

## Out and About...

### **1301 Cantina**

Elegant earth tones and a refined menu define this grill and margarita bar owned by local Tex-Mex mavens, the Laurenzos (Ninfas, El Tiempo Cantina). The menu features classics like tacos, tamales, chalupas, enchiladas and combo plates while house specialties involve the oak grill for savory fajitas, quail, baby back ribs and jalapeno sausage.

*How it's gay-friendly: This is the place to be on Friday nights after 6 p.m. Gay guys flock here for the skinny margs and the fajitas.*

### **Baba Yega**

Since 1975, this converted bungalow-turned-eatery has charmed regulars with healthy fare and hearty portions. A crowd as eclectic as the menu dines in cozy tables throughout the house--on the back veranda with a view of the tranquil gardens and koi pond, oak-tree-shaded front patio (ideal for people-watching) or the antique-filled main dining area.

*How it's gay-friendly: Baba Yega is in the middle of the Pacific Street gay scene. Because of that, the restaurant caters to a predominantly gay clientele. Definitely, try the brunch buffet.*

### **Barnaby's Cafe Montrose**

Constantly humming with lively conversation, this cozy cafe is a popular Montrose neighborhood hangout. This snug diner features fresh, uncomplicated, contemporary food. The service is quick, and the price is right.

*How it's gay-friendly: From the sheepdog mascot surrounded by rainbows to the service with a little sass wait staff, Barnaby's is where the boys gather to gossip for Sunday brunch.*

### **BB's**

Set in a strip center in the heart of Montrose, BB's offers up Gulf Coast cuisine and New Orleans-inspired fare with a Texas twist. Dig into one of 15 different po'boy varieties, as well as wallet-friendly Cajun favorites like Bubba Lump salad, boudin balls, and gumbo. There's also a great selection of frozen daiquiris, you can even take some "2 geaux".

*How it's gay-friendly: What's better when you leave the bars late at night than a greasy po-boy within walking distance? Yeah, that's right.*

### **Brasil**

Artsy types, poetry buffs and music lovers from all walks of life count this warm coffeehouse as a favorite. Contemporary art by local artisans adorns the walls, and tiny metal tables with South American Kokopelli-type creatures carved into the tops line a performance area.

*How it's gay-friendly: Brasil is a neighborhood hangout for the artistic gay set and a favorite spot for stimulating conversation.*

### **Canopy**

Expect well-prepared items at this stylishly-chic bistro like buttermilk fried pork loin, crab remoulade and heirloom tomato salad, oven-roasted natural chicken and chocolate hazelnut tart.

*How it's gay-friendly: Canopy is a perfect romantic spot for a date that's convenient to pre- and after-dinner cocktail stops.*

### **Common Bond**

Located at Westheimer and Dunlavy, Common Bond bakery and cafe offers an impressive savory menu as well as a vast array of viennoiserie, pastry, bread, gelato and more. Come for breakfast, lunch or a late afternoon pastry and cup of coffee. The 3,600 square foot space exudes upscale offerings in a casual yet elegant setting, with lots of wood, concrete and glass accents. But the focus of the café, or course, is the 24-foot rustic contemporary bakery case.

### **El Real**

Back in the good old days, before there were pre-formed taco shells and canned enchilada sauces, restaurant Tex-Mex was just like homemade. El Real Tex-Mex café offers the same homestyle flavors and the same fresh-fried taco shells, house made chili powder and made-from-scratch enchilada sauces that your grandparents once enjoyed.

*How it's gay-friendly: Located right near the intersection of Montrose and Westheimer, El Real has rehabilitated a historic theater building and brought new life to an area that once housed Houston's gay and lesbian bookstore.*

### **Hugo's**

This restaurant is housed in a 1925 structure designed and built by Houston architect Joseph Finger, who is also responsible for Houston's Art Deco-style City Hall. The Latin-inspired building has been lovingly restored to feature its original beauty, and the interiors designed to include both "chic" contemporary touches and inviting traditional elements of old Mexico. Chef Hugo Ortega features refined Mexico City classics with a contemporary twist.

*How it's gay-friendly: Easily one of the best gourmet Mexican fares in Houston, Hugo's is a must for a date close to the action just a few blocks away.*

### **Jenni's Noodle House**

It's hard to say which is more alluring: the jaw-droppingly cheap prices or the winking, witty atmosphere. In either case, this unassuming Vietnamese-American establishment gives customers expertly prepared Vietnamese food at remarkably reasonable rates.

