



Spaghetti
Fisherman
at Frenchie's

Top 10 Houston Spaghetti List

IF YOU LOVE SPAGHETTI AND HAVE never been to the **Sacred Heart Society's Thursday Spaghetti Lunch** (Sacred Heart Society Hall, 816 E. Whitney Street, 713-692-0198), you must go next Thursday. For under ten bucks, you get a salad, rolls, and all the pasta you can eat. The spaghetti with pig's foot sugo, meatballs and/or homemade sausage optional, is a trip back to the Sicilian-Texan cuisine of 60 years ago. And you get to see the old guard of Houston's Italian community all in one place.

If it isn't Thursday, get your Sicilian-style spaghetti and meatballs at **Mandola's Deli** (4105 Leeland St., 713-223-5186), the wonderfully eccentric East End quasi-cafeteria where you can get anything from pasta to po' boys. **Patrenella's** (813 Jackson Hill St., 713-863-8223) is a restaurant in an old Italian family home complete with herb gardens and a bocce court. The spaghetti with fennel-scented Italian sausage is a standout.

Giacomo's Cibo e Vino (3215 Westheimer, 713-522-1934), the casual wine bar and eatery on Westheimer just west of Kirby, serves the best spaghetti carbonara in town. And if you're after spaghetti Bolognese, don't miss the definitive version at **Damian's** (3011 Smith Street, 713-522-0439)—although there are 14 other pasta choices on the menu at this elegant Midtown trattoria, if you feel like experimenting.

Antica Osteria (2311 Bissonnet, 713-521-1155) serves a stunning spaghetti *aglio olio* topped with shrimp, along with a good Bolognese and a passable *puttanesca*, in an old-fashioned dining room with lots of Frank Sinatra tunes on the sound system.

If you can stand to skip the fabulous pizzas at **Dolce Vita** (500 Westheimer, 713-520-8222), you'll find the spaghetti with clams and *cecì* (garbanzo beans) is sensational—try it with an escarole and pecorino salad on the side. If you're not a fan of beans, you may prefer the spaghetti with clams and baby Roma tomatoes at **Da Marco** (1520 Westheimer, 713-807-8857)—and you can get that bowl of spaghetti as part of the \$29 three-course business lunch.

Once you're done gawking at the NASA photos and memorabilia on the walls of **Frenchie's Italian Restaurant** (1041 NASA Parkway, Clear Lake, 281-486-7144), say hello to the affable owner, Frenchie himself, who came to Houston from the Island of Capri. Both his spaghetti with clams and his spaghetti with olive oil, garlic, and mushrooms are good bets. But the main attraction is the dinner menu's \$27 Spaghetti Fisherman, a big bowl filled with spaghetti in red sauce topped with mussels, clams, scallops, fish, and shrimp—the enormous serving will easily feed two.

And finally, the leek ash spaghetti carbonara at **Provisions** (807 Taft, 713-628-9020) is a clever play on the dish's Italian name, which means "spaghetti of the coal miner's wife." To make the strange gray pasta, flour is seasoned with the ash of carbonized leeks before being moistened and formed into long strands. The half-boiled egg on top is rolled in fine black pepper, which makes it look like it's been coated in coal dust, while giving the dish a very spicy bite.

The cutting-edge pasta at Provisions is the latest mutation in the evolution of Houston spaghetti—a process that began over a hundred years ago. —R.W. 