

No matter the day, it's brunch o'clock on the Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

By Karen Feldman
Culinary consultant

Brunch. It's a small word but one loaded with meaning. It's neither breakfast nor lunch, but rather a combination of the two. It's typically eaten later than the former and earlier than the latter. But not necessarily. It could be a buffet or a from-the-menu affair. And it almost always involves adult beverages.

Whatever it means to you, it's a meal that people generally savor slowly on weekends – or, for those lucky enough to be on vacation, leisurely weekdays – and the Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel have plenty of establishments that understand how to provide a satisfying brunch. Some do it on Sundays only, some on Saturdays and Sundays and a few offer it daily.

What that adds up to is that whatever day it is, it's brunch time someplace in town.

Feast your eyes on the list below and you're sure to find someplace that will tempt your taste buds. Keep in mind that some establishments discontinue brunch after Mother's Day when there are fewer visitors so call first to be sure it's still being served if you want to go once the weather gets warmer.

Bonita Springs

Bonita Brunch: The menu ranges widely here, encompassing the crabby Benedict, Greek omelets, pancakes, chicken quesadillas, avocado toast, a mushroom Swiss burger and the Southern waffle – homemade sausage gravy with fried eggs and bacon on a waffle. Gluten-free and vegan options available, too. And, because brunch is in its name, it's offered 7 a.m.-3 p.m. daily. (26381 S. Tamiami Trail, Bonita Springs; 405-7415; on Facebook)

Survey Café: This charming historic home-cum-café has a roomy porch plus a cozy indoor space where you can enjoy smoked salmon, French crepes, cheese plates, quiche, reubens, omelets, veggie burgers, deli boards and fresh-baked cheddar buttermilk biscuits 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. (10530 Wilson St.; 992-2233; surveycafedowntown.com)

Tarpon Bay: The Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa offers a sumptuous champagne and jazz brunch 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Sundays. The buffet includes sushi, seafood, ceviche and pastries. Patrons also may choose from among entrees such as chicken and waffles, eggs Benedict, pumpkin waffles, sweet potato crepe, foie gras and toast points, shrimp and grits or buttermilk biscuits with alligator sausage gravy. (5001 Coconut Road; 390-4295; coconutpoint.regency.hyatt.com)

Cape Coral

Gather: Chefs Fabrice Delatrain and Benjamin Voisin bring their French backgrounds and international training to the menu at this new and sophisticated waterfront café. From 7 to 11 a.m. Tuesday through Sunday, enjoy smoked salmon and egg tartine, lobster cake Benedicts, Nutella and citrus waffles, burgers and more. (Tarpon Point, 5971 Silver King Blvd.; 666-7880; gathercape.com)

Omelet Shop: Long known as House of Omelets, it's under new management (the brother of the brunchmeister at Bonita Brunch), but it's still serving a host of omelets, biscuits and gravy, eggs Benedict and Southern waffles (topped with eggs and bacon) plus lunch fare. (900 SE Pine Island Road; 673-7545; houseofomelets.com)

Slate's: The Sunday jazz brunch, which runs 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., is popular and for good reason. This Cajun/Creole restaurant offers a wide range of entrees, including fried oyster, crab cake or boudin sausage Benedict, etouffee omelets, bananas Foster French toast, beignets, red beans and rice, Cajun gumbo, jambalaya, a full slate of cocktails and great jazz, along with a charming service staff. (4820 Candia St.; slatescapecoral.com; 540-6800)

Fort Myers

Artisan Eatery: From 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays, enjoy bottomless mimosas along with the chef's creations, such as truffled Benedict (poached eggs on a croissant with prosciutto and truffle hollandaise), house-made pastrami hash, house-made granola and Greek yogurt, breakfast burritos, lobster rolls, Cubans, burgers, cheesesteaks, salads, flatbreads and freshly baked pastries – do not skip dessert here. (8951 Daniels Parkway, Fort Myers; 887-4844; artisaneatery.com)

Bistro 41: This Bell Tower Shops institution serves brunch 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sundays, with items such as French onion soup, Asian calamari, steak and eggs, quiche, burgers, mahi tacos, and other hearty selections and a choice of dining indoors or out. (U.S. 41 and Daniels Parkway; 466-4141; bistro41.com)

Crave: On Sundays, the breakfast/brunch menu is served 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. (most days it's available until 4 p.m.) Omelets abound, along with shrimp and grits, biscuits and gravy, salmon hash, a variety of Benedicts, quiche, filet and eggs and other stick-to-your-ribs dishes. (12901 McGregor Blvd.; 466-4663; cravemenu.com).

The Standard: It's bottomless mimosas and bloody Marys 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays at this downtown establishment that offers a variety of breakfast and lunch items. (1520 Broadway; 219-6463; thestandardftmyers.com)

Fort Myers Beach

Bayfront Bistro: All weekend, from 11 a.m. to 2:30- p.m., this elegant waterfront bistro serves lobster bisque, avocado grilled cheese, huevos ranchero, chilaquiles, French toast filled with ham, Swiss cheese and ranch dressing, grouper sandwiches, salads, Oaxaca mahi tacos and more along with a full selection of cocktails, wine and beer. (4761 Estero Blvd., 466-3663; bayfrontbistro.com)

Jack's Farm to Fork: The premier dining spot at Pink Shell Beach Resort offers a daily buffet featuring waffles with assorted toppings, made-to-order omelets, fresh baked goods, steel-cut oatmeal, home-fried potatoes and a prime view of the Gulf of Mexico. (275 Estero Blvd.; 463-6181; pinkshell.com)

Sanibel/Captiva

Blue Coyote Supper Club: Surrounded by the phantasmagorical and anthropomorphic paintings and sculptures of artist Marcus Pierson – known for his coyote art, from which the bistro/bar draws its name – guests are lavished with hospitality and can dine on dishes such as eggs Benedict, PB&J French toast

and Dutch babies as well as a hearty bacon and egg bloody Marys or bottomless mimosas from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays. (1100 Par View Drive; 472-9222; bluecoyotesupperclub.com).

Il Cielo: Sunday brunch (11 a.m. to 2 p.m.) is taken seriously here with dishes such as fried green tomato Benedict, Belgian waffles, corned beef hash, house-cured lox and bagel, cast-iron bacon and cheddar frittata, jumbo lump crab cakes and shrimp and grits. (1244 Periwinkle Way; 472-5555; ilcielosanibel.com)

Thistle Lodge: Smoked salmon or crab cakes? Gumbo or lobster bisque? It's hard to decide how to begin brunch at the charming beach-front Thistle Lodge. Any of those choices are apt to be good ones and will be satisfactory warmups for entrees such as prime rib, Casa Ybel Sardou (poached eggs, artichoke bottoms, spinach, hollandaise and Holland rusk), Creole shrimp pappardelle, or the Thistle Benedict. Omelets, waffles and pancakes, cheese grits and, of course, adult beverages served, too. (Casa Ybel Resort, 2255 W. Gulf Dr.; 472-9200; casaybelresort.com)