

# where

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**CALGARY**  
NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2013

ONE-STOP  
*gift guide*

**WINTER  
RECREATION**

**NEW ART  
SPACES**

**INDIE  
BOOKSTORES**

**DESIGNER  
EYEWEAR**

## Celebrating Scrooge

**THEATRE CALGARY'S  
A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

One of our Hot Dining editor's definitive Calgary dishes is doughnuts by Jelly Modern Doughnuts

## These are a Few of John's Favourite Things

**John Gilchrist  
on His Top 300  
Southern Alberta  
Restaurants**

By Rachael Frey



Where contributing editor, food critic and author John Gilchrist has explored Southern Alberta's dining scene for more than 30 years. His latest book, *My Favourite Restaurants: Calgary, Canmore and Beyond*, is an eighth-edition omnibus of the reviewer's word on nearly 300 regional eateries from bakeries and diners to bistros and tapas bars. The book's indexes function as a planner for birthdays, business meetings, romantic dinners and more.

### How many meals do you eat out per week?

At least one for my Friday CBC Radio review. I'm in many restaurants—probably 15 to 20 each week to talk to people, but not to eat.

### How does Calgary's dining scene compare to other Canadian cities?

Very favourably, but the key indicator is size. So, how do we compare with other North American cities of 1.2 million? We have great breadth of cuisine, great kitchen talent and a corporate clientele and a well-heeled, well-educated public to support it.

### What are Calgary's signature dishes?

Caesar cocktails, ginger beef, Jelly Modern Doughnuts (Page 45).

*My Favourite Restaurants* covers not just Calgary, but all of Southern Alberta. How do the region's rural restaurants stack up against the urban dining options? Canmore, Banff and Lake Louise are more global than

rural. There are also some very good places in the foothills and smaller centres like Okotoks and Cochrane.

**It seems like there are new restaurants popping up weekly. How do you keep the list workable?**  
Constant management. I'm fortunate that I started this over 30 years ago and have just kept up with the growth.

### What dining trends do you notice in Calgary now?

Beer halls, noise, braising off-cuts of meats, Brussels sprouts, fried chicken, cocktails, confit, French, contemporary, hyper-local, poutine, pickles, rotisserie meats, Sriracha, food trucks.

### How much weight do you give to non-food factors?

A lot. Each restaurant has their own story and each diner has their own experience. Food and service are key, but I may write a whole piece about a restaurant's bathrooms or parking lot or soundtrack.

### Your book reveals the best washrooms in Southern Alberta. What makes an outstanding washroom?

Cleanliness, character, cultural style, aroma, noise level. A fireplace is nice, too.

### What's the biggest misconception about your job?

That it's easy—it's not. It's great fun, but you have to know a lot about food, and you spend too much time at the computer. And you have to be considerate about critiquing someone's livelihood.

### What is the real "best kept secret" in Calgary?

That we're more, much more, than the tourist myth of a steakhouse city.

*My Favourite Restaurants: Calgary, Canmore and Beyond* is available at most Calgary bookstores.

## THINGS WE LOVE ABOUT CALGARY

### MUSICAL HISTORY

The National Music Centre curates a living collection of rare and unique instruments. See them up close and even play some of them on a guided public tour that includes exhibits on historical developments such as the invention of the theremin (Page 28).

### OVAL ICE SKATE

Ice skate like a gold medalist at the Olympic Oval, which boasts the smoothest, fastest ice in the world. Over 250 world records have been set on its 400-metre oval ice track, which is also open for public skating. Rental skates and gear are available (Page 56).

### COOKING CLASSES

Go to a sushi bar, and you'll make it yourself and you can get rolling anytime. Cookbook Co. Cooks offers fun, hands-on, one-time classes on sushi preparation as well as perogy making and gluten-free cookery. Couples classes (Page 35).

### EYES ON THE SKIES

Though many birds fly south for the winter, plenty of hardy species tough it out in Calgary, making for great bird-watching. On Dec 7, the City of Calgary holds its two-hour Winter Bird Count class for novice and experienced bird watchers. Learn how to complete an official bird count ([www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca)).