

RESTAURANTS IN DES MOINES

With the conference being on our home turf, we felt the food recommendations should be personal. Most of these are selected by Iowa-based SWCS staff members. You'll notice we have some foodies in the office, and hope you leave Des Moines with inspiration and full stomachs!

DOWNTOWN & EAST VILLAGE

These are great options within walking distance of the conference center.

Coffee & Treats

Northern Vessel

- For coffee enthusiasts! Northern Vessel started as a coffee cart and continues to serve wonderfully handcrafted drinks.

St. Kilda Café & Bakery (Annie's Favorite!)

- Perhaps a bit millennial, but who knew avocado toast could be this good!?
- Avocado toast, with the poached egg, or the saint breakfast sandwich. Always with a flat white for my coffee order.

Scenic Route Bakery

- Coffee, pastries, sweet treats, and more! Scenic Route is a wonderful place to stop and take a break or get your day started.

Molly's Cupcakes (Annie's Favorite!)

- Sometimes you just need to eat dessert, with sprinkles, while sitting on a swing. A fun stop for families.
- Go straight for the center-filled: The Ron Bennington, creme brulee, peach cobbler

Lunch & Quick Bites

Local Bites

- A food court without the mall. It's only open for lunch and is a great spot for groups with different tastes or if you just want something quick!

South Union Bread Café

- Sandwiches, salads, and more, so close to the conference, you won't regret stopping for lunch!

Malo

- Delicious Latin-American cuisine in the heart of Des Moines! Go for lunch, happy hour, or dinner; it'll wow any time.

Dinner

Fong's Pizza (Courtney's Favorite!)

- Crab Rangoon Pizza: My favorite pizza of all time; I still have yet to find a better pizza anywhere else I've been!

Centro (Erika's Favorite!)

- Insalata Mista, Pizza Bianco: Have some time? This is an amazing Italian spot in the heart of downtown!

The Iowa Taproom (Joe's Favorite!)

- A restaurant that specializes in serving Iowa-made beers. Over 100 taps that change out regularly. The food is also good. Has a wood-grained country vibe that is very rural Iowa. In the East Village and walkable from the hotel.

Hessen Haus

- What's better than German sausage and beer? If you can't think of anything, this is the spot for you!

Zombie Burger + Drink Lab (Joe's Favorite!)

- Gourmet burgers with topping combinations that will both thrill and frighten you. In the East Village and walkable from the hotel.
- Don't forget to order a milkshake, with or without booze.

Ceviche (Joe's Favorite!)

- Cuban food and drinks. Small and comfortable. In the East Village and walkable from the hotel.

El Bait Shop/High Life Lounge (Annie's Favorite!)

- A downtown Des Moines staple that boasts the "Largest Craft Beer Selection West of the Mississippi," but also a patio and a menu featuring both Mexican-American fare and Midwest comfort food (cheese curds, stroganoff, and meatloaf). The laid-back atmosphere makes this a popular bike ride stop.
- Cheese curds and fish tacos. Oh, yeah, probably a beer, but you'll have to choose that.

Exile Brewing (Courtney's Favorite!)

- Great appetizers, drinks, and atmosphere!

Pho Real Kitchen & Bar (Annie's Favorite!)

- Spring Rolls and Pho Ga: you can't go wrong with Vietnamese food in Des Moines.

HoQ (Annie's Favorite!)

- Farm-to-Table with an ever-changing menu.
- Seasonal menu, but it's never disappointed!

Lua Brewing (Joe's Favorite!)

- My favorite brewery/restaurant in Des Moines. Small menu but done very well. The outdoor patio gives a pleasing view of the downtown skyline. Go for dinner, and great for brunch on the weekend.

Nightlife

Locust Tap (Joe's Favorite!)

- The diviest dive bar in the city. Wash your hands before, after, and during your visit. Electric atmosphere for late nights out. Drinks only, no food.

Ricochet (Sarah, Renee, and Courtney's Favorite!)

- A fun spot with several Mule variations. Test your collaboration skills with 3v3 foosball or literally any of the other games they have.

