

## State Bar Communications Director, Jenni Smith-Pulsipher

### Vegas Recommendations:

#### Attractions

##### In town

[The Mob Museum](#) is curated by the Smithsonian. It's edgy and informative, with information highlighting both "sides" of the law. Among its many exhibits, it includes a restored display of many of the bricks in the infamous St. Valentine's Massacre wall, as just one example.

The [Springs Preserve](#) is a museum itself is very kid-friendly and features a small zoo of desert animals. The botanical gardens are especially lovely, and the newest exhibit is a recreation of Las Vegas' Main St. from the year 1906, wild-west style.

Sharks in the desert? You bet! The [Shark Reef](#) is a very good aquarium, including not only sharks, but also fish, crocodiles, a komodo dragon, and more! Open daily at the Mandalay Bay.

You may have noticed the [Ethel M](#) candy stores in the airport...this chocolate is delicious and made fresh, locally, in our very own candy factory. It is standalone gourmet chocolate created by the same Mars family of candy fame – their quality, not mass-produced stuff, featuring the family's favorite recipes. (The pecan brittle is to die for.) You can tour the candy factory, visit their local store, and wander the attached four-acre botanical cactus garden, which is especially pretty.

##### Worth the Drive

If you would like to relax and see some of the lovely desert surroundings, [Red Rock Canyon](#) is only a half-hour drive away from Las Vegas. In addition to hiking paths, they have a scenic drive through this state park, so you can enjoy it entirely from your car if you wish. If you go early enough, you might be able to spot bighorn sheep or wild burros in the morning before they take their mid-day naps.

[Hoover Dam](#) is only about 30 minutes out of town, and the tour takes you deep inside the dam and is really quite interesting. The drive through the desert is quite nice as well, and nearby stops include Lake Mead and the quirky town of Boulder City, full of interesting collectible and art shops.

## Live Entertainment

### Impressionists

Las Vegas is known for its wealth of top-tier impressionists, helping guests celebrate favorite artists. Current performers include the Rat Pack, Elvis, Prince, Michael Jackson, the Bee Gees, and more. The [Las Vegas.com website](#) has an excellent overview.

### Musical Residencies

Of the many world-class performers currently hosting Las Vegas residencies, [Lady Gaga will be performing Jan. 24](#), and [Billy Idol will be performing Jan. 25 and 26](#).

### Multimedia Performance

Cirque du Soleil is synonymous with Las Vegas. [Several shows play nightly](#), including *Mystere*, *Zumanity* and *Ka*; however it's worth noting that tickets [to Love, Cirque's celebration of the Beatles](#), are currently on sale.

As an alternative to Cirque, [Absinthe](#) has reinvented circus, cabaret, vaudeville and burlesque for a modern audience, and the show is getting rave reviews. Performances take place twice nightly.

### Sports

The Las Vegas Golden Knights hockey team made a huge splash in the sports world last season by going to the Stanley Cup finals in the team's inaugural season. [On Wed. Jan. 23](#), you can see them face off against the Nashville Predators at the T-Mobile arena in Las Vegas.

### Magicians

One of the world's most famous magicians of all time, [David Copperfield](#) is performing at the MGM Grand from Jan. 24-26. Or, if less-traditional magic is your thing, check out locals' favorite, [Penn & Teller](#), at the Rio on Jan. 26.

## Restaurants

### Downtown

#### *Gastropubs:*

[Carson Kitchen](#) does excellent small plates in the style of upscale comfort food, with dishes like short rib grilled cheese sandwiches and pork belly-pickled fig flatbread. They have full entrees as well, and excellent desserts.

[The Smashed Pig](#) does an interesting mix of classic English dishes and some Asian fusion. You can get dishes ranging from a grilled salmon teriyaki sandwich to homemade bangers and mash with onion gravy.

### *Casual/Lunch:*

[Pizza Rock](#) is a go-to place when eating lunch downtown. The chef is one of the few non-Italians to win the top international award for pizza, and they have three different kinds of ovens and a HUGE selection of kinds of pizzas. Great for sitting down, but you can also walk up to the counter and grab an easy slice to go. It's right next to the Mob Museum, so plan to hit both if you're heading that direction.

[La Comida](#) is an award-winning Mexican restaurant in the popular Fremont East area. Huge selection of mason-jar margaritas, great atmosphere.

### *Brunch:*

[The MTO Café](#) is a small, casual brunch place that makes good crowd-pleasing food. Do not skip the apple rings.

