



2/15/22

Hope you had a lovely Valentine's Day. As usual this newsletter is for our VIP members who faithfully write reviews for our website throughout the year. Linked [names](#) go to our website listing (or elsewhere). You can click on them.

## REVIEWS:

Since our last Newsletter, you submitted 27 reviews on area restaurants. That's great! Thanks to those that took the time to write. Here are the reviews that came in this month. Good reading always. Green rating indicates "Will Return" and red rating indicates "Won't Return":

- [The Braised Onion](#) in Ocala: **11 Stars**.
- [Miller's Ale House](#) in Lady Lake: **11 Stars**.
- 2 for [Morevino](#) in Ocala: **8 Stars** and **13 Stars**.
- [Ichiban Buffet](#) in Leesburg: **14 Stars**.
- [Piesanos Stone Fired Pizza](#) in Lake Deaton Plaza: **14 Stars**.
- [Glenview Country Club Restaurant](#) in The Villages: **15 Stars**.
- [Brick City Southern Kitchen and Whiskey Bar](#) in Ocala: **12 Stars**.
- [Carrabba's Italian Grill](#) in The Villages: **12 Stars**.
- [Prima Italian Steakhouse](#) in Brownwood Paddock Square: **15 Stars**.
- [keke's Breakfast Café](#) in Lady Lake: **3 Stars**.

- [Tierra del Sol Bar & Grill](#) in The Villages: **12 Stars.**
- [Sonny's Real Pit Bar-B-Q](#) in The Villages: **12 Stars.**
- 2 for [Havana Country Club](#) in The Villages: both **10 Stars.**
- [Pasta Faire Ristorante](#) in Belleview: **10 Stars.**
- [The Crooked Spoon A Gastro Pub](#) in Clermont: **13 Stars.**
- [Cheng's Chinese Cuisine](#) in The Villages: **13 Stars.**
- [Roberto's Ristorante and Pizzeria](#) in Pinellas Plaza: **10 Stars.**
- [Kafé Kokopelli](#) in Dade City: **14 Stars.**

And we finish with a flurry of perfect scores...

- [Mezza Luna Restaurant](#) in Colony Plaza: **15 Stars.**
- [The Chop House](#) in Lake Sumter Landing: **15 Stars.**
- [Glenview Country Club Restaurant](#) in The Villages: **15 Stars.**
- [Legacy Restaurant](#) in The Villages: **15 Stars.**
- 2 for [Mesa de Notte Ristorante](#) in Ocala: both **15 Stars.**
- [West 82° Bar and Grill](#) in Crystal River: **15 Stars.**

You should note that [West 82°](#) has now reopened the popular Sunday Brunch Buffet (\$26 pp) that has been on a pandemic hiatus for almost 2 years. If you have not been there for the food and walked around the pleasant resort after your brunch, give it a try sometime and tell us what YOU think.

## NEW RESTAURANTS:

- We published the menu for Fred's new restaurant in Brownwood Paddock Square, called [Harvest Restaurant and Bar](#). It has interesting entrées on the list and although they won't take reservations for a few more weeks, the restaurant is scheduled to open next Monday (2/21/22) on a first-come-first-served basis. Evening hours at first, then full day meals later and reservations taken next month. The Wine List is always of interest to me and it is unusual. If you dare to go, write a review for us to read.

- Always looking for new restaurants that sound interesting, we added [Estefan Kitchen](#) in Kissimmee. You might recognize that celebrity name. Gloria and Emilio Estefan have a small chain of these large upscale Cuban restaurants. This one is the closest to us right down US 27 a ways.

- In the same location (Sunset Walk) we added [The Wharf](#), right across the street from [Estefan Kitchen](#). The Lobster Roll caught my eye.
- Speaking of Lobster Rolls, our friends tipped us off that [The Catfish Place](#) in Apopka has been sold and is now [The Nauti Lobstah](#). (My spell checker hates this name!) Many menu prices are “Market Price”, and we can understand why. By the way, the popular [Catfish Place](#) was in business for 38 years.
- The popular and highly rated (13 Stars) [Olive Branch Mediterranean-Italian Grille & Bar](#) in Mount Dora has changed hands. Jeff Riesland of Wyoming will be running it now and promises not to make any changes except to add a few dishes he likes to the already wonderful menu.
- We added [AK Phở Vietnamese Noodle House](#) in Ocala, it replaces [Taste of Asia](#) in that location.
- [Sumi Sushi & Hibachi](#) in Leesburg is now open in the Leesburg Square Shopping Center on Citrus Blvd. Looks interesting. We wish Qin Chen, the owner, good luck here.
- [AVA MediterrAegean Restaurant](#) in Winter Park, just opened. It replaces [Luma On Park](#). Very interesting menu at Winter Park prices. (They have *Opus One* on their wine list at \$1,000/bottle.) Wished I lived closer.
- We added [Il Pescatore](#) in Orlando. Been here since 2005, it just slipped by me as a neighborhood restaurant that has a good reputation.
- We added [Kane's Cattle Co.](#) in Crystal River, replacing the [Hardwood Smokehouse](#). What caught my eye was a 40 oz. Tomahawk Steak at \$115 on the menu. It's large enough for two people (and all the other patrons in the restaurant too!).
- We also added [Chop Block Grill](#) in Brooksville. Their top shelf item is an 8 oz. *Prime Filet Mignon* at \$52. I can remember when “Baseball Mignons” were \$20. Not any more!

