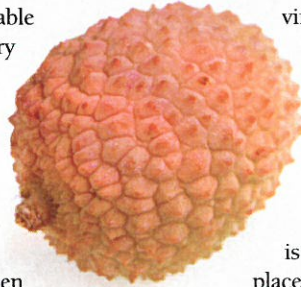


INGREDIENT

LYCHEE LOVE

If your gut reaction is to say *Gesundheit* when you hear someone say lychee, chances are you've never had the pleasure of knowing this glorious fruit. Tiny though it is, the lychee's glistening pearl-colored flesh, silken texture and flavor reminiscent of cherries and grapes can pack quite a memorable punch. And though still a mystery to many in this country, the lychee (also spelled litchi, leechee, lichee and lichi) has long been a star in China, where records of its cultivation date back more than 2,100 years. The fruit didn't make it to the U.S. until around 1883, when it was brought to Florida. And though commercial crops began to flourish there during the mid-1900s, its history has been a bumpy and erratic one, dotted with freezes and devastating hurricanes. You'd think we



would have heard news reports detailing these tragedies, but no, we were too busy puckering over navel oranges and wondering whether or not pomelos taste different than grapefruit. Even after production spread to California and Hawaii, the little lychee's life still went virtually unnoticed by most of us in this country, and it has yet to become a mainstream success outside of the Asian culture—where the demand for the fruit has frequently outweighed the domestic supply. With the advent of fusion fare, however, it is finally getting its well-deserved place on the gastronomic playing field. No longer just served right out of the can or over ice, chefs across the country have begun to take full advantage of the lychee's versatility. Here in St. Louis, for example, lychees have been given starring roles in

MONSOON VIETNAMESE BISTRO

14248 Manchester, 636-256-8838
Fried Lychee Served with Ice Cream
and Assorted Berries

NADOZ CAFÉ

3701 Lindell, 314-446-6800
Lychee and Blood Orange Parfait

RED MOON

1500 St. Charles, 314-436-9700
Lychee Cosmo

ST. LOUIS BUBBLE TEA

6677 Delmar, 314-862-2890
Lychee Slush (lychee jelly can also be
added to all drinks)

ZOË PAN-ASIAN CAFÉ

4753 McPherson, 314-361-0013
Shanghai Martini

bubble teas, martinis and even the stray dessert. Soon, they will take over the world. Until then, here are some local establishments that will help you realize exactly what it is you've been missing the last 122 years.

—Stefanie Ellis

ESPINOS MEXICAN BAR AND GRILL, 17409 Chesterfield Airport Road, 636-519-0044. Lunch Sun-Fri, dinner daily. Mexican-American cuisine plus dishes with a twist. **& \$\$**

GERARD'S, 1153 Colonnade Center, 314-821-0458. Dinner Mon-Sat. All pastas prepared fresh to order. Fresh fish flown in from around the country. Wine list exceeds 450 selections. **& \$\$\$**

GIANFABIO'S ITALIAN CAFÉ, 127 Hilltown Village Center, 636-532-6686, Lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat. Established in 1987, Gianfabio's serves the finest veal, chicken, steaks, fresh seafood and pastas. **& \$\$\$**

JOHN MINEO'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT, 13490 Clayton, 636-434-5344. Lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat. Upscale Italian. **& \$\$\$\$**

KEITH'S AMERICAN BISTRO, 450 Chesterfield Center, 636-530-1996. Lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat. Light menu Mon-Sat 10 p.m.-12:30 a.m. Classic American cuisine in a popular location. Specialties include steaks, seafood and pasta. **& ⚙️ \$\$\$-\$\$\$**

LADIES OF LUCERNE TEA ROOM, 930 Kehrs Mill, Suite 302, 636-227-7300, www.ladiesoflucerne.com. Lunch Tue-Fri, tea Sat 12-3 p.m. The refined and relaxed ambience of the tea room, in the historic Barn at Lucerne, lends itself to unhurried conversation and leisurely dining and shopping. **& \$\$**

MANEE THAI, 481 Lafayette Center, 636-256-8898. Lunch and dinner daily. Authentic Thai food served in an inviting atmosphere. One of the top Thai restaurants in town. **& \$**

MILLER'S CROSSING IN HOG HOLLOW, 14156 Olive, 314-439-0400. Lunch and dinner daily, featuring sandwiches, salads, soups, pizzas and pastas. **& \$\$**

MONSOON VIETNAMESE BISTRO, 14248 Manchester, 636-256-8838, www.monsoonestvietnamesebistro.com. Lunch and dinner Tue-Sun. Excellent upscale Vietnamese. **& \$\$ REVIEWED JANUARY '05**

NICOLETTI'S, 1366 Big Bend, 636-225-4222. Lunch Tue-Fri, dinner daily. Known for homemade pastas, steaks and fresh seafood. **& \$**

