

**BEST RESTAURANTS 2014** 4m



vegasseven Our Fifth Annual Celebration of Dining Excellence in Las Vegas

**BEST PLACE TO BE A PICKY EATER**

**Crush**

Recently commit to a diet and then suddenly remember you have to meet girlfriends for dinner and drinks before a concert at MGM Grand? Fear not, as there is a restaurant on property that will gladly satisfy the pickiest of eaters as well as those with dietary limitations. The Morton Group's Crush opened in 2013 with the simple philosophy of "Eat, drink, love," which translates well to the shared-plate concept crafted by chef Billy DeMarco. Upon request, Crush will provide a special menu with its dishes divided into the categories of vegan, vegetarian, dairy free, gluten free and seafood/shellfish free—which help making the right choice much easier. Don't miss the roasted cauliflower with garlic, mint and chili; the mixed green salad with figs and pine nuts; and the sea bass with braised kale and tomato chutney. Dressing on the side, hold the oil... the sky's the limit. *In MGM Grand, 702-891-3222, MGMGrand.com.*

**BEST SOMMELIER**

**Devin Zendel**

Over the past seven years, Devin Zendel has been at the helm of some of the most exciting wine programs in the city (Vintner Grill, Carnevino, Eiffel Tower Restaurant). This spring, he landed at DB Brasserie, charged with complementing the food of chef Daniel Boulud and executive chef David Middleton. After only a short

exchange, most patrons will feel as if they have known the exuberant wine expert for years. With a sly grin and an arsenal of laymen adjectives, Zendel—who studied hospitality administration at UNLV and is currently pursuing his master sommelier certification—makes the tasting (and buying) experience palatable to both novices and seasoned pros. His favorite wine producer right now? "Ridge Vineyards in Santa Cruz," he says. "This is one of the greatest wineries in America."

**BEST GOURMET-QUALITY SIDE DISH THAT CHANNELS YOUR INNER 8-YEAR-OLD**

**Tater Tots, PT's and Sierra Gold**

Before you scoff at us for ordering tater tots as an appetizer served in a bucket—let alone for honoring them with an award—we have one question: Have you tried these bad boys? Because you should. Crafted with the consistency Mom never got right, PT's tater tots have the winning combination of crunch on the outside and tenderness on the inside. Most importantly, they've got serious flavor (which is to say, not a hint of the cardboard aftertaste common in most tots). Kudos to corporate executive chef Joe Romano and his team of cooks for offering more than just the traditional variety; you can also get these little fried spheres served Cajun style, chili and cheese, or garlic Parmesan. Bonus points, too, for the fact the tots don't crumble under the pressure of the all-important fork-to-ketchup-to-mouth transfer. \$8 for a bucket, multiple locations, PTEGLY.com.

**BEST LASAGNA**

**Nonna's Lasagna Al Forno, Buddy V's Ristorante**

Buddy Valastro may indeed be the boss of cake, but we can say without hesitation that his grandmother was the czar of lasagna. Her version of the classic Italian dish at her grandson's family-style restaurant is as impressive in its construction as it is delicious to eat: layer upon layer of square noodles in between a rich mixture of meats (Italian sausage, beef, pork), cheeses (ricotta, mozzarella, provolone, Parmesan) and sauce. That all four corners of this dense creation nearly touch the edges of a cast-iron pan that's the circumference of a kid's soccer ball leads us to offer this tip: Either order for two (at least), or don't make dinner plans for tomorrow. "The lasagna reminds me of Sundays, especially during the holidays," Valastro says. "It was always meant to be shared with the family, so the size had to justify that thinking." \$25, in the Grand Canal Shoppes, 702-607-2355, BuddyVLasVegas.com.

**BEST MIDDLE-OF-NOWHERE SANDWICH**

**T-Bird, KC's Outpost Eatery & Saloon**

Near the end of the two-hour journey from Las Vegas to the ghost town of Rhyolite, the hamlet of Beatty (population: 1,000) boasts several inns, a museum and its most important attraction for hungry adventurers: KC's Outpost Eatery & Saloon. Take



the friendly staff's advice and order the T-Bird, a Thanksgiving-feast-to-go consisting of homemade French bread piled with roasted turkey breast, stuffing and cranberry sauce. The sandwich comes with your choice of side (try the potato salad) and a slice of cake—plenty of fuel for clambering around the ghost town, or just staying awake during the long stretch of nothing between you and home. \$9, 100 E. Main St., Beatty, 775-553-9175.

**BEST DRESSING SO GOOD THEY SHOULD BOTTLE IT**

**Lemon Caper Vinaigrette, SkinnyFats**

It's green, addictive and you can only get it from your dealer—er, server. Of course it's SkinnyFats' lemon caper vinaigrette, and it smothers the restaurant's Flat Chix & Greens entrée (also available off-menu made with a Portobello mushroom standing in for the chicken). But diners ask