

# The Search for Calgary's Best Quiche

BY LINDA GARSON



**Q**UICHE! IT'S ONE OF THE most beloved and versatile dishes; delicate yet hearty, fragile yet substantial, regularly relished at lunch or brunch, and as a starter for supper, or cocktail canapes.

The name is likely of German origin, from 'Kuchen', meaning cake or tart, and we know dishes of eggs and cream baked in pastry were in evidence in England in the 1300s, but much of the credit for its popularity goes to the Lorraine region of northeast France, where its namesake quiche was enhanced (like most things) by the addition of bacon.

Eggs are an essential ingredient so, in collaboration with the Egg Farmers of Alberta, we set out to find out how Calgary fares in the quiche world – and embarked upon another amazing and completely delicious journey. We asked our readers and our followers on social media and television to nominate your favourites, and we were thrilled at the enthusiastic response: we counted

30 cafés, bakeries, and restaurants around the city, representing 44 quiches on your list of must-tries!

We knew we couldn't tackle this alone, so we engaged four local experts to judge too: egg farmer, Susan Schafers; food connoisseur, Rosemary Bacovsky; egg industry expert, Brandy Addai; and restaurateur, Mhairi O'Donnell, along with yours truly!

"I was amazed to see how many entries there were," Schafers says. "As an egg farmer, it was great to see eggs used in so many combinations of filings."

Addai echoes these sentiments: "I was definitely surprised by the number of quiches that entered as well as the variety of quiches available. There are so many delicious and unique options for Calgarians to enjoy."

"Simple foods made with the best ingredients are my favourite. That's why I love quiche! I was so pleasantly surprised by the breadth of portions we had," agrees O'Donnell.

**What makes the perfect quiche? What were we looking for?**

\* **Great quiche** is all about the eggs: are they well set and not runny, rubbery, or scrambled?

\* **The other ingredients:** what else is in the quiche and does it belong? Are the flavours complementary and appropriate?

\* **The presentation:** does the quiche look enticing and appealing? Is the crust baked to a golden brown, is the custard set?

\* **And finally, with twice the weight of each of the previous categories, we asked ourselves how highly we would recommend this to a friend.**

We take our awards very seriously, and if we're recommending the best of the best, every piece has to be good – and consistently good.

To judge all the quiches equally and fairly, instead of having five judges driving around the city to visit all the nominated locations, this time we arranged for a full day at the Carriage House Hotel, where we could spread out comfortably and have access to ovens to sample the quiches as they were meant to be enjoyed.

It was a full day of tasting, and while it sounds like the best job in the world, you may be surprised to hear that it's really quite hard work. "After the first couple of dozen quiches, taste buds started to fatigue," says Bacovsky. "But I nibbled on as they were so delicious and irresistible."

Some quiches arrived as individual pies and some as family-size to feed four or six people. Some quiches were even larger, serving eight, ten, or even twelve; and some had a special presentation or service consideration to better represent how the dish would fare at the restaurant or bakery.

We were very impressed not only with the quality of the quiches we tasted

but the diverse range of ingredients for the fillings, as well as for the crusts and additional toppings and accompaniments.

“I appreciated the creativity in structure, ie: tall and fluffy, a single portion cube, crust or no crust, and crust on the side. Gluten-free, flavours and herbs in the crust, variety of ingredients in the custard, and accompanying salads and sauces,” Bacovsky adds.

“One of my favourites was a quiche that had the rosemary added into the crust, which added so much extra flavour,” says Schafers. “I also loved the use of fresh vegetables with herbs and different cheeses. The flavours were bright with the herbs and the cheeses brought in a lot of depth.”

### **Ultimately, to be sure we’re judging like for like, we’ve split our awards into three distinct categories:**

✱ **Classic Quiche Lorraine:** you’ll see various definitions for Quiche Lorraine but they all include eggs, bacon or ham, heavy cream or milk, and cheese. Some will say that it can only be Swiss cheese, but all agree that apart from the addition of onions, any other ingredients would be ‘Quiche’ and not ‘Quiche Lorraine’.

✱ **Quiches with meat** as well as ingredients other than a classic Quiche Lorraine would include, which we’re calling “**Meat Quiches**”.

✱ And finally, quiches including no meat which we’re calling “**Vegetable Quiches**”.

The quiches we tasted spanned all categories, and it was a very close contest. In the quiet of our judging room at the Carriage House Hotel, amidst the munching sounds, you could hear the occasional exclamation of “divine!” and “heaven”. There were many extremely good quiches that we couldn’t include here; Bacovsky summed it up with a grin... “Most quiches were eggs-traordinary!”

Many thanks to everyone who helped make our search for Calgary’s Best Quiche so successful: to you for guiding our journey by nominating your favourites; to all the cafes, bakeries, and restaurants who gave their time and expertise to make the quiches for us to judge; to the Carriage House Hotel for being perfect hosts and to Egg Farmers of Alberta for



being perfect partners (and having the best oven gloves!); to our judges, who each worked diligently for seven hours tasting and scoring the quiches; and to Tom Firth for his number-crunching skills to ultimately find our winners.

### **We’re delighted to announce the highest scoring “Classic” Quiche Lorraine:**

#### **Cassis Bistro**

This French Ham and Gruyère Cheese quiche is beautiful, and looks just how you want quiche to look – handmade, yet deftly executed. The crust is flaky and light, and the ham is diced finely and spread evenly throughout the perfectly cooked creamy eggs.

