



## GOLD STAR RESTAURANTS

It is a lovely idea to think that journalism is balanced and objective. The truth is that into every story goes a plethora of decision-making...a slant. So, for this restaurant list, we've abandoned any pretense of objectivity and listened to our friends, readers and included some of our own picks. ★ The list has been a year in the making so we've had lots of time to mull things over, and one of our decisions has been to focus primarily on eateries that are unique to Jacksonville and St. Augustine...because they're a part of what makes us different from other cities, they're a part of what gives us our soul. ★ Of course, it bears mentioning that this list isn't solely based on quality and good taste, but also on service, price, and atmosphere. A spot doesn't need to be fancy to be good—being nice and having good prices goes a long way too! That being said, there are enough things on this list to keep you busy well into spring. Enjoy! ★ Oh, and if you think we've overlooked a spot, shoot us an email—[arbus@arbus.com](mailto:arbus@arbus.com)—and we'll check it out... maybe even with you.



Bistro Aix  
Chef Tom Gray busy at work

Photos by Laird and Jensen Hande



The Onyx Lounge @ Bistro Aix  
Onyx combines Atlanta's sophistication and Miami's heat—and at night, it's a golden oasis.

### Bistro Aix

The perfect place to feel cosmopolitan after work, or glamorous late in the evening, Bistro Aix, under Executive Chef Tom Gray's steady hand, has risen to the top of Jacksonville's restaurant list, and there it stays...and we're not the only people who think so—in 2003, the restaurant received a DiRoNa award. Consistent without being stodgy, Aix reinvents itself a little each night: whether it's food, music, or wine, something's always a little different but the atmosphere is always the same—sexy and playful. 1440 San Marco Blvd., 398-1949.

### CHILL SPOTS

#### The Onyx Lounge @ Bistro Aix

With a lighted onyx bar and Phillip Starck's ghost chairs, Bistro Aix's new lounge looks like it stepped out of Hotlanta and into San Marco. More than just an expanded dining room, the lounge is a great place to people-watch and be watched while nibbling on one of Aix's signature appetizers. 1440 San Marco Blvd., 398-1949.

### OUTDOOR DINING

#### Bistro Aix

Though mostly known for its gracious interior, Aix has a tiny little patio area complete with heaters in the winter, and ivy year-round. Much more intimate than "Aix-proper" it's the perfect place to relax after work or share a late-night salmon pizza and champagne. 1440 San Marco Blvd., Jacksonville, 398-1949.

### MARTINIS

#### Bistro Aix

Bistro Aix might be the originator of the specialty martini in Jacksonville. With their signature Aixoise martini, which has olives stuffed with Spanish anchovies, blue cheeses or jalapenos. They expanded upon a trend that looks like it has returned for good. Though it has its detractors, the Aixoise martini, like Aix, isn't shy about making a statement. And for those with a taste for a slightly glossier experience, slide on over to the Onyx lounge at Bistro Aix. Onyx combines Atlanta's sophistication and Miami's heat—and at night, it's a golden oasis. 1440 San Marco Blvd., Jacksonville, 398-1949.