- More steakhouses, we added [Colorado's Prime Steak](#) in Sanford. It's been in business since 1995. Everyone loves Prime Steaks but I was hard pressed to find the word "*Prime*" on their menu. Surely if you were serving *USDA Prime Grade* beef you would mention it on your menu. But, regardless of their business name, I don't think their beef is even "*Choice Grade*". Deceptive? Decide for yourself.
- We added [Crossroads 561 Grill & Music Bar](#) in Tavares. If you like dives or biker bars, this just might be up your alley. "Bingo and Burgers" on a Monday night just might cater to the older patrons here. It's right on Lake Harris. Dress down, way down!
- When we thought that the original [El Ranchito](#) (in Leesburg) was all done, it's back. Now called [El Ranchito Mexican Cuban Restaurant](#), it's right on US 441 after the split. Added to the refurbished place is Cuban food and a new owners, Feliz and Victor. They own other restaurants too and may buy our local [El Ranchito Mexican Restaurant](#) from Antonio Reyes. We wish them well, of course.

### CLOSED RESTAURANTS:

We continue to find restaurants poisoned by the pandemic venom. Here are more closed businesses.

- The [Riverside Restaurant](#) in Nobleton (Brooksville) closed during the pandemic and never reopened. It's now For Sale.
- [Taste of Asia](#) on SW College Rd. in Ocala, closed after 7 years here. (Mentioned above.)
- [Kotobuki Japanese Steakhouse](#) on 27<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Ocala, closed after 36 years in business here. What a shame!

**LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO TRY FOR DINE-OUT?**

**[Amerikanós Grille](#)** in Spanish Springs Town Square.

**[Harvest Restaurant and Bar](#)** in the Brownwood Paddock Square.

**[Chef's Studio](#)** at the Brownwood Hotel.

**[Bamboo Bistro](#)** in Rolling Acres Plaza.

**[O'Shucks Oyster Bar and Grill](#)** or

**[The Sunny Pint \(Taproom and Eatery\)](#)** in Wildwood.

**[Rose Plantation](#)** in Fruitland Park.

**[Cousin Vinnie's](#)** in Leesburg.

**[Los Laureles Mexican Restaurant & Bar](#)** also in Leesburg.

**[Salsa \(Restaurant and Bar\)](#)** in Tavares.

**[CJ's Seafood Company](#)** or **[Nalan Sultan Grill](#)** in Eustis.

**[Sayulita Tageria](#)** or **[Mark's Prime Steakhouse](#)** in downtown Ocala.

**[Bank Street Patio Bar and Grill](#)** or **[Cantina Tex-Mex & Tequila Bar](#)** or

**[Ivy On The Square](#)** or **[Katya Vineyards](#)** or

**[The Black Sheep on Broadway](#)** all in downtown Ocala.

**[Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen](#)** or

**[Milano Ristorante Italiano](#)** on SR 200 in Ocala.

**[Stirrups](#)** at the World Equestrian Center Hotel in Ocala.

**[1921 Mount Dora](#)** or **[JK Thai Garden \(and Sushi\)](#)** or

**[Pisces Rising](#)** or **[Tony's Chowder House](#)** or

**[PizzAmoré](#)** or **[Funky Monkey Gastropub](#)** all in Mount Dora.

**[Mission Inn Resort, La Margarita Restaurant](#)** in Howey-In-The-Hills.

These are not really recommendations, just some suggestions to investigate.



Let your grandchildren help in the kitchen.

## New Recipes:

- We posted a new recipe for [Beijing Beggar's Chicken](#) on our website. It's an ancient Chinese recipe for a chicken dish just in time for the Olympics.
- And in solidarity with the Ukrainian people, we offer the traditional [Chicken Kiev](#). Hard to believe but Ukraine is the largest country in Europe (after Russia's overlapping European/Asian portion) even beating France by 9%.

## Popular Restaurants in The Villages:

So what's the most popular restaurant in *The Villages*? Not the highest rated! Highest rated honor goes to [City Fire American Oven & Bar](#) at Lake Sumter Landing. [City Fire](#) has 11 reviews and averages 14½ Stars. It's sister location in Brownwood only gets 12 Stars.

But for the most popular, measured by the number of reviews we received so far, top honors go to (3<sup>rd</sup> place) [Carrabba's Italian Grill](#) in Rolling Acres Plaza with 40 reviews and a 12½ Star rating. Then (2<sup>nd</sup> place) [Bonefish Grill](#) in the Buffalo Ridge Shopping Center with 45 reviews, also getting a 12½ Star rating. Top honor (1<sup>st</sup> place) goes to [Cane Garden Country Club](#) with 48 reviews and a score of 13 Stars. Of course, the age of the restaurant would affect this ranking, so it's not a scientific analysis, more of a curiosity.

Next month we'll explore the most popular restaurants outside *The Villages*, the ones that members visit most often. Can you guess who they might be?

Kind regards,  
*Rich & Ellen*  
*The Villages Gourmet In or Out Club*