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BEST OF STARRO LOCAL

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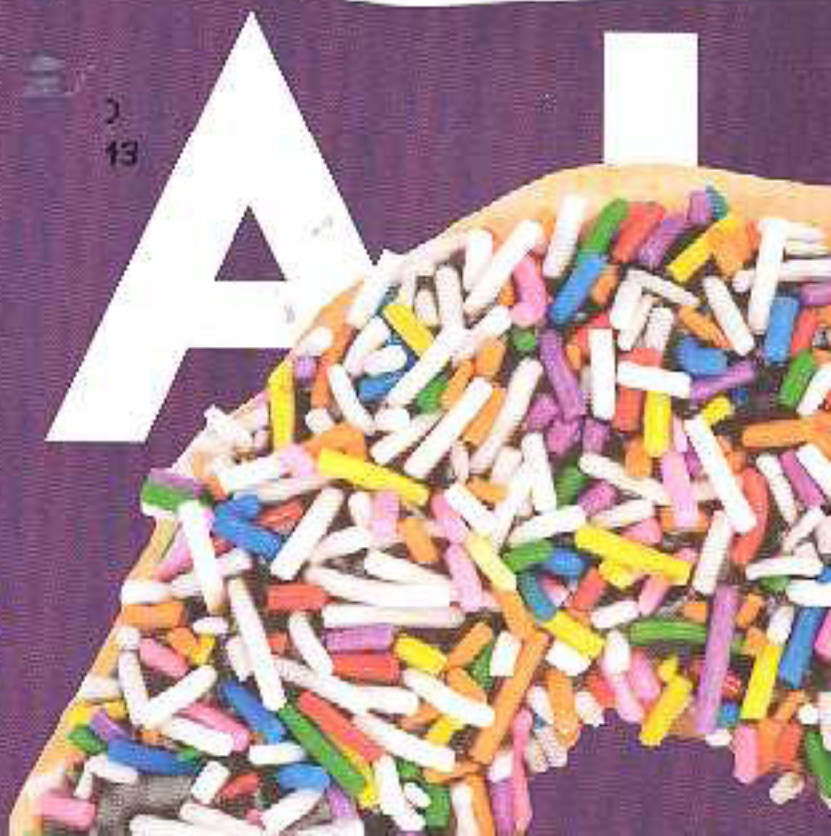
OUR READERS VOTED
FOR THEIR BEST LOCAL
EXPERIENCES, PLACES
AND PEOPLE.

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Best Cup of Coffee

WINNER **PASTRY ART**

Although some attempted to express their undying love for Starbucks in this locally focused competition, there's no denying **Pastry Art's** win for Best Cup of Coffee, beating out the second place competitor by more than twice as many votes. Known for its buzzing morning atmosphere, Pastry Art is a staple for workweek caffeine fixes or Saturday morning cups on the way to the Farmer's Market. Holding its own a few blocks down Main Street is **Sarasota News and Books**, coming in as first runner-up. The shop where coffee-meets-books is a perfect locale for those looking to curl up on the couch with a good read. **Local Coffee and Tea**, which takes "shop local" values to a higher level, came in as second runner-up. **The Great Commission Café at Calvary Chapel**, a contemporary worship church that welcomes the public to its café for a cup of joe, gained quite a few votes. **Bella Coffee House** was mentioned as well, the perfect stop if you're looking for a bluesy atmosphere and a plush seat for sipping. —*SW*

Dog lover and coffee connoisseur Andrea Rankin: "A day on Main Street without Pastry Art would be like going home to momma's and not getting a hug. Pastry Art is the go-to place to get a smooth, mild roast coffee (or something else if that's your fancy), see friendly faces and enjoy the best chocolate macaroon you'll ever eat. I liken my favorite coffee from there to my Labrador, Dixie. The thought of it warms my heart and it makes me feel good." *Curtis Hencye, who found his favorite coffee inside a local church:* "[The Great Commission Café] has some of the best coffee I've ever had. Something with the way the beans are processed is what I've been told. I like variety and they have it all—I've never been disappointed." *Java drinker Bill Schulte:* "I feel that of all the coffee places, Bella has the best tasting coffee. All of their flavors are tasty, especially the Hawaiian Hazelnut. The décor, the great music and the people who work there give it a comfortable feel."

Best Omelet

WINNER **WORD OF MOUTH**

Winning the love of our readers proved an easy egg to crack for **Word of Mouth**. A deluge of emails praised WOM's Veggie Omelet, with its blend of tomatoes and fresh herbs. Thomas Fastiggi highly recommended the Greek Feta Omelet. The small restaurant serves up other varieties and while preferences for fillings differed greatly, the broad consensus was that WOM cooked up the lightest and fluffiest omelet around. But don't think **The Broken Egg**, a restaurant with a major reputation on Siesta Key and in Lakewood Ranch, would let this title go without a hard fight. The restaurant is runner-up this year and readers say such dishes as the Key West Omelet deserve respect for spicing up the most important meal of the day. **The Serving Spoon** pulled out a third-place win, serving up doses of spinach in its Popeye's Omelette and sautéed veggies in its Osprey Omelette. But more than a few readers said they need not venture to a restaurant to find the best omelets around. Susan Baugh said her own asparagus, Swiss and tomato omelet could get her through the day, and Barbara Whipple said she would trust this dish only to her mom. —*JO*

Joanne Parke, who prefers the Key West Omelet: "When I come to Sarasota, I love to go to The Broken Egg for breakfast. Their omelets are so large, fluffy and just plain good. The wait staff is fun and very friendly and always make me feel like I'm back home."

Best Off-The-Beaten-Path Lunch Spot

WINNER **SIMON'S COFFEE HOUSE**

Hopefully, the irony of a voting competition for the "most obscure" category is not lost on you, gentle reader. The hard part about picking a victor in this group is that, by definition, an off-the-beaten-path lunch spot isn't going to be sitting on the tips of everyone's tongues. Foremost among them was **Simon's Coffee House**, a South Trail excursion that collects a lot of those good feelings from its seamless integration of healthy and vegetarian/vegan dishes with your grade-A deli fare. Any restaurant that can serve up a good roast beef and white cheddar wrap alongside an apple, celery and carrot beverage called "The Cleanser" is bound to get its share of love around these parts. Second place went to **Word of Mouth**, which is such a local institution that its "off-the-beaten-path" status is reliant mostly on geography—it is its own destination. That, and WOM's notoriously gnarly Curried Egg Salad. Third place went to **Libby's Café and Bar**, as good a lunch spot as any in Sarasota. But considering it's on Osprey Avenue, one of the busiest non-artery streets in town, we wonder if Southsiders might need to get out of their neighborhood more often to explore. Thanks a lot, New Urbanism! Noteworthy also-rans included **Clayton's Siesta Grille**, **Maximilian's Café**, **Sierra Station Cafe** and **Hob Knob Drive In Restaurant**. Someone voted for a barbecue pit on Macintosh and Webber, but unless this is a once-every-100-years BBQ Brigadoon, we're pretty sure they meant **Perry's at Beneva** and **Webber** or **Alday's at Beneva** and **Rahia Vista**. We're still keeping our eyes out, just in case. —*BH*

M.L. Kates, who found a little strip of heaven at Simon's: "When a friend suggested having lunch at a restaurant in a strip mall on south 41, it did not stir my imagination of where one would find good food. To me, that makes Simon's off the beaten path. Their bread, unfortunately for me, is addictively good. For Simon's, I wish popularity, [but] for myself, I like going in and sitting down." *Cliff Roles, who'll have the Crab Cake Sandwich,*

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