

LOS ANGELES

LA GUIDES

3

Five Fantastic Veal Parmesan Dishes to Try in Los Angeles

The Italian-American classic is one of the best comfort dishes of all time

by [Alejandro Benes](#) | Jan 31, 2019, 2:15pm PST



Rao's [Official photo]

First of all, veal parmigiana, or veal parmesan, is among the best comfort foods ever. Second, it was not created in Italy. Well, it kind of was. Eggplant parmigiana, lightly breaded with a smattering of cheese in a light tomato sauce, is a staple in southern Italy and is the ancestor of the veal and chicken parms Americans know and love today. When Italians migrated to the United States in large enough numbers, about four million between 1880 and 1924, they created “Little Italy” neighborhoods in several cities. Half of the migration took place between 1900 and 1910 and most of those immigrants were escaping grinding rural poverty in Southern Italy and Sicily.

Meat was costly in Italy. In the U.S., veal was inexpensive and a good source of protein. Cheese, a bit player in the eggplant version, became a co-star in America because it too was affordable.

So, Italian-American food became a thing and veal parm was at the center of menus.

California, according to 2010 US Census Bureau, is home to 1,496,669 Italian-Americans, or about four percent of the nation's total. About 300,000 Italian-Americans reside in Los Angeles County. LA, however, does not have a Little Italy neighborhood anymore, though a small one existed in the 1890s on the northeast side of Downtown. There is, nonetheless, a lot of veal parmigiana in and around LA. These are the essential five veal parmigiana plates to try in Los Angeles.

Dan Tana's



Veal parmigiana and other dishes at Dan Tana's | [Hillary Dixler Canavan](#)

Dan Tana's opened in 1964 and became a true destination in the 1970s when artists like Elton John, Van Morrison and Cat Stevens, playing at the Troubadour, just two doors west, would go in after their shows looking for a restaurant that was open late. Back then, the servers wore tuxedos and the bartender wore a red jacket. Today, the servers still wear tuxedos and the bartenders wear red jackets. For all the formality, Dan Tana's is a cozy, red-checkered tablecloth, red-booths, red sauce Italian-American restaurant that happens to be in LA. But it could also be in Secaucus, New Jersey, though Meg Ryan probably wouldn't be eating there.

The veal parmigiana here, like all the entrees, comes with a side of pasta. It's called the "Jerry Weintraub" after the late, legendary producer and talent agent, and costs \$35. The veal is pounded thin and the breading turns a bit soft from the heaps of somewhat chunky tomato sauce on top. There's a mountain of nicely melted mozzarella, so be sure to share it.

Dan Tana's, 9071 Santa Monica Blvd, West Hollywood, CA 90069. 310) 275-9444.

<http://www.dantanasrestaurant.com>

The Arthur J



Veal parmigiana at The Arthur J | [Matthew Kang](#)

The bone-in veal chop here is in the capable hands of chef David LeFevre's kitchen at his Manhattan Beach steakhouse, The Arthur J. "The veal parmigiana is a dish that screams neighborhood steakhouse and has an old school, nostalgic feel," LeFevre explains.

A big upside to this bone-in veal chop parm is that the very balanced tomato sauce is under the breaded meat. "We also keep the meat on the thicker side," says LeFevre, "not pounded super thin, because it lets us get the dish crispy, but still keep it moist with a substantial meaty portion."

The mozzarella, which could have been increased by a third, is melted on top. The veal chop is prepared only slightly pounded and is supremely tender and juicy. Fried basil leaves accent the dish. The downside is that this is served only on Wednesday evenings for \$30 a plate.

The Arthur J, 903 Manhattan Ave, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266. (310) 878-9620.

