

Best of the



all the
best

Our readers have spoken!

Once again! Last year's reader's poll was such a huge success that we doubled our number of 'Best of' categories this year.

Now you can find out what Okanaganites consider to be the 'Best of the Rest,' including best place to buy shoes, lingerie, fresh vegetables; best T.V. and radio personalities, realtor; best Okanagan tradition and much, much more.

In order to vote, readers clipped the ballot from our Summer issue of Okanagan Life and mailed in their choices.

Now you have it. Your year-long guide to the best the Okanagan has to offer. Once again it confirms that our Valley is a great place to live!

Restaurant Photography by Chris Clark

restaurants

BEST IN SOUTH OKANAGAN

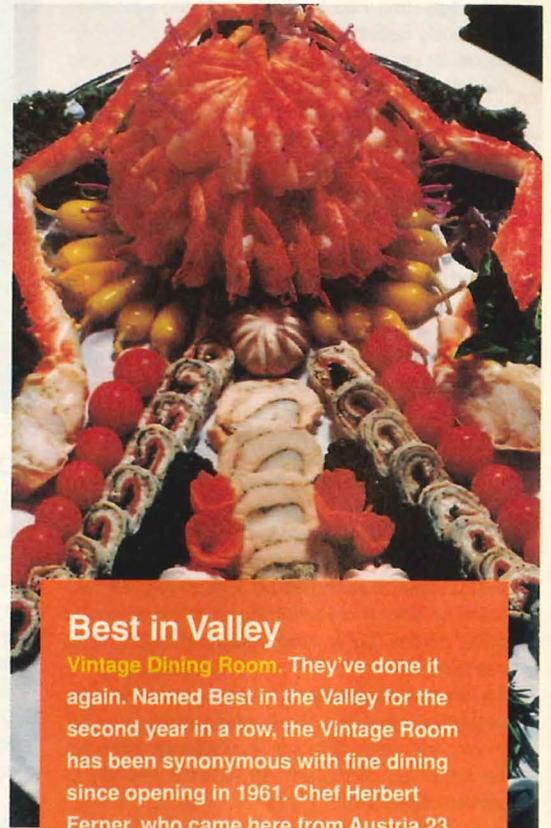
The Country Squire.

Those fortunate to have dined at the Country Squire say it is more of an event than a simple night out for a meal. Proprietors Ron and Pat Dyck live a restaurateur's dream every day. Patrons first endure the picturesque drive out to Naramata (or arrive by boat or plane). Then they share a five course dinner, that takes all evening, with 32 other lucky diners. During the breaks between courses, guests have a chance to relax and explore the property's lakeshore setting. **2nd:** Theo's Restaurant. **3rd:** Granny Bogner's.

BEST IN NORTH OKANAGAN

Demetre's Steak House.

Since 1984 Demetre's has been known for its delicious Greek cuisine and large portions. Owner Jim Diamantopoulos is happy with the addition of Sir Winston's Pub adjoining them, for those who like an extra beverage before or after dinner. Locals know that if you want to dine at



Best in Valley

Vintage Dining Room. They've done it again. Named Best in the Valley for the second year in a row, the Vintage Room has been synonymous with fine dining since opening in 1961. Chef Herbert Ferner, who came here from Austria 23 years ago to work with recently retired Chef Helge, carries on the restaurant's tradition of fine food in a classic, rich atmosphere. **2nd:** William's Inn. **3rd:** (tied) Joey Tomatoes, de Montreuil and Hotel Eldorado.

Best New Restaurant

Bellini's. The old Bonanza location on Harvey Avenue in Kelowna has been transformed. Steve Stinson has opened a lively Italian diner that serves nothing but traditional Italian foods. "The key is quality, imported Italian products, our sauces which we make from scratch, and great value," he says. Seems the steady stream of customers, and our readers, agree. **2nd:** Baxters. **3rd:** Water Street Grill.



Okanagan

'96

Demetre's on the weekends you had better reserve well in advance. **2nd:** (tie) Boa Thong Thai Restaurant; The Courtyard Garden; Earl's. **3rd:** Intermezzo Restaurant.

