



## YOU GO, GAZPACHO!

IT'S STILL HOT WEATHER ... WHY AREN'T YOU EATING GAZPACHO? NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TRAVEL TO EUROPE, DINE AT A SPANISH RESTAURANT OR EVEN SLAVE IN YOUR OWN KITCHEN. JUST LOOK AT THE WIDE RANGE OF GAZPACHO SOUP PERSONALITIES IN H TOWN: INVITING RED POOLS OF COOL SUMMER PLEASURE WHIRLED UP WITH FRESH CRISP TEXAS VEGETABLES, A DASH OF MEXICAN SPICE OR A SPRINKLE OF OLD-WORLD SPAIN. DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF. SLURP GAZPACHO.

**CAFE EXPRESS**, 3200 Kirby Dr., 713-522-3994

*Fresh express.* This pureed version is bright red, bold and just-picked fresh. Expect the sweet crunch of minced carrot, refreshing cucumber and a savory snap of onion and garlic in a sturdy and tart tomato base. No need for garnish; naked, it's nearly perfect.

**PRICE: \$3.50/bowl**

**SCORE: 9**

**KRAFTSMEN BAKERS**, 4100-C Montrose Blvd., 713-524-3737

*Drink it in.* A finely pureed and rather thin soup (*sans* vegetable chunks) with flavors of tomatoes, onions, garlic and, alas, too much salt. Good job on the avocado garnish and French bread side, however.

**PRICE: \$5/bowl**

**SCORE: 6**

**PAULIE'S**, 1834 Westheimer, 713-807-7271

*Intense.* Mama Mia, that's a spicy gazpacho! Luxuriously thick with all the right stuff: cucumber, onion, tangy tomato, bell peppers, purple onions and a soothing sour cream garnish.

**PRICE: \$3.95/bowl**

**SCORE: 10**

**TILA'S**, 1111 S. Shepherd, 713-522-7654

*Hot as a haba~ero.* Chunky gazpacho presented in a salted and herb-rimmed sundae dish with piped sour cream, homemade croutons and buttery avocado hunks, looks innocently charming. But beware of dangerously hot jalape~os — whew.

**PRICE: \$5.95/bowl**

**SCORE: 7**

**TREEBEARD'S**, 1117 Texas Ave., 713-229-8248

*Homey.* Salad-thick and colorful with rough-chopped yellow and red peppers, cucumbers, scallions, tomatoes, parsley and balanced seasonings including a sneaking kick of pepper. Although refreshingly cleansing, the tomato stock was watery.

**PRICE: \$3.45/bowl**

**SCORE: 8**

**WHOLE FOODS**, Kirby Dr., 713-520-1937

*Gazpacho de garlic.* Full-bodied Guadalajara-style chunky soup is stocked with fresh-diced cucumber, onions, tomatoes, cilantro, corn and lime juice. If you love garlic, this is your gazpacho. Good value, too.

**PRICE: \$3.49/bowl**

**SCORE: 8**

*Robin Barr Sussman is a freelance food writer with a culinary mission: great taste.*

## JUST SAY SORBET

HOT UNDER THE COLLAR? HOUSTONIANS ON THE SWEET-TOOTH TRAIL SHOULD CONSIDER THE COOLING POWER OF SORBET.

REFRESHINGLY LIGHT, ICY AND INVENTIVE — WITH ENTICING FLAVORS LIKE LAVENDER PEACH OR CHOCOLATE NUTMEG — SORBET HAS EVERYTHING TO SATISFY SUMMER ICE CREAM CRAVINGS ... EXCEPT THE FAT. WE DIPPED INTO SUPERMARKETS, ICE CREAM SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS TO FIND A FEW FAVES. SCORE OF 10 IS TOPS.

**AMÉRICAS**, 1800 Post Oak Blvd., 713-961-1492

*Pick piña sorbet.* For an ethereal dessert, scoop up this refreshing and artful tropical find. Frosty, fruity pineapple sorbet is piped onto the plate in the shape of — you guessed it — a pineapple, topped with edible leaves.

**PRICE: \$7/dessert**

**SCORE: 9**

**AMY'S ICE CREAM**, 3816 Farnham, 713-526-2697

*Grown-up stuff.* Fantastically non-sweet and frosty, mango-banana sorbet merges the exotic tang of fresh mango with naturally sweet banana. We also moo over the potently tart Key-lime ice, the perfect base for a killer frozen margarita, if so inclined.