<http://www.thearthurj.com>

Matteo's



Veal parm and pasta at Matteo's | Alejandro Benes

Matteo's is an old school LA restaurant, opened in 1963, with roots in Hoboken, New Jersey. The founder, Matty Jordan (Matteo Giordano at birth) lived across the street from Frank Sinatra back in the old neighborhood. The story is that Jordan was delivered by Sinatra's mother, a midwife. So, it's no surprise that Matteo's became Frank Sinatra's favorite restaurant. Sinatra's picture sits in the glass case at the front. Is that reason enough to try the veal parm? Yep. Sit at an old-school red booth and order a little vino. There might be some Hollywood stars, some of whose pictures are next to Sinatra's, at the next table.

The veal parmigiana is a classic preparation with thin, pan-fried veal cutlets under some of the tastiest tomato sauce in LA. "It's the same recipe from the beginning," says William Aragon, Matteo's floor manager. "We don't do much at all to the tomatoes. You really get the taste of them."

A slight acidity comes through, a welcome counter to the richness of the prodigious amount of melted mozzarella that tops the dish. "It's one of our most popular items," Aragon adds. The veal parm comes with vegetables, but ask for perfectly cooked pasta on the side, they'll do that. All for \$29. *Fuhgedaboutit.*

Matteo's, 2321 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90064. (310) 475-4521.

<https://www.matteosla.com>

Rao's Hollywood



Veal parmigiana at Rao's Hollywood | Rao's [Official photo]

The 16-ounce bone-in veal chop parmigiana at the LA outpost of New York City's famous Rao's (pronounced RAY-ohs) is big. Hang over the plate and \$50 big.

"It's the size of a medium pizza," explains Patrick Hickey, the general manager at Rao's. "It's number one or two with our lemon chicken. It's one of those dishes that three people share very comfortably. Most people order a lot of different dishes and share everything."

The Hollywood location looks pretty much the same as the one back east, with photos of many of the same celebrities hanging on the walls. This is perhaps the quintessential hybrid — a red-sauce restaurant with white tablecloths.

This veal, the best money can buy according to Hickey, is pounded thin and breaded, then topped with a San Marzano tomato sauce that is covered in melted mozzarella and shaved Grana Padano cheese (a cousin of Parmigiano-Reggiano) with little brown spots where the cheese toasted. Micro basil is sprinkled on top. The flavors all blend into a recognizable, warm, saucy experience. "It's the most comforting of comfort dishes," Hickey says.

Rao's, 1006 Seward St, Los Angeles, CA 90038. (323) 962-7267.

http://raosrestaurants.com/location_la.html

Vito Restaurant



Veal parmigiana and pasta at Vito Restaurant in Santa Monica | Alejandro Benes

At this Santa Monica white tablecloth Italian restaurant, first opened in 1980, diners might think they've walked into a formal European restaurant. Attentive servers prepare Caesar salads tableside. Paintings with nature scenes hang on the wall (some are a little crooked), with frames painted gold. The booths are tan leatherette and comfortable.

At Vito, the veal parmigiana is as thin as it gets. One hungry person can eat it alone, with a side of tomato-sauced pasta or vegetables, as a main course. The pasta also comes with an *aglio e oglio* (garlic and olive oil) sauce as an option.

"The important thing is to use the best ingredients," says Roberto Somma, owner and manager. "If you do that, everything is good." Somma says the tomato sauce is made with San Marzano tomatoes, from the south of Italy, and with tomatoes from the north, depending on their flavor and season. He adds that the quality of the mozzarella is key.

"The chef can buy any kind he wants. I saw the price and it's expensive," Somma adds. The result is a creamy, melted cheese on top of supremely tender milk-fed veal. This interpretation of veal parmigiana has a breading that is reminiscent of *schnitzel*. The crust is light and does not stick to, but envelops the meat. The flavor of the veal peaks through even though it's amply covered. At dinner, it's \$29.95 and just \$24.95 at lunch. Just don't fill up on bread.

Vito Restaurant, 2807 Ocean Park Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90405. (310) 450-4999.

<http://vitorestaurant.com/>

- [22 Old-School Red Sauce Italian-American Restaurants in LA](#) [ELA]

E

Eater LA

Sign up for our newsletter.

SUBSCRIBE

By signing up, you agree to our [Privacy Policy](#) and European users agree to the data transfer policy.