



REFECTORY RESTAURANT

Stained glass and a vaulted beam ceiling in The Refectory in Columbus, Ohio, are reminders of the building's former life as a church.

REPURPOSED RESTAURANTS

Spice up your meal by dining in these unique spaces across the Midwest

BY KATHERINE RODEGHIER | Chicago Tribune

It goes without saying that when you dine out you want fine food. But if you want a dash of atmosphere to liven up the experience, choose a restaurant in a building that once served another purpose.

Maybe you'll be ordering a burger in what was a jail cell, sipping a beer in a former funeral parlor or studying the menu in an old schoolhouse. Repurposed buildings noted for their architecture or colorful past can add an element of fun to a meal.

Here are a few examples to whet your appetite in the Midwest.

Boone Co. Jail Restaurant & Bar

104 W. Washington St., Lebanon, Ind.

Take a seat in an old jail cell, complete with metal bars and graffiti on the walls, and contemplate what it must have been like to be incarcerated in the Boone County Jail. Built in 1938 across the street from the courthouse, it ceased locking up prisoners in 1992 and opened under its former name, Cell Block 104 Restaurant and Bar, in 2016. A craft distillery being installed in the basement soon will be turning out vodka and gin. For now, you can order Hoosier Vodka and choose from menu items such as the jailhouse burger and Indiana's signature dish, a pork tenderloin sandwich. Stroll past rows of cells on the second floor, and pose for a mug shot in the solitary confinement room; 765-481-2682, boonecojailrestaurant.com.

Webster House

1644 Wyandotte St., Kansas City, Mo.

Book a table in this 19th-century schoolhouse to learn why it earns high marks for its farm-to-table fare. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the red-brick Romanesque structure sits next to Kansas City's modern Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, making it an ideal spot for dining before or after a performance. Chef Brandon Winn uses ingredients from local producers to create menus that change seasonally. Recent lunch offerings included a shrimp toast starter and Skuna Bay salmon, while dinner featured duck breast and a dry-aged rib-eye. Sunday brunch diners get a new take on an old-school favorite with the Webster House Steak Benedict. Allow plenty of time to browse the Webster House shop selling European antiques, clothing, jewelry, personal accessories and gift items; 816-800-8820, websterhousekc.com.

The Refectory

1092 Bethel Road, Columbus, Ohio

This former 19th-century church and schoolhouse has been feeding foodie souls in Ohio's capital for more than 40 years. It specializes in contemporary American and classic French cuisine under the toque of chef Richard Blondin, a native of Lyon, France, who honed his skills under the tutelage of chefs Paul Bocuse and Pierre Orsi. Choose from two dining styles: a fixed-price, three-course meal in the Bistro housed in the lounge that once served as a schoolhouse, or a more formal a la carte dinner in the former church with a vaulted beam ceiling, stained glass windows and a loft that serves as a music venue. Hors d'oeuvres might include Russian caviar with potato blinis, quail or escargot terrine, and entrees might feature Texas antelope and filet mignon. An impressive wine list catalogs a virtual bible of vintages tucked into a 700-bottle wine cellar; 614-451-9774, refectory.com.

Brewery Vivant

925 Cherry St., Grand Rapids, Mich.

The word "vivant," French for "alive," seems an ironic name for a pub and brewery housed in what once was the largest funeral home in Grand Rapids. The craft brewery specializing in Belgian- and French-style beers occupies a building used as the livery for the funeral home's team of white horses, and the pub sits in the former chapel with original wood beams and light fixtures. The inventive menu, created with beer pairings in mind, includes starters such as escargot, beer cheese, duck confit nachos and roasted bone marrow, as well as pub fare such as poutine and steak and frites. Ask what goes best with the brewery's Undertaker Belgian-style dark ale or another of its beers; 616-719-1604, breweryvivant.com.



KATY BATDORF PHOTO

Brewery Vivant, in a former funeral home in Grand Rapids, Mich., pairs food with beers brewed on-site.

