

RESTAURANTS/ Original



RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN FILE PHOTO

Chicken Scratch Flats' welcome sign is seen inside the restaurant in October after it was named best restaurant in the Readers' Choice awards.

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In addition to its award-winning wine list, the restaurant has added a martini bar. It's open 5 to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

n **Monterey Coast Brewing Company** at 165 Main St. in Oldtown Salinas (758-2337) is an eatery with on-site micro brewing and affordable fine dining. It's open Tuesday through Sunday for lunch and dinner. On Mondays, it's only open for lunch.

Owned and operated by Lucy Chesire and husband Charles Lloyd, this Oldtown restaurant, with exposed brick and an unfinished-look rafter ceiling, invites chatting and conversation, along with warm, friendly dining and superb homemade brews.

"We have a wide selection of light and dark beers, as well as some superb wines," said Camelo Sanchez, manager. "But in addition to the beers, we have really excellent food and people.

"It's a brewery with really good food."

n **Salinas Valley Fish Company** at 172 Main St. (775-0175) is an upscale fish house in Oldtown Salinas.

"When we opened, we wanted to fill a big void here: Salinas needed a seafood restaurant to feature all the wonderful offerings of the Monterey Bay," owner Tony DiGirolamo said. "There just wasn't anything that gave diners a Monterey experience without the half-hour drive. That's what we are."

n **Gino's** at 1410 S. Main St. in south Salinas (422-1814) has been among Salinas' finest since 1975.

"Either (brother) Frank or I am always in the kitchen, and we make sure that the qualities of our meals are consistently superb," Ralph Bozzo said. "I am a Salinas boy, so when I walk through the grocery store and see a customer, I want them to say, 'Hey Ralph, I had a great meal there last night.'"

n Also for the lunch crowd, check out **Chicken Scratch Flats Rotisserie & Brick Oven** (775-4738) located inside the National Steinbeck Center, 1 Main St. It's open 11 to 5 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday

and 11 to 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. Look for expanded hours over the next few months.

The restaurant has a wide selection of pastas and pizzas, and nothing on the menu is more than \$13.

Other notable restaurants providing an entertaining and tasty dining night out in Salinas include **The Pub**, **The Penny Farthing Tavern**, **Eagle Restaurant**, **Elli's Great American Restaurant**, **Shogun**, **Chapala**, **China Star Super Buffet**, **Smalley's Roundup** and **La Perla**.

There also are more great chain restaurants than ever before, all located in the North Salinas area, including **Outback Steakhouse**, **Chevy's Fresh Mex**, **Marie Callender**, **Applebee's**, **Olive Garden** and **Red Lobster**.

Nearby, the city of Marina has its own rising stars of local dining, from a number of Asian- and Mexican-fare restaurants to American-style sites.

n **A.J. Spurs Dining Hall and Saloon** at 3295 Dunes Drive in Marina (883-9479).

n **Michael's Grill and Steakhouse** at 265 Reservation Road in Marina (884-2568).

n **Nak Won BBQ Korean Restaurant**, 330 Reservation Road, No. A in Marina (883-2302), open 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 4 to 9 p.m. on Sunday.

"We serve food from the kitchen, but each table has a barbecue grill, so whatever the customer orders, chicken or beef, we can cook right at the table," said manager Ha Young Choi. "It's all Korean-style. Also, we serve vegetarian food like kimchee, made from cabbage."

n **Dishes Bistro & Grill**, 330 Reservation Road in Marina (883-1207), open 4 to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday, closed Sundays.

"We have a Mediterranean-style cuisine with a lot of fresh seafoods, free-range steaks, fresh salads, homemade soups and desserts, full bar service and a variety of Monterey County and foreign wines," said Andre Vadas, who owns the restaurant with his wife, Gudrun. "We cook very light in terms of our homemade sauces. We're original in our dishes, and focus on freshness and consistency."