**PRICE: \$2.10/tiny scoop**

**SCORE: 10**

**CIAO BELLA, CENTRAL MARKET**, 3815 Westheimer, 713-386-1700

*Icy.* Sweet-tart citrus flavors dominate this popular supermarket/restaurant brand. Sunny-colored passionfruit sorbet is zingy, but sweet. Also look for lemon, raspberry, blood orange and apricot. Melts fast, so lap fast.

**PRICE: \$4.99/carton**

**SCORE: 7**

**DOLCE & FREDDO**, 5515 Kirby Dr., and other locations, 713-521-3260

*Cosmopolitan.* The creamiest of all sorbets sampled with the widest variety of flavors (about six). It's torture deciding between the mango, coconut, lemon or cassis. Blackberry sorbetto impresses with authentic fruit flavor and light sugar.

**PRICE: \$2.75/scoop**

**SCORE: 9**

**OUT OF A FLOWER, CENTRAL MARKET**, 3815 Westheimer, 713-386-1700

*Romantic.* Flowery names and flavors, like peach-champagne flecked with fresh mint, keep us coming back for more of this smooth and creamy supermarket sorbet. Other sweet delicate scoops include strawberry tequila and dark chocolate.

**PRICE: \$2.99/small carton**

**SCORE: 8**

**TCBY**, 2518 Rice Blvd., and other locations, 713-528-2595

*Just for kids.* Small pints lick up TCBY's silky textured watermelon sorbet, but it may be too sugary for adults. Orange sorbet is less cloying, and if cheating, "Dreamsicle" swirls in vanilla ice cream for a thrill-chill combo.

**PRICE: \$2.29/small scoop**

**SCORE: 6**

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## RX IN A BOWL: chicken soup

HALLELUJAH ... IT'S TECHNICALLY FALL. SOON, YOU'LL NEED SWEATERS, FOOTBALL TICKETS AND A GOOD SOURCE FOR ALL-AMERICAN CREATURE COMFORTS LIKE CHICKEN SOUP. DO YOU SLURP IT WITH NOODLES OR RICE? PREFER IT BOBBING WITH VEGGIES, SWIRLED WITH PISTOU, FIERY SALSA OR JUST BIG BITES OF BIRD? HERE'S THE SCOOP ON SOUP.

### **DACAPO'S PASTRI DELI**, 1141 E. 11th Street, 713-869-9141

*Soup's off.* Italian chicken noodle sounded enchanting, with earthy mushrooms, tomatoes, linguini and mozzarella, but reminded us too much of Campbell's cream of mushroom. But, have you tried Dacapo's cinnamon rolls? Incredible.

**PRICE: \$3.25/SMALL    SCORE: 6**

### **EDLOE STREET DELI**, 6119 Edloe, 713-666-4302

*Chicken little.* Edloe's bowl brims with nice full-bodied, golden, coaxed-from-chicken broth, but there's not a speck of chicken. Just thick, wavy egg noodles and flecks of parsley. Good for those puny, noodle-needing days, we're thinking.

**PRICE: \$2.25/SMALL    SCORE: 7**

### **LA MEXICANA**, 1018 Fairview, 713-521-0963

*Pure.* Strained clear of debris, this homey chicken broth tastes fussed over. Expect an entire boneless chicken breast and whole hunks of carrot, celery and potato. Add Mexican rice, onion-crisp pico, fresh lime and hot sauce for a great value meal that could cure your worst ailments.

**PRICE: \$4.75/SMALL    SCORE: 9**

### **MOM'S KITCHEN**, 2620 Joanel, 713-622-7290

*Mmm, mmm, good.* Mom's chicken soup is a rustic version with cooked-down bits of tomato, spring onion, fall-apart chicken and fusilli pasta. Soup's a little salty, but you sure can't beat the chi-chi surroundings.

**PRICE: \$3.25/SMALL    SCORE: 8**

### **THE RAVEN GRILL**, 1916 Bissonnet, 713-521-2027

*Rave-worthy.* Wholesome and stewey-thick, Raven's tomato-based version is stocked with gently simmered squash, carrots, celery, tender pulled chicken breast and crunchy corn kernels. Low in carbs, high in comfort, which suits us perfectly.

**PRICE: \$3.95/SMALL    SCORE: 10**