

# Much Ado About Mediterranean Food

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## DCPA NEWS CENTER

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Dinner only needs to embrace the clever use of herbs and spices rather than words, unlike a play by William Shakespeare. You can get those by seeing the Bard's famous play *Much Ado About Nothing*, a comedic act of love, lies and pride that the DCPA Theatre Company sets in Messina, Sicily.

Celebrate this whimsical show with a Mediterranean feast before the performance. After all, this production is the first Shakespearean show that has played at the Denver Center of Performing Arts since 2019. Catch dinner and the 400-year-old play now and until November 6 at the Kilstrom Theatre.

### **RIOJA**

1431 Larimer St., 303-820-2282

Chef and restaurateur Jen Jasinski's fine-dining restaurant Rioja should be on your list before the show, and any other day you want an elegant meal of seasonal Mediterranean delights. All pasta is made in house and may include ricotta gnocchi with maitake mushrooms, corn risotto with herb butter, and sourdough tagliatelle with braised rabbit.



Photo courtesy of Rioja

Entrees feature dishes such as halibut with saffron-braised fennel and olive-oil-poached fingerling potatoes, Colorado lamb with parmesan polenta and goat cheese mousse, and grilled Spanish octopus with gigantes beans. All the seafood served is sustainable, and the restaurant has been ranked as a SmartCatch Leader by the James Beard Foundation.

The cozy eatery is located in Larimer Square, an easy five-minute walk to and from the theatre. Make a reservation for lunch or dinner, depending on when you want to see the play.

### **BEIRUT GRILL 2**

1456 Champa St., 303-623-2825

While not all Lebanese cuisine gets made under the banner of classic Mediterranean cooking, Lebanon remains one of the most densely populated countries in the region. Hence, Beirut Grill, which serves an array of kabab such as chicken kofta, lamb, vegetables and beef, all over a bed of rice with salad and pita on the side.

The setting is laid back, and reservations aren't needed. Park your car in the theater garage and walk there; it's just seven minutes away on foot. And, if you're wondering why the name is Beirut Grill 2, the original Beirut Grill (or 1 in this case) is in Englewood.



Photo courtesy of Beirut Grill

### **THREE SAINTS REVIVAL**

1801 Wewatta St., 720-707-3500

Not long ago the restaurant in the Hotel Indigo underwent a transformation and Three Saints Revival was born. The kitchen is helmed by long time chef John Broening, who has owned and worked at numerous spots in and near Denver.

On the menu find savory marinated olives, baba ganoush, flatbread laced with muhamara, warm lentils with ras al hanout, falafel and more. All the dishes are meant to be shared, giving diners the perfect excuses to laden the table with all the favorites. Breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner get served here too, so no matter when your show starts, there will be food. It takes about 20 minutes to walk to and from the theater, or it's just a quick six-minute drive.



Three Saints Revival. Photo by Linnea Covington

### **MAZEVO MEDITERRANEAN EATERY**

3961 Tennyson St., 303-955-8256

Though not walking distance to the theater, this Berkeley hot spot run by Khagendra Gurung is worth the venture. The name mazevo means "to gather" in Greek, much like our protagonists gathered at the masquerade ball. But there's no trickery here, only fresh, flavorful food.

Experience dishes such as vegetable tagine, harissa carrots or cauliflower, tomato chermoula shrimp, and chicken shawarma over hummus with pita. Don't miss the fattoush either, the chopped salad comprises arugula, watermelon radish, cherry tomatoes, English cucumber, green onion, and pomegranate molasses, and can be made even heartier with the addition of lamb or chicken.

### **EL FIVE**

2930 Umatilla St., 303-524-9193,  
elfivedenver.com

On the lesser-known side of the Mediterranean is Gibraltar, located on a narrow peninsula off of Spain's southern Mediterranean coast. It's also the inspiration behind El Five, Justin Cucci's rooftop restaurant in LoHi. In fact, the menu, dubbed 'tapas de Gibraltar,' focuses on the melting pot of Mediterranean regions and flavors.

Think sharable plates of goat cheese croquetas with crispy jamon and chili honey, Iberico pork loin with paprika, grapes and pine nuts, and tabbouleh with za'atar spiced tomatoes. Also look for platters of dips such as peanut and charred carrot hummus, muhammara, Turkish eggplant and house-made pita.

This spot fills up fast, so make sure to book a reservation. On nice days sit outside and take in the city skyline, then head to the theater full and happy.



Mazevo. Photo by Linnea Covington



El Five. Photo by Denver Eater