Hello, Marjorie (Courtney's Favorite!)

- 70's era living room setting with the coolest cocktail options.

NEARBY

Will likely need a vehicle or other mode of transportation.

Coffee & Treats

La Mie (Annie's Favorite!)

- Delectable breakfast! The main location is a personal favorite, but they also have La Mie Elevate in the Downtown Skywalk, if you want to get a taste.

Coaches Kolaches (Clare's Favorite!)

- It's so difficult to find kolaches outside of Texas, but here you'll find those wonderful sausage buns to start your day!

Snookies Malt Shop (Annie's Favorite!)

- A local favorite for summertime treats!

Lunch & Quick Bites

The Green Olive (Sarah's Favorite!)

- #6 Gyro Supreme Plate, gyro style lamb and falafel *insert chef's kiss*: Mediterranean & Middle Eastern cuisine, Gyros, Falafel, Shawarma, and more, there's plenty to enjoy, including a vegetarian platter and lots of custom options. Such good food with friendly staff. Strongly recommend a stop if you find yourself on Fleur Drive.

Drake Diner (Erika's Favorite!)

- Best diner-food. Go-to order: Cheese Frenchie, Green River

The Cheese Shop (Joe's Favorite!)

- Fully functional deli that allows you to dine in. Pull a bottle of wine from the cooler and order a monger board - you won't be upset.

Gateway Market (Joe's Favorite!)

- A healthy option grocery store that also serves prepared food. Online ordering for pickup or Door Dash available. The cranberry walnut salad is epic.

Dinner

Eatery A (Annie's Favorite!)

- Incredible Mediterranean-inspired fare! There are so many options to choose from on their delicious menu. Love their wood-fired pizza!

Flying Mango (Annie's Favorite!)

- A Cajun and Caribbean barbeque joint in Iowa? Yes, and it's surprising in the best ways! You'll learn quickly that it's been featured by the one and only Guy Fieri on Diners, Drive-ins & Dives.

Big Grove Brewery (Joe's Favorite!)

- Great food and beer. Perfect for large groups.
- Citrus Surfer beer is the go-to for summertime happiness

A Dong Vietnamese (Annie's Favorite!)

- Just as good as Pho Real Kitchen, you simply can't go wrong with Vietnamese food in Des Moines!

ANKENY

Try these quick bites when you visit SWCS Headquarters in Ankeny!

Big Acai (Clare's Favorite!)

- Not just a trend, these bowls are spectacular, and you can make them exactly as you want!

Tasty Tacos (Erika's Favorite!)

- Perfect for any time of day, tacos that hit the spot every time.
- Original Flour Taco, extra hot sauce

Hidalgo Mexican Bar and Grill

- Best margaritas and guacamole in town!

Cazador Mexican Restaurant

- Best queso in town, family owned and operated!

AMES

If you're making the trip to visit Iowa State University, as a cyclone-dominant staff, we have a few ideas for you close to campus!

Café Beaudelaire (Jody's Favorite!)

- Café B is right across the street from Iowa State's campus.
- I'd go with the signature sandwich, "Beaudelaire Bauru" (who says you can't put peas and corn on a sandwich?)

Macubana (Emma's Favorite!)

- The best mac in Ames! Macubana is a favorite with students and townies alike.
- The Midnight Monster will blow your mind

Ichiban

- Amazing Japanese cuisine! Have fresh sushi or comforting ramen, you can't go wrong!

ALTOONA

Big Steer (Erika's Favorite!)

- Had to recommend Big Steer because it couldn't get more Iowa than this! While in Altoona, you can go to Adventureland or browse the Outlets of Des Moines.
- Filet Deburgo (medium rare), sauteed mushrooms, side of horseradish

LUTHER

Whatcha Smoking? (Erika's Favorite!)

- It might be a bit of a drive, but you can stop at Jester Park and see the bison herd if you don't believe that the barbecue in Luther alone is worth it.
- Brisket Poutine, Brisket Bloody Mary (I know, just trust me... there's house-made pickles involved.)