

# Wondering what to make for the holidays?

## Make Reservations...

MONA DE CRINIS



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During the holidays, things are hectic enough without having to think about what to make for Thanksgiving dinner or other family gatherings. And if you're visiting the desert or find yourself culinary-challenged this season, it's comforting to know that the Coachella Valley teems with great restaurants for those who don't feel like cooking. For full menus and pricing, call or visit the restaurant's websites.

Holiday dining at Spencer's Restaurant (1-760-327-3446; [www.spencersrestaurant.com](http://www.spencersrestaurant.com)) offers several options: A grassy bluff overlooking Palm Springs that is well suited for ceremonies and receptions for up to 200 guests; the elegant Bougainvillea Room that accommodates up to 250 guests and features a romantic fireplace; or one of Spencer's private patios. Whichever you choose, Spencer's offers an unsurpassed setting for events — holiday or otherwise. But make your reservations early; it fills up fast.

If you want to stay at home, Spencer's also provides excellent catering services. Large-party dinner plates include a choice of three-course or four-course meals, enhanced and deluxe, including entrées such as grilled Norwegian salmon coated with Chinese mustard, black Angus filet of beef with green peppercorn sauce, and Dijon-coated New Zealand rack of lamb au jus, plus all the trimmings and amazing desserts. (Can you say "lemon Chantilly mousse cake?") You can also order a dinner buffet for a minimum of 40 guests, with or without a carving station, including a choice of four or five appetizers, three entries and accompaniments, and Spencer's famous pastry table.

Trio Restaurant (1-760-864-8746; [www.triopalmssprings.com](http://www.triopalmssprings.com)) anchors Palm Springs' trendy Uptown Design District and has been busy from day one. For the holidays, Trio offers Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve seatings. For Thanksgiving, enjoy a traditional turkey dinner, including roasted brussels sprouts, candied yams, and homemade cranberry relish. On Christmas Day, the restaurant features its regular menu, plus a nightly special, and on New Year's Eve three dinner seatings beginning at 5:30 p.m., with a balloon drop at midnight. "Sit back and relax," invites co-owner Tony Marchese. "Let us do all the work so you can enjoy your friends and family during the holidays."

Copley's on Palm Canyon (1-760-327-9555; [www.copleypalmssprings.com](http://www.copleypalmssprings.com)) also encourages you to make the most of your Thanksgiving meal by letting someone else do the cooking — someone like Chef Andrew Copley. This romantic setting is perfect for celebrations. This year's special prix fixe Thanksgiving Day menu features roasted butternut squash soup or one of Copley's famous salads, followed by your choice of oven-roasted free-range turkey, grilled pork chop, five-herb crusted Scottish salmon, or 12-ounce prime rib New York steak.

Enjoy elegant holiday dining at Wally's Desert Turtle (1-760-568-9321; [www.wallys-desert-turtle.com](http://www.wallys-desert-turtle.com)) in Rancho Mirage. On Thanksgiving, Wally's offers a four-course menu with traditional turkey. Substitute the bird for roasted maple leaf duck breast, pan-broiled whitefish, roasted pork tenderloin, or sliced tenderloin of beef. "I think we have the perfect holiday meal, with salmon appetizer, lettuce salad, turkey with all the trimmings and the scrumptious cheesecake," says Office Manager Andrea Matcham. Don't forget to try Wally's signature soufflés in six flavors.

Several valley restaurants have become family traditions over the years, among them Lyons English Grille and Lord Fletcher's. Lyons English Grille (1-760-327-1551; [www.lyonsenglishgrille.com](http://www.lyonsenglishgrille.com)) offers Thanksgiving and Christmas Day seating featuring hearty meals that favor large servings of quality meats, such as filet mignon, braised lamb shank, and the King Henry cut. Lyons also offers turkey with all the fixings, of course. If a traditional meal in a 19th century London inn setting appeals to you, reserve your table today, as Lyons attracts large, loyal parties who have made the restaurant their holiday home away from home for years.

