

Take me out – for a meal – before or after the ballgame

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Well, of course you'll have a hot dog at the ball game. And maybe a beer shake, some popcorn and peanuts, too. But those are just the mandatory snacks one consumes at a spring training game. But chances are, you'll want to combine an afternoon or evening at the ball park with a meal at a restaurant.

Fortunately, there are lots of options along the Daniels Parkway corridor that lead to both JetBlue Stadium, where the Boston Red Sox play, and CenturyLink Sports Complex, home to the Minnesota Twins. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time to get to the game if you eat beforehand.

The choices commence even before you hit Daniels Parkway. On the outparcels of Bell Tower Shops, there's Cantina Laredo (5200 Big Pine Way, 239-415-4424, cantinolaredo.com), which serves stylish, well-executed Mexican fare, including tableside guacamole, ceviche, fajitas, carne asada, shrimp, steaks and excellent margaritas, among other adult beverages.

For a more intimate experience, try Mad Fresh (12995 S. Cleveland Ave., 239-362-2363, madfreshbistro.com), right behind Outback Steakhouse, where Chef Ruth Cohen serves intriguing small and large plates, many of which include her house-fermented fruits and veggies. Other interesting options include radish baguette, roasted veggie salad, mussels mariniere, duck confit, baked fresh fish, tartines, burgers and pizzas. Beer and wine served.

Within the shopping center, Blue Pointe Oyster Bar & Seafood Grill (13499 S. Cleveland Ave., 433-0634, bluepointerrestaurant.com) has a raw bar with a variety of fresh shellfish plus sushi, cooked fish from a number of locales around the world, burgers, sandwiches, soups and salads and a full bar.

Grimaldi's Pizzeria (13499 S. Cleveland Ave., 239-432-9767, grimaldispizzeria.com), specializes in coal-fired brick-oven pizza with a dizzying array of toppings piled upon dough made fresh daily in-house. Add a watermelon rocket salad, caprese or Caesar salad and adult beverages for a satisfying meal.

Cru (13499 S. Cleveland Ave., 239-466-3663, eatcru.com) has long been the cool kid on the block. Creative American fare and a stylish design in both the bar and dining room, as well as ample outdoor dining and drinking space, make this a popular spot. There's tapas and more substantive dishes, such as steak frites, wild game burger, duck breast, scallops, salads, sandwiches and frittatas plus a wide range of adult beverages.

Bistro 41 (13499 S. Cleveland Ave., Fort Myers, 239-466-4141, bistro41.com) serves lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch. The 41 Flat is a signature platter of olives, fruit, salami and cheeses that's great for sharing. For something more substantial, there are salads, paella, meatloaf, scallops, fish, beef and pasta, plus lighter lunch fare, including sandwiches and burgers. Full bar.

Da Ru Ma Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Lounge (13499 S. Cleveland Ave., 239-344-0037, darumarestaurant.com) has something for everyone – sushi, cooked Japanese dishes and the teppan menu, where chefs prepare the food in front of you on super-hot surfaces at your table.

Society (13499 Bell Tower Drive, 239-236-5528, societyfortmyers.com) is the center's newcomer with a variety of dining possibilities from the patio on the ground floor and the downstairs dining room to the rooftop dining area. Menus vary according to where you sit but there are small plates, burgers, and full plates available as well as a host of beverages. This place tends to get more lively the later it gets.

Fancy's Southern Café, 8890 Salrose Lane, (239) 561-2099, fancysoutherncafe.com. If chicken and waffles, fried cheese grits, meatloaf sandwiches and country fried steak sound appealing, this is the place. It's Southern food with a touch of elegance.

La Grotta (9520 Marketplace Road, 332-5500, lagrottaitalian.com) offers a wealth of classic Italian fare – lobster ravioli, fettucine Bolognese, butternut squash ravioli, eggplant parm, pizza, seafood, calzones, Stromboli, wings and more.

The Saucy Meatball (12401 Commerce Lakes Drive, 239-800-7172, saucymeatball.com) Long-time local restaurateur Sal Basile's latest restaurant offers casual quick-serve food in the front and more leisurely dining in the back of this great new spot just inside the Gateway development off Daniels Parkway. Veal scaloppini, mussels fra diavolo, Mama's meatballs, antipasto and other classic Italian fare is available at moderate prices.

Origami Korean Japanese Restaurant (8911 Daniels Parkway, 239-482-2126, sushiorigami.com) Whether it's sushi, cooked Japanese fare or a taste of Korea in the form of bulgogi or bibimbap and kimchee you have a hankering for, this is the place.

Artisan Eatery (8951 Daniels Parkway, 239-887-4844, artisaneatery.com) The name may sound like an oxymoron, but it's a casual place with serious breakfast, lunch and dinner made from scratch. Chef Timothy Yoa is a graduate of the Culinary School at the Art Institute of Philadelphia with years of experience and it shows. Try his made-from-scratch pastrami (and pastrami hash), Belgian waffles, cheese steaks, Cuban sandwich, lobster roll, blackberry bread pudding and daily large-plate specials.

Fat Katz Sports Café (10080 Daniels Interstate Court, 239-768-3541, fatkatzsportsbistro.com) is a sports bar but it's so much more. Try the stuffed grape leaves, homemade pierogis, hummus and tapenade, burgers, flatbreads, salads and shrimp along with adult beverages.

Thai Star (6611 Orion Drive, 239-208-4057, thaistarfortmyers.com) is a cozy little place where the welcome is warm and the food is fresh and authentic. Small plates abound – satay, spring rolls and such – and there are well-executed Thai entrees as well, such as pad Thai, curries, basil duck and panang fish.

Rock n' Sushi Asia Bistro (11940 Fairway Lakes Drive, 239-561-6566, rocknsushigateway.com) is tucked into the Gateway community just off Daniels Parkway. Rock n' Sushi serves sushi, Thai and Japanese cuisine. The menu is extensive, as is the wine, beer and sake list.

Lee Roy Selmon's (5056 Daniels Parkway, 239-690-3287, leeroysemons.com) is named for the late, great NFL Hall of Famer who loved Southern comfort food. That's what you'll find here – fried green tomatoes, brisket, blackened redfish as well as burgers, wings and such – plus all the trappings of a sports bar.

Trattoria Mia (6631 Orion Drive, 239-208-7300, trattoriamia.comcastbiz.net) prides itself on offering traditional Italian classics like arancini, bruschetta, pasta e fagioli, pastas, Marsalas, Parmigianas and other favorites.

Two Meatballs in the Kitchen (8890 Sal Rose Lane, 239-489-1111, 2meatballs.com) refers to the owner's son and son-in-law, who were the original occupants of the kitchen in this popular Italian joint that's open for lunch and dinner, serving all the usual suspects – pizza, calzones, subs, stromboli, chicken, seafood, pastas, even gluten-free fare and a full bar.

Stevie Tomato's Sports Page (9510 Marketplace Road, 239-939-7211, stvietomato.com) is exactly what the name implies: a sports bar, serving nachos, fries, meatballs, salads, gyros, reubens, barbecued pulled pork, burgers, a selection of fish, pizza and beer, beer, beer plus cocktails.

Fine Folk Pizza (113300 Lindbergh Blvd., 239-313-5155, finefolkpizza.com) not only can you feast upon the unusual pizzas served here but chances are you'll learn a bit about the art of making a pizza when the pizza acrobats show up at your table for a demonstration. There are lots of interesting combinations to experience here, from the classic to the ultra-creative, including veggie options.