*How it's gay-friendly: Jenni's is a favorite gay hangout. Maybe it's the fun sayings like "it's all good in the noodlehood" or the fact that Jenni's is a big supporter of LGBT causes, including Pride Houston.*

### **Niko Niko's**

No matter the time of day or night, diverse followers crowd into this zany-looking, converted service station and wait to order at the bustling counter. Gyros don't get much better than this: Moist, aromatic lamb slices are blanketed by a warm, plushy pita with sweet onions and creamy cucumber-garlic tzatziki sauce. Chickpea croquettes (falafel) sauced with sesame-scented tahini are savory and non-greasy.

*How it's gay-friendly: When it's just you and the gang looking for something cheap and tasty, this is the spot. The lines can get long, but we think it's because people are ogling a couple of the hotties behind the counter.*

### **Uchi**

James Beard Award-winning Chef Tyson Cole's signature restaurant near the intersection of Montrose Boulevard and Westheimer is intimate and sophisticated. The entire restaurant revolves around the open kitchen and sushi bar where Far Eastern delicacies are turned out to



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### **Underbelly**

The tagline, "The Story of Houston Food," sums up Chris Shepherd's vision for Underbelly: A menu showcasing local ingredients, as well as the chef's culinary experiences in the city.

Everything from his frequent farmers market visits to his passion for local cuisine is reflected in the menu, as well as the restaurant design (the spot is housed in the same building that formerly held the lesbian bar Chances). The chef is even working directly with area ranchers to raise his own pigs, goats and other animals.

## Nightlife Recommendation

### WHATEVER YOUR SCENE, YOU'RE COVERED IN H-TOWN

Visiting Houston and not sure which bars to hit up? Don't worry, we've got this. One good thing about H-town is that there's a scene for just about whatever you're into. From stand-and-model to boot scootin' honky tonk, here's your personalized hit list for a good time.

**DANCE FREAK.** Feeling the need to shake it to the latest dance mixes? The longstanding and recently revitalized nightspot **Rich's** is regularly ranked among the top dance clubs in the city. And small wonder with the huge dance floor and fantastic in-house DJ talent. Another popular club over in the Montrose area is **South Beach** which not only offers a huge dance floor but also an expansive rear patio.

**SONGBIRD.** Like to belt out Beyonce like nobody's business? Head to **Guava Lamp** on Wednesday and Sunday nights for a karaoke scene like no other. This hidden away video bar off Allen Parkway serves up strong drinks and a fabulous song selection. **JR's** on the Pacific Street strip also does karaoke on Thursdays and Sundays.

**PRETTY BOY.** Over at the **Eagle** in Montrose, you'll find cute guys on the patio and in the history-laden upstairs bar. Or head downstairs to enjoy the beat of DJ JD Arnold. You'll also find a cute crowd at **Rich's**, particularly when the beat picks up on Friday and Saturday nights.

**PARTY GIRL.** The top spot for ladies is **Pearl Houston**. This expansive club smack dab in the middle of Washington Ave. offers tons of big screen TVs to catch games as well as a large outdoor patio complete with fun games and plenty of seating. Multiple bars, darts and much more await at the Pearl.

**URBAN COWBOY.** If your idea of a good time is two-steppin' and shooting pool, we have the perfect spot. **Neon Boots** is Texas' largest gay country bar -- more than 10,000 square feet of fun under one roof. Dance the night away on the enormous dance floor, relax in the side lounge or belly up to more than a half-dozen different bar stations. There are live shows, dance lessons and much more each week.



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**CHILL KID.** Sometimes you just want a relaxed night out with your friends. Enter once again **JR's** and **Eagle**. JR's has been a staple in Houston's gay scene for decades, helping form the bedrock of Montrose nightlife. Here you'll find folks from all over gathered around the numerous bar tops and on the patio from happy hour into the wee hours. Meanwhile, just a couple blocks away, you can find the **Eagle**, where leather meets the neighborhood watering hole. The patio and upstairs deck are fantastic hangout spots in good weather.

**TOUGH GUY.** For those looking for a little edge, **The Ripcord**, a Montrose staple just a few blocks away offers a fun leather scene. Finally, check out **The Eagle Houston**, when they host one of their regular theme nights and be sure to check out the homage to Houston's LGBT history upstairs.