The [Downtown Terrace](#) is lighting up all the food review blogs right now. In addition to a great-looking menu including dishes like chicken-and-waffle sliders, they have a \$16 bottomless brunch drink offering, allowing you to choose from mimosas, Bellini's, bloody marys and wine.

## **The Strip**

### *Ultra-Upscale Fine Dining:*

[Twist](#) at the Mandarin Oriental will make you feel like you're eating art. Absolutely every component on the plate – and there are many tiny components on each plate - has been carefully curated to allow you to mix and match each bite for a slightly different perspective on the food. One of the best dining experiences in town. (Very expensive, but worth it.)

### *Fine Dining:*

[Bazaar Meat](#) has a huge menu featuring creative, eclectic takes on familiar dishes and unusual foods you cannot find elsewhere. Best enjoyed with a larger group open to sharing so everyone can try things, this is a restaurant for the slightly adventurous. Although this place specializes in meat dishes, definitely try the foie gras – it comes in both s'mores and cotton candy forms – and do not skip the mashed potatoes.

[Sage](#) at the Aria is one of the few places I go back to again and again. It's an approachable introduction to fine dining, with upscale American bistro style food that changes based on what's in season. This is the sort of upscale place that will have something everyone will like, with just enough creativity to feel interesting and new, without being "weird."

### *Gastropubs:*

The best thing about [Culinary Dropout](#) is their build-your-own charcuterie menu, offering a sushi-style system, allowing you to select from house-made cured meats, really delightful cheeses, and excellent sides. Skip the main dishes entirely and stick to the Antipasti menu. It's in the Hard Rock Hotel, so you get to check out their traveling rock star exhibits on your way in.

### *Casual:*

[The Burger Bar](#) at the Mandalay Bay is often crowded, but worth the wait. Their build-your-own burger menu has every topping you can imagine, from fancy upscale ingredients to classics. This restaurant is what happens when you ask a world-class top-tier fine-dining chef to “just make a really good burger.”

### *Brunch:*

[Bouchon](#) at the Venetian is typically considered an upscale fine-dining restaurant, but honestly, their brunch menu is even better than their dinner menu! My personal go-to dish is the Pain Perdu, but you can't go wrong with anything on this menu!

### *Buffets:*

For a top-tier buffet experience, my foodie friends recommend the [Bacchanal buffet at Caesar's Palace](#). It's expensive (about \$70, \$100 if you want a dedicated reservation time), but worth it, featuring dishes like lump crab avocado toast and smoked wagyu beef.

On the opposite side of the scale, the [Carnival World buffet at the Rio](#) is definitely the best in the “most bang for the buck” category. It costs about half of what you'll pay at Caesar's, and features sushi stations, prime rib and other roasted meats carved to order, and a ton of seafood – all of very good quality.

### **Off the Beaten Path**

A few locals' favorites for folks willing to wander out of Downtown and the Strip!

### *Steakhouse:*

One absolute favorite place to go is [Herbs & Rye](#). This speakeasy-style bar and steakhouse is hidden in a shopping center a short ride from downtown and the strip. They have an AMAZING bartender who has won multiple national awards for recreating vintage cocktails. The food is excellent (try the fig-glazed pork chops), and steaks are half-priced after midnight!

### *Casual:*

[Monta](#) is a small ramen restaurant in Chinatown with about five things on the menu – and all five of them are nearly perfect. I've tried every ramen place in Vegas, and this is just the best, hands down. Their broth is especially good, of the “can't stop eating it” variety.

### *Dessert:*

Vegas has a Chinatown district, and this tiny dessert restaurant is one of the hidden gems in it! [Sweets Raku](#) does multi-component, beautifully composed, artistic desserts, and they serve wine and tea too. There are only a few tables, and there's often a short wait to get in, but if you get the chance, skip the tables and take a seat at the counter so you can watch the desserts being made...the prep staff are real artists, and mesmerizing to watch.

### *Drinks:*

The [Millennium Fandom Bar](#) is a favorite place to hang out. Any given night, there's a theme party celebrating something nerdy or some type of costuming culture. It's casual, comfortable, and very fun – think of it as “Cheers for Nerds.”

Also found in the Chinatown district, the [Golden Tiki](#) is too much kitschy fun to miss. The décor in the place is over-the-top in all the right ways, including a pirate ship, animatronic tikis, and more. The drink menu is serious, with dozens of tiki drinks to choose from, including punch bowls. They also serve Dole Whip.