BEST SERVICE

Vintage Dining Room. Some say the best service is not even noticed. No sooner have you thought it, than it's there. Well, Vintage Room servers are not quite mind readers, but they are the epitome of politeness and professionalism. Overseen by Maitre'd Bart Dorssers (said to be a 'Tom Cruise look-a-like') the staff takes pride in making every dining experience

memorable. **2nd:** (tie) Finer Choice; de Montreuil. **3rd:** (tie) Guisachan House; Earl's.

BEST ATMOSPHERE

Eldorado Hotel. A peaceful lakefront setting, 180° view of the water, elegant heritage decor (reproduction of the original hotel) and candlelight dining. 'Nuff said! The 'El' were runaway winners in this category again this year. **2nd:** Joey Tomato's. **3rd:** (tie) Theo's; de Montreuil.

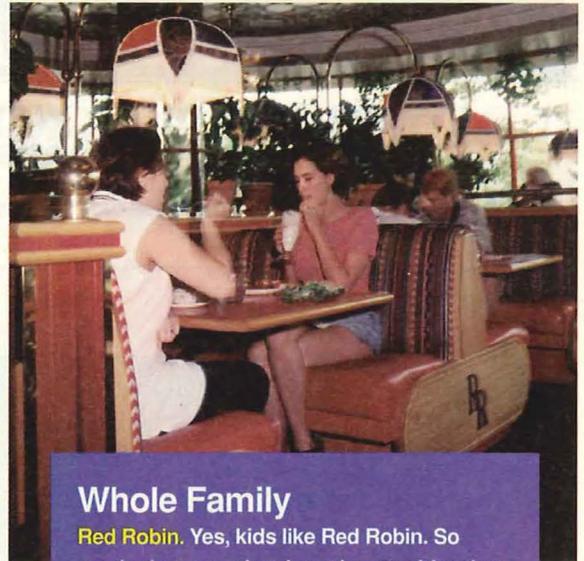
BEST PIZZA

Pizza Hut. "Pizza Hut, nothing but!" Their slogan must be working! People all over the world recognize 'the Hut' as a

place for great pizza in a fun, family atmosphere. In the Okanagan it's no different—although they may be looking over their shoulder. Joey Tomato's has moved up one notch since last year. **2nd:** Joey Tomato's. **3rd:** (tie) Boston Pizza; Bredeaux.

BEST BURGER

Burger Baron. Owner Rob Ohlmann is quick to admit that Burger Baron doesn't try to impress with their looks, but he is proud of their continuing reign as the purveyor of the best burger in the valley. Unless it's sunny outside bring your bib, as you may want to pull over after your 'drive thru' to consume this delectable, homemade



Whole Family

Red Robin. Yes, kids like Red Robin. So much, that once they learn how to drive they, and all their friends, keep going there. And then once they have kids, they go some more. The bright brass and lively red decor makes Red Robin a great place for a family outing — plus they have great burgers (placed second in our poll) and serve generous portions for those with bottomless bellies. **2nd:** Swiss Chalet. **3rd:** (tie) PJ's Allstar Cafe and White Spot.



Best European

Swiss Italia. Tucked away in a semi-industrial area on Leckie Road, Chef Dave Harries serves up favorites such as Rack of Lamb Dijon and Swiss Italia platters for two or more in a warm and cozy atmosphere. Once a patron has discovered the Swiss Italia cuisine they are sure to return, as proven by the restaurant's popular 10 year history in Kelowna. Our vote: that the Swiss Italia open for lunch, so we can enjoy the experience in the middle of the day as well! **2nd:** William's Inn. **3rd:** Wood Fire Bakery.

offering before you get home. **2nd:** Red Robin. **3rd:** White Spot.

BEST STEAK

The Keg. Comfortable in their expanded 'corner of Water St. and Lawrence Ave.' location in Kelowna (they've added Keg Caesar's lounge), the Keg continues to impress Okanaganites with their succulent steaks. Patrons also talk about the impressive, life-like chalk art by full time Keg artist Rob Bowen, which adds a unique signature to their fun atmosphere. **2nd:** Christopher's Steak & Seafood Restaurant. **3rd:** (tie) Vintage Dining Room; Cattle Country.