### **Highly Recommended winners are (in alphabetical order):**

#### **Manuel LaTruwe**

A classic Ham and Cheese quiche, with a terrifically textured and browned crust containing buttery, light, and fluffy set eggs with a perfect quantity of ham and good flavoured cheese.

#### **Sidewalk Citizen**

A really good, soft and fluffy crust contains perfectly set, creamy eggs with a generous amount of bacon, onion and Cheddar, with herbs sprinkled on top and accompanied by a lovely, spicy chili sauce.

#### **Simple Simon**

These individually portioned Bacon and Cheddar quiches from Simple Simon are



sprinkled with smoked paprika and tick all the boxes – lots of flavour, and a great buttery short crust.

### **Our highest scoring Meat Quiche:**

#### **River Café**

Chefs Scott Mackenzie and Ben Thompson’s elegant and unusual square quiche, with spinach, leek, mangalitsa prosciutto, Kennebec potato, green alder, Avonlea Cheddar, and white wine, comes with greens and edible flowers on top which perfectly balance the richness of the filling. Wonderful flavours in a light, flaky crust, and the highest scoring quiche of the day.

### **Highly Recommended winners are (in alphabetical order):**

#### **Lake House**

Chef de Cuisine Gareth Colville’s rustic, deep-dish Leek, Double-smoked Bacon, Cherry Tomato, Aged Cheddar, Gouda and Boursin, Nutmeg, and Smoked Paprika quiche presents beautifully, and has rosemary in the pastry – a lovely addition. There’s a great melding of all these flavours too.

#### **Pie Cloud**

Most unusual and very delicious, Pie Cloud’s “BLT” Keto Quiche has a bacon weave bottom crust (great idea!) full of flavourful fresh and sun-dried tomatoes, crumbled bacon, spinach sautéed in garlic and butter, Parmesan, Cheddar, and Mozzarella cheeses.



## Pie Junkie

These individual, 5-inch, Bacon, Cheddar and Arugula quiches include caramelised onions, and arugula, with nicely set, creamy eggs. The buttery, crunchy crust holds a good mix of the ingredients, and a lot of filling.

## Yellow Door

Something completely different, this deep dish 'Nduja and Grilled Asparagus quiche with its tall Sylvan Star Gouda pastry crust, is baked perfectly, filled with smooth and fluffy eggs, and comes with a roast garlic and pesto aioli and local greens too.

## Our highest scoring Vegetable Quiche is a tie!

### Gravity Espresso & Wine Bar

Chef Elkin Cardona's veggie quiche has a nicely browned and crunchy pastry crust filled with a tasty, flavourful, and smooth, creamy custard full of bell peppers, mushrooms, and cheese, and a sprinkling of paprika on top.

### Sidewalk Citizen

Sidewalk Citizen's veggie quiche is Mushroom, Onion, and Cheddar, with a beautifully flaky and light crust, big chunks of mushroom, a sprinkling of herbs on top, and a spicy sauce that gives a burst of flavour. (photo on page 23).

## Highly Recommended winners are (in alphabetical order):

### Le Comptoir by Francois

Francois' Smoked Gouda, Red Onion, and Spinach quiche is tall, with an



Gravity Espresso & Wine Bar

impressive crispy crust, fluffy eggs, lots of spinach, and a hefty layer of cheese on top. The smoked Gouda is delicious, and enhanced by Gruyère and Parmesan cheeses.

### Les Moulins La Fayette

Lovely to look at, this Roast Pepper, Tomato, and Goat Cheese quiche tastes as good as it looks, with soft and fluffy eggs, a really good, light and flaky crust, and excellent balance of goat cheese to eggs, contrasting the sweet peppers.

### Manuel LaTruwe

Another beautifully presented quiche from Manuel LaTruwe, this time Spinach and Feta Cheese, with generous amounts of both combining perfectly balanced flavours in a flaky, short crust.

### Pies Plus Cafe

This Zucchini and Tomato quiche has a great flavour and a lovely mouthfeel, with a nice and peppery filling of soft and tender zucchini and tomato resting

in a tasty short pastry and a beautifully browned topping.

### Simple Simon

These individual Broccoli and Cheddar quiches have terrific flavour and are very cheesy with the addition of Parmesan. The buttery crust is evenly browned and the eggs really nicely set.

### Sunterra

There's a really nicely balanced combination of flavours and spice coming through in Sunterra's good-looking Broccoli and Cheddar quiche, with its buttery crust and well-set custard filling.

*As some of these restaurants may be working with reduced or seasonally changing menus, you may wish to call ahead or reach out directly to them.*



## Our Judges:



**Susan Schafers**  
of STS Farms - who better than an actual 2nd-generation Alberta egg farmer to judge all those delicious quiches!



**Rosemary Bacovsky**  
who travels the world for great food experiences. She regularly judges restaurants locally, nationally and internationally.



**Brandy Addai**  
who oversees all aspects of supply chain management as Logistics Coordinator for the Egg Farmers of Alberta.



**Mhairi O'Donnell**  
restaurateur and owner of The Loop, Mission Diner, Moonlight & Eli, and the new Varbar.



**Linda Garson**  
who eats and drinks for a living, and spends most of her time writing and talking about it!