A fixture in the desert for more than three decades, Lord Fletcher's (1-760-328-1161; [www.lordfletcher.com](http://www.lordfletcher.com)) also specializes in English fare. Located on Highway 111 on Rancho Mirage's Restaurant Row, Lord Fletcher's is best known for prime rib and rack of lamb. Those with "sweete toothes" should try the English rice pudding, made fresh daily and served with raspberries or cinnamon and whipped cream, or Lord Fletcher's signature Royal Brandy Ice — a decadent after-dinner ice cream drink. An evening at Lord Fletcher's is as much a history lesson as a great dining experience, offering a fascinating collection of authentic English art, antiques, etchings, and bric-a-brac — all hand-selected and shipped from England by the restaurant's founder, Ron Fletcher. If you're craving a full evening of dining in rich tradition, this is a great place, over the holidays or any time of the year. Reservations are a must.

Resorts get into the holiday spirit as well. Lake View Restaurant at JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa (1-760-341-2211; [www.desertspringsresort.com](http://www.desertspringsresort.com)) in Palm Desert offers a substantial Thanksgiving Day brunch featuring waffle, omelet, and soup stations; a vast selection of pastas and sauces; salads; breakfast meats; and fruit and cheese displays. If

you're hungry for daytime delights, this is the place to be.

La Quinta Resort & Club (1-760-777-4835; [www.laquintaresort.com](http://www.laquintaresort.com)) offers several options for holiday dining. Thanksgiving Day weekend presents a grand buffet with delicious selections "from the land" and "from the sea," a "sweet table," and more.

At Morgan's in the desert, Chef Jimmy Schmidt prepares a four-course prix-fixe Thanksgiving menu, from 4 to 9 p.m. Thanksgiving Day, featuring culinary delights that include maple-cured turkey breast and roasted pumpkin tarts. The resort's modern bistro Twenty6 also offers a Thanksgiving Day menu, from 5 to 8:30 p.m., featuring classic American fare with a twist: a turkey "TV dinner" with a confit of turkey leg stuffing, braised short rib pot roast, or sole meuniere, with a pumpkin roll and vanilla bean ice cream. The regular menu will also be available. For those seeking chef tips to prepare the bird and fixings at home, La Quinta Resort & Club offers three pre-holiday interactive cooking demos, each with a separate focus, such as preparing winter salads and root vegetables, soups and hot chocolate, and, of course, how to cook restaurant-quality turkey. Resort chefs conduct the demos Nov. 6, 13, and 20, from 3 to 4 p.m. at the resort's Main Kitchen. Limited to 25 people per session, make reservations early at 1-760-564-7259.

Holiday dining specials and options abound at local casinos, such as Spa Resort Casino (1-888-999-1995; [www.sparesortcasino.com](http://www.sparesortcasino.com)) and Agua Caliente Casino • Resort • Spa (1-888-999-1995; [www.hotwatercasino.com](http://www.hotwatercasino.com)). Spa Resort Casino's Oasis Buffet offers an all-day Thanksgiving Day feast beginning at 11 a.m. It's a culinary cornucopia featuring assorted holiday salads, including Asian soba noodle salad, spicy mussels, and Ambrosia salad, among others. A cold seafood display offers up shrimp and king crab legs.

Stations include Pan Pacific (honey duck, Asian seafood, beef Mussaman); roasted and carved (baked ham with citrus glaze, standing rib roast); holiday soups; Thanksgiving favorites (roasted tom turkeys with traditional cornbread stuffing, rotisserie chicken, etc.); Latin (enchiladas, pozole, and more), and desserts (multiple pies, cherries jubilee with crepes, cranberry orange bread pudding, etc.).

Now that we've sufficiently whetted your appetite for the season, check with your favorite restaurant to see what holiday specials they offer. And don't forget to make reservations!