Village at Grand Traverse Commons

830 Cottageview Drive, Traverse City, Mich.

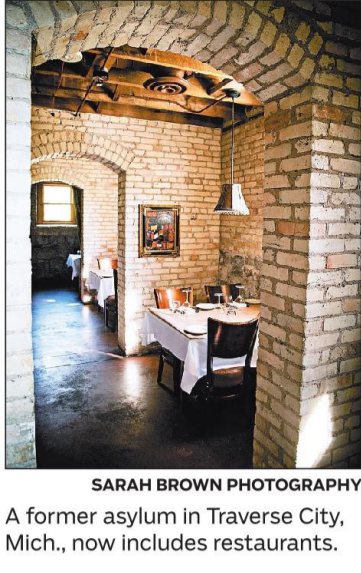
The Victorian-Italianate building once housed a state-run asylum, but a massive redevelopment project transformed it into a mind-boggling complex of offices, condos, shops and food outlets. Two fine-dining spots stand out. At Trattoria Stella, James Beard Award nominee chef Myles Anton works with more than 45 local farms to create seasonal dishes with a Mediterranean flair, like a roasted beef bone marrow with grilled focaccia antipasti and chicken saltimbocca; 231-929-8989, offthemaphospitality.com/trattoria-stella. PepeNero

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KATHERINE RODEGHIER/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

A corridor in the old Boone County Jail in Lebanon, Ind., opens onto individual cells where diners are seated.



SARAH BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY

A former asylum in Traverse City, Mich., now includes restaurants.

Old spaces

revived as

restaurants

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occupies the first floor of the old hospital's chapel, where it turns out from-scratch Italian and Sicilian cuisine that might include a secondi of grass-fed Black Angus beef; 231-929-1960, pepenertc.com/pepenero.html.

And a few more:

Charlie Parker's Diner: Lunch and an all-day breakfast, including the city's signature horseshoe open-face sandwich, in a World War II-era Quonset hut; 700 North St., Springfield, Ill., 217-241-2104, charlieparkersdiner.net.

Ladora Bank Bistro: Shared-plate meals in a bank building on the National Register of Historic Places; 811 Pacific St., Ladora, Iowa, 319-623-7766, ladorabank.com.

The Apparatus Room: New American cuisine of chef Thomas Lents, who earned two Michelin stars while at Sixteen in Chicago, is served in the apparatus room of a former firehouse; 250 W. Larned St., Detroit, 313-915-4422, detroitfoundationhotel.com/apparatus-room.

The Old Feed Mill: Occupies a former flouring mill and serves bread made with organic flour ground daily; 114 Cramer St., Mazomanie, Wis., 608-795-4909, oldfeedmill.com.

Hai Hai: Southeast Asian street food restaurant and bar in what was the Deuce Deuce dive bar and strip club; 2121 University Ave. NE, Minneapolis, 612-223-8640, haihaimpls.com.

Flatted Fifth Blues & BBQ: Southern cookin' and barbecue with jazz and blues in a 170-year-old gristmill; 300 Potter Drive, Bellevue, Iowa, 563-872-3838, pottersmill.net/flattedfifth.

Gold Cash Gold: Part of Motor City's culinary rebirth, noted for Southern fried chicken served in a former pawn shop in gentrifying Corktown neighborhood; 2100 Michigan Ave., Detroit, 313-242-0770, goldcashgolddetroit.com.

J. Smugs GastroPit: Barbecue in a former filling station; 2130 Macklind Ave., St. Louis, 314-499-7488, jsmugsgastropit.com.

Livery: Casual dining in an 1890s building that once housed stables; 720 N. College Ave., Indianapolis, 317-383-0330, livery-restaurant.com.

The Blue Duck Barbecue Tavern: Food made from scratch or smoked daily served in the old Rock Island Depot in the River-Front District; 212 Southwest Water St., Suite B, Peoria, 309-981-5801, blueduckbarbecue.com.

Marble Room Steak and Raw Bar: The Garfield Building, named for U.S. President James A. Garfield, housed a bank before it became this steakhouse featuring a wine "cellar" in a loft above the bar, grand marble staircase and massive basement vault used for private events; 623 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, 216-523-7000, marbleroomcle.com.

The General Store Pub: Depicted in Grant Wood's first major landscape, "Stone City, Iowa," this 1897 general store is now a restaurant serving burgers, pizza and other pub fare; 12612 Stone City Road, Anamosa, Iowa, 319-462-4399, generalstorepub.com.

Katherine Rodeghier is a freelance writer.