

GOOD EATS FROM THE GOLDEN ERA

BY LISA PLUMMER

There was a time, the good ol' days to be sure, when Vegas was about \$1.99 shrimp cocktails and rubbing shoulders with Elvis and the Rat Pack, not quadruple-digit bottle service and Kim Kardashian. Luckily, while mega-casinos spring up around them like mushrooms, some old-school restaurants refuse to budge.



Hugo's Cellar

With its mood lighting, rose-themed décor and charming wine cellar ambiance, this elegant little eatery is a romantic date spot unto itself. At Four Queens Hotel & Casino; 202 Fremont St.; 702-385-4011; hugoscellar.com

Established: 1978
Most famous old-school patron: Smokey Robinson

Best bang for your buck meal: "Every item is a value," says Manager Albert Steele. "All meals come with complimentary bottled water, a salad cart, a sorbet intermezzo, vegetables, a choice of potato and chocolate-dipped fruits for dessert." (Average cost: \$44)

Secret to success: At Hugo's, the quality of food and a classic approach to service has remained unchanged; each table is still cared for by a three-person server team.

Fun fact: Every female guest receives a rose before being seated, a tradition the restaurant has continued since it opened.

How times change: This isn't the *Mad Men* era anymore. Back in the olden days, about 90 percent of patrons would order two to three gin martinis or Manhattans before dinner. That number has now dropped to about 5 percent, says Steele. So much for Sin City.



Golden Steer Steakhouse

Whether dressed to the nines or in jeans, patrons will feel right at home in this classic Vegas institution that boasts oversized red booths and Western-inspired décor. 308 W Sahara Ave; 702-384-4470; goldensteersteakhouse.lasvegas.com

Established: 1958
Most famous old-school patrons: Frank, Dean and Sammy Davis Jr., as well as Elvis, Marilyn Monroe and John Wayne

Best bang for your buck meal: The Caesar salad, which is made tableside (\$12 per person) and the bone-in rib eye (\$41).

Secret to success: The Steer has been kicking it for more than five decades thanks to the unchanged quality of its food, service, pricing and old-school atmosphere.

Fun fact: This is where outlaws Anthony and Michael Spilotro of the infamous Hole In the Wall Gang (whose members also included Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid) ate their last meal in Sin City before meeting their demise, according to Jon Fondy, Golden Steer spokesman. "Many careers started and ended at the Golden Steer," he says.

How times change: This eatery never ceases to be amazed that even after 54 years, the restaurant business just keeps on growing.



Top of Binion's Steakhouse

A best-kept local's secret for decades, this elegant yet comfortable steakhouse offers vintage Vegas décor and breathtaking city views, all in a deliciously romantic atmosphere. Binion's Gambling Hall & Hotel; 128 E Fremont St.; 702-382-1600; binions.com

Established: 1967
Most famous old-school patrons: The Rat Pack

Best bang for your buck meal: Benny Binion's Cut 24 oz. bone-in roasted prime rib (\$42.95)

Their secret to success: This Downtown steakhouse basically hasn't changed a thing in terms of food and service in more than three decades.

Fun fact: Guests will enjoy an unrivaled view of glittering Sin City after riding an exterior glass elevator up 24 floors to the restaurant.

How times change: The dress code has changed dramatically since the good ol' days—gentlemen in sports jackets and ties have been replaced with dudes in shorts and polos.



Peppermill Restaurant & Fireside Lounge

With its mirrored ceilings, neon lighting and faux garden décor, this fun, laidback café and lounge is not only a great place to get a satisfying meal, it's a prime people-watching destination. 2985 Las Vegas Blvd S; 702-735-7635; peppermilllasvegas.com

Established: 1972
Most famous old-school patrons: Elvis, The Lennon Sisters, Rich Little and the Rat Pack

Best bang for your buck meal: "There isn't a meal on the menu that isn't bang for your buck," says General Manager Peggy Orth. "You can split anything on our menu and fill two people up." (Average cost: \$19.95)

Secret to success: The Peppermill's original 1972 customer service mantra—to give people what they want and make every dining experience memorable—still rings true today.

Fun fact: Numerous Hollywood films have been shot at the Peppermill, including *Casino*, *Cotton Club* and *Showgirls*.

Biggest change the restaurant has witnessed in Las Vegas: While staying put, this place has seen major casinos that used to surround them—like the Landmark, Desert Inn, Sands, Dunes and the Stardust—demolished.