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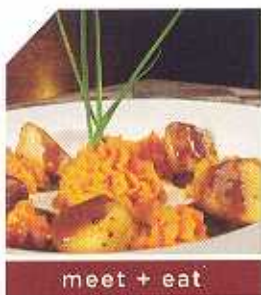
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Above: A beautiful and tasty dish by Sonterra. Right: Nosh has a private dining space that can hold up to 45.

COLORADO SPRINGS—PRIVATE DINING GALORE

DOWNTOWN, HISTORIC, GLAMOROUS AND DOWN-HOME EATERIES WILL HAVE YOUR GROUP ASKING FOR AN ENCORE. **BY LINDA DUVAL**



SOMETIMES, MEETING-GOERS NEED TO BREAK OUT, leave the host hotel, explore the town, dine at a different venue and try the local cuisine. ¶ In some towns, groups both small and large may have a tough time finding a good restaurant for an off-site gathering that includes a good meal, but that's not a problem in Colorado Springs.

"Colorado Springs has an extraordinary variety and number of unique, private dining rooms available at local restaurants," says Steve Kanatzar, president of the Pikes Peak Chapter of the Colorado Restaurant Association and owner of The Airplane Restaurant, which will rent the entire space—an actual airplane—for groups of 250.

At Marigold Café and Bakery, with some of the best food in town, there's a room with a view of the Rampart Range that seats up to 35. Dinner guests want to be sure to consider the lamb and the sumptuous scalloped potatoes. And do not skip dessert!

Similar views and a seasonal menu (changing daily) lure diners to The Margarita at Pinecreek, offer-

ing upscale fare that sometimes has a Southwestern twist. Two private spaces are available, both accommodating 50 people. In summer, the patio areas hold 150 for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.

"Sometimes, convention-goers just want to get off-site, and this certainly is," says Owner Pati Burleson, referring to the restaurant's secluded location.

THE DOWNTOWN SCENE

Many downtown restaurants have private dining for groups, including McKenzie's Chop House, where you can order fine steaks and other American fare. There are two small dining rooms (holding 15 and 20) and one accommodating 60.

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For the addresses and phone numbers of these establishments and more, go to www.restauranteur.com/co/cs/alpha.htm.



The spacious third floor of Phantom Canyon Brewing Co. offers a historic venue for informal gatherings. They'll provide anything from appetizers and award-winning microbrews to a full family or buffet-style dinner for up to 200 people. There's also a private dining room on the first floor that seats up to 35 guests.

The Olive Branch Restaurant serves healthful, nutritious and delicious food—they even have yummy gluten-free selections—and hosts private dining for up to 150.

Across the street, Sonterra, with its upscale nouveau Mexican cuisine, offers three private dining spaces: the Aspen Room (35 seated), The Lounge (70-80 seated) and The Loft (150 seated). The lovely Aspen room comes with audio-visual equipment. The Lounge, with a bar and leather sofas, is more casual.

If you're looking for a truly casual gathering, South Side Johnny's might just suit. Its party room holds up to 100 standing and 65 seated.

Jack Quinn's serves up Irish fare—corned beef and cabbage, pot pies and shepherd's pie—on a buffet (for 40-120) or off the menu (for fewer). You get the whole upstairs area, so you can sing Irish tunes to your heart's content.

If German food suits your tastes, consider the Edelweiss Restaurant, where several spaces may be reserved for groups of 10 to 135 and guests dine on well-prepared schnitzels and wursts.

The Blue Star, just south of downtown, has a creative, upscale menu (think duck breast, quail, prawns) and a lovely wine cellar dining room suitable for small parties (seating up to 22).

Its trendy downtown sister, Nosh, offers a private space for as many as 45 people. Nosh is known

for its small plates, which provide mini bites with major flavors.

At Giuseppe's Depot, in the old Rio Grande Railway Station, the train theme and Italian food have made it locally popular for decades. It has four private dining rooms—the Observation Alcove, where you can see trains go by (up to 20 people), the Ticket Office (25 people), Club Room (40 people) and the South Room (150 people).

Another popular spot for downtown meetings is The Warehouse Restaurant & Gallery, which can host as many as 220 for cocktails or 150 seated in The Gallery. Or the more intimate Wine Room holds 20.

Groups such as the Southern Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce meet in The Gallery regularly. "The gourmet meals are carefully planned, beautifully presented, and the featured artwork provides a great backdrop," says Linda Mojer, executive director of the group.

HISTORIC SETTINGS

Small but elegant private dining is available at the historic Cliff House restaurant in nearby Manitou Springs. The Solarium seats 12-16 and the meal will be memorable.

The historic Briarhurst Manor, also in Manitou, boasts nine private dining spaces that accommodate anywhere from two to 240 guests. Its idyllic setting and lovely architecture make it seem far removed from town.

At The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, the luxurious Penrose Room, Colorado's only five-diamond restaurant, has its own private dining room with dramatic views of Cheyenne Mountain and the resort and seats 16. The hotel's bistro-style restaurant, Summit, has a private room that holds 20. ☞

Left: Sonterra serves up upscale nouveau Mexican cuisine in a stylish atmosphere. Right: Soak in the historic character at the Briarhurst Manor in nearby Manitou Springs.