-528-8282, republicnola.com

W.I.N.O. • Warehouse District • Wine Bar

The décor at the Wine Institute of New Orleans, or W.I.N.O., is Spartan, but the Warehouse District bar is a paradise for oenophiles. The narrow room is lined with rows of gleaming Enomatic machines attached to 80 bottles of wine ranging from California cabernet to precious Château d'Yquem. After buying a debit card, you can purchase a one-ounce taste, or a full glass, from any bottle and debate for hours the merits and faults of the juice. If you find something outstanding, this wine bar can also sell you a bottle. Add a plate of cheese or olives, and you have the perfect pre-dinner stop for the serious wine drinker. *Wed-Thu noon-10pm, Fri-Sat noon-midnight, Sun 3-9pm.* ☐☐ 610 Tchoupitoulas St., 504-324-8000, winoschool.com