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It's time to vote for your favorite bistros, bars, restaurants

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What makes a restaurant great? If it were based on good food, impeccable service and atmosphere, a lot of local restaurants definitely would make the grade. But some places have that extra something that makes them unforgettable.

In a search for these places, we're launching our online Best of Metromix contest. For two weeks starting today, you can visit FLORIDA TODAY's entertainment site at brevard.metromix.com and vote for best place to grab a beer, best restaurant and lots of other bests. We picked the cream of the crop in 16 categories for your consideration.

Nominees were selected based on restaurant reviews and user-generated comments on the site.

Chef Debbie Buza of Grant-Valkaria, a culinary instructor at Keiser University in Melbourne, said a few tricks will help restaurants build a loyal fan base.

"As a chef, you get really good feedback when you take that opportunity and actually talk to your customers and find out what they like and what they don't like," Buza said. Quick surveys help.

"Consistency in your product is another thing. Once you find a good (restaurant), the reason why you go back is because you know what you're going to get every time."

Maribeth Salge, who owns Better Bodies Physical Therapy in Rockledge, is a regular at several local restaurants, and consistency plays a big part in that.

Her restaurant pet peeve? "Going to someplace wonderful and you're all excited and then you go back and get the same dish, and it's awful," she said. "It's just the pits."

But when a restaurant gets it right, Salge becomes the type of loyal customer eateries dream of having.

She swears by the large white pizza at Domenico's in Rockledge, which she picks up every Tuesday night to share with her husband.

"We go to Orchid Bistro, Vintage 56, which is relatively new in Rockledge, and we go to Ashley's," the Cocoa resident said.

Now we want to find out which restaurants inspire your loyalty.

See the full list of categories at right, and have fun voting.

Contact Sangalang at 242-3630 or jsangalang@metromix.com.

Additional Facts

The details

Voting: Today through Jan. 24 at brevard.metromix.com

Categories: 16, including best restaurant with a water view, sports bar, place to grab a beer and more

Nominees in each category: Five

Winners: The winners will be announced Jan. 25. Along with their "best of" honor, they'll receive Metromix swag.
