

ROCK CITY EATS

Date Night in Hot Springs

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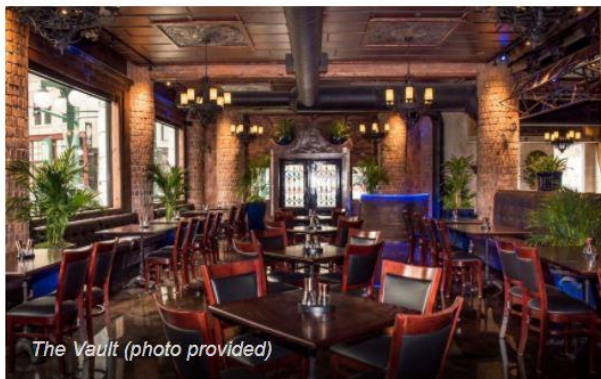
Hot Springs has long been our favorite date night getaway. You can get there fairly quickly (under an hour) and it is always a beautiful spot to just walk around. Plus if you decide to stay a little late there are several good hotel options at a reasonable price.

Over the past couple of years the food scene has seen a huge resurgence. There are so many great places in town that really hold their own against any other place in the state. Plus, there are even more coming. Every time I take a visit I hear whispers about another great new place coming in soon.

Regardless of if you slip out for the Derby at Oaklawn this weekend, or just want a get away on any other night, Hot Springs is an excellent choice. Here are some of our favorite spots.

The Avenue – Located in The Waters hotel on Central, The Avenue opened about a year ago with executive chef Casey Copeland who previously worked at SŌ in Little Rock. Copeland has really started to shine as one of the state’s top chefs now that he is at The Avenue. The menu leans heavily on small plates, so you can easily bring a few friends and sample a good variety or use it as a first course spot in a progressive dinner. If you want to make a full meal though, the entrees are exceptionally cooked and the atmosphere is beautiful.

Delucas Pizzeria – A dive pizza joint on our best date night list? You bet. There is a reason people drive from every corner of the state to come here, Delucas is hands down the best pizza spot in the state. It is an experience dining event that you will never forget. Owner Anthony Valinoti is one of the biggest personalities in the Arkansas food scene. The pizzas are all fantastic, if it is your first time go with the Patsy Searcy, The Don, or the Goulet for a good taste of Delucas style flavor. Also don’t skip on the buffalo caprese salad or the new house made ice cream. Do not forget to call ahead for reservations, they will seriously sell out every night. Also the pizzas are huge (18-20inch), we recommend 1 for every 3-4 people, and you can get them to split the pizza between two different styles if needed.



Arlington Hotel – Growing up in central Arkansas, the Arlington was this magical place where movie stars came in to eat and drink. Starting in the late 90’s it began to lose that luster. Thankfully the Arlington is making a roaring comeback thanks to some new ownership with a renewed energy to make this spot great. The Venetian Dining Room is beautiful and classic, a

great place for a romantic night out. Come on Fridays for a really nice seafood setup, or even better catch it on one of the ballroom dancing nights.

Rolandos – Rolando’s is always an excellent change of pace restaurant with a unique menu. The ownership comes from Ecuador and the cuisine reflects the latin American influences of the region strongly. They have a solid mix of pork and chicken dishes served in a variety of ways, if you can’t decide you can always do the “adventure” plater and try a little of everything. They also have one of the most beautiful patios in Hot Springs, perfect for the weather this time of year.

Silks Bar and Grill – One of our favorite things to do this time of year is to spend a day at Oaklawn, it has become so much easier to turn that into a date since Silk’s opened in the early 2010s. Located in the gaming side of Oaklawn, it is nice to slide over for dinner after the track and enjoy a good meal. They have some of the best burgers in town, a solid steak, and other great entrees. They also have live music on Friday and Saturday nights if you want to stick around and have a few drinks.

J&S Italian Villa – J&S opened in the early 2000’s and quickly became the best Italian spot in town. It was frequently a date night spot in my later college years and never disappointed. It survived the ups and downs of the area and still remains as strong as it was when the place opened. They do some solid veal dishes, fantastic chicken & seafood, and quality steak entrees all cooked in traditional Italian styles. Plus they have a great pasta lineup for the folks who want to go more Americanized Italian.

The Vault – The Vault has certainly become one of the more buzzed about places around the state. The spot is located in the original citizen’s bank building. Photos from the remodel look absolutely beautiful, and should be one of the nicest dining rooms in the city and include a club level area located in the old vault for the bank. They are being fairly tight lipped about the menu, although I’ve heard very positive things about the menu testing. The space should start openings next week according to the owner.



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