NIPPON TEI, 14025 Manchester, 636-386-8999. Lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Tue-Sun. Sushi and Asian favorites such as pan-seared sea scallops with wasabi sauce, shrimp

tempura and spicy prawns on skewers served in a serene atmosphere. **& \$\$\$**

PAUL MANNO'S, 75 Forum Center, 314-878-1274. Dinner Mon-Sat. Excellent antipasto, pasta and authentic Italian entrées. **& \$\$\$ REVIEWED DECEMBER '02**

REGATTA BAR & GRILLE, 660 Maryville Center, 314-878-2747. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. American cuisine—the best of land and sea. Private party room available. Sun brunch. **& Fri and Sat. & \$\$\$**

ROUX CAJUN CAFÉ, 17250 Manchester, 636-273-6990. Dinner Wed-Sat. Serving Cajun and New Orleans specialties, including shrimp etouffe, jambalaya and crawfish pie. **\$\$\$**

SALINA'S MEXICAN RESTAURANT, 20 Clarkson Wilson Centre, 636-530-9010. Lunch Mon-Sat, dinner daily. Arizona-style Mexican food: pollo ranchero, tamales, camarones, carnitas and chile rellenos. **& \$**

SIMON'S CAFÉ, 79 Forum Center, 314-469-2210. Lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily. Middle Eastern cuisine in a charming atmosphere. **& \$\$ REVIEWED AUGUST '04**

VILLA FAROTTO, 17417 Chesterfield Airport Road, 636-519-0048, www.villafarotto.com. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Café market, piano bar and main upscale dining room. Private dining room for 60. **& ⚙️ café \$, dining room \$\$\$\$ REVIEWED FEBRUARY '05**

WHOLLY MACKEREL, 403 Lafayette Center, 636-256-3949, www.whollymackerel.com. Lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Tue-Sun. Featuring flavors of the Gulf Coast, with fresh seafood, steaks, chops, pasta and monthly wine dinners. **& \$\$\$**

XANADU, 280 Long, 636-532-9262, www.xanaduplace.com. Lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat. Steak, pasta and seafood in an elegant setting featuring a fireplace and live music. **& ⚙️ \$\$\$\$ REVIEWED ON PAGE 174.**

YIA YIA'S EURO CAFÉ, 15601 Olive, 636-537-9991, www.yiyias.com. Lunch and dinner daily, Sun buffet brunch 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Food with European-Mediterranean flair. Wine by the glass and Yia Yia's martinis. **& \$\$\$**

ZHIVAGO'S RUSSIAN RESTAURANT, 15489 Clayton, 636-394-5758, www.zhivagos.com. Dinner Tue-Sun. Reopened under new ownership. Russian delicacies, some with Mediterranean and far-Eastern influence. **& ⚙️ \$\$\$\$**

SOUTH COUNTY

BAMBINO'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT, 3601 Commerce, 636-282-1100. Lunch and dinner daily. A taste of the Hill in South County. **& \$\$**

BARTOLINO'S SOUTH, 5914 S. Lindbergh, 314-487-4545, www.bartolinos-stlouis.com. Lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily. A family-owned restaurant serving a wide selection of dishes, from veal parmesan and lasagna to sautéed artichoke with shrimp and crab. **& for six or more. \$\$\$**

GINGHAM'S HOMESTYLE RESTAURANT, 7333 S. Lindbergh, 314-487-2505. Open 24 hours, seven days a week. Full-service menu available anytime. Children's menu available. Dine in or carryout. Banquet facility for groups up to 40. **& \$**

HELEN FITZGERALD'S, 3660 S. Lindbergh, 314-984-0026, www.helenfitzgeralds.net. Lunch and dinner daily. Featuring Irish food, pizzas, steaks, shark chunks and burgers. Claims first 150-inch high-definition TV in America. **& for parties of six or more. & ⚙️ \$\$\$**

MANGO, 7307 Watson, 314-752-8300. Lunch and dinner Tue-Sun. Authentic Peruvian cuisine. **& \$\$\$**

ROBERTO'S TRATTORIA, 9416 Gravois, 314-631-4321, www.robertostrattoria.com. Lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Tue-Sat. Classic Italian cuisine by Roberto Zanti. **& \$\$\$-\$\$\$**

NORTH CITY & COUNTY

THE BERKSHIRE GRILL, 12455 St. Charles Rock Road, 314-298-1260. Lunch and dinner daily, bar open until midnight. Specialties include grilled steaks, seafood, chicken, pasta, salads and desserts served in warm, comfortable surroundings. **& ⚙️ \$\$**

BISSELL MANSION RESTAURANT AND DINNER THEATRE, 4426 Randall, 314-533-9830, www.bissellmansiontheatre.com. Lunch Tue-Fri, dinner theater Fri and Sat 7 p.m., Sun matinee 2 p.m. Enjoy lunch or participatory dinner theater in St. Louis' oldest home. **& for dinner theater. & \$\$\$\$**

CHINELLA'S, 6849 Howdershell, 314-731-7244. Lunch and dinner Mon-Fri. Quaint 40-seat restaurant serving St. Louis-style pizza, pasta, salads and sandwiches. **& \$**

CROWN CANDY KITCHEN, 1401 St. Louis, 314-621-