BEST SEAFOOD

Codfather's Seafood Deli. Three steps to a successful

seafood restaurant: one, choose a good name; two, sell fresh fish so you have a continuous fresh supply; three, start cooking. Codfather's has followed the formula to a 'T,' vaulting into the top spot in this category less than a year after beginning to serve meals in their new Guisachan Village location. **2nd:** Christopher's. **3rd:** Pelican's Landing.

BEST RIBS

(tie) Adel's Creekside Ribhouse and Earl's Restaurant. The Abougoush clan at Adel's say people like their ribs not just because they use premium products that are steamed to just the right tenderness, but because they can't resist their homemade sauces. Not so fast, says Earl. He claims the ribs at



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his restaurant are "fall off the bone tender" too, and are prepared with their unbeatable barbecue sauce. Guess we'll have to wait until next year for a tie-breaker. **2nd:** Swiss Chalet. **3rd:** Boston Pizza and Kelly O' Bryans.



BEST APPETIZERS

Kelly O' Bryan's. Up and down the valley folks know that it will take a little longer to order from the Kelly O's book, oops, that is, menu. Page after page filled with tasty appies and much more (including a little 'Blarney' of course) makes decision making a little tougher. Veterans know they can't go wrong with a plateful of Kelly O's famous, 'patented' Pachos. **2nd:** (tie) Earl's; Hotel Eldorado; Joey Tomato's.

BEST DESSERTS

Cheesecake Cafe. Their name says it all. Easy winners for the second year in a row, despite some impressive competition, the Cheesecake Cafe stakes its reputation on delicious (you guessed it) cheesecakes and big servings. Ask for a piece of cake and be prepared to eat like the Jolly Green Giant. **2nd:** Vintage Dining Room. **3rd:** (tie) Water Street Grill; Abbott's Dining Room.

BEST ASIAN

Mekong Restaurant. When Dan Truong escaped from Vietnam as a refugee 17 years ago, little did he know he would give so many people pleasure by serving them taste treats from his native country. This place really sizzles. Szechuan, that is, right at your table. Plus the view of the Lake and Dow Reid's 'Sails' at the foot of Bernard are an added enjoyment. **2nd:** Mon Thong Thai Food Restaurant. **3rd:** Chinese Laundry.

BEST BREAKFAST

International House of Pancakes (IHOP). Any restaurant with 'pancakes' in its name is bound to do well in the early morning fare category. This was a close race, but IHOP managed to maintain the number one position it claimed last year. Maybe it's just that people know that breakfast has got to be good where

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Best for Light 'n' Healthy

The Bohemian Bagel Café. Multigrain bagels, lentil soup, vegetarian quiche—you will see both the faithful and the converted consuming the healthy offerings at the 'Boh.' Instead of a question about fries the servers ask, "would you like sprouts with that?" (Free, of course). Plus the leather and wicker furniture and the displays of original art—whew, a great place to relax. Bunches, also known for its fresh, healthy fare was a close second. **2nd:** Bunches Bistro. **3rd:** Water Street Grill.



the 'boys in blue' (okay, black, yellow and uh, gray) frequent. **2nd:** Smitty's. **3rd:** White Spot.

BEST BUSINESS LUNCH

PJ's Allstar Cafe. When you're attached to the largest mall between Vancouver and Calgary you have to excel at providing quick service for masses of hungry people. Perhaps this is why PJ's did so well in this category: good food and fast service in a lively, cosmopolitan environment. Plus their famous "Fat Tuesdays" are very popular. **2nd:** Earl's On Top. **3rd:** (tie) Divino's Cafe; Joey Tomatoes; de Montreuil.

BEST SUNDAY BRUNCH

Chateau Dining Room (Lake Okanagan Resort). This is always a close race. Last year the Chateau and the 'El' tied for first. Both offer a fabulous spread in a spectacular location. Sunday brunch at Lake Okanagan Resort begins with a picturesque drive along the shores of Okanagan Lake. Diners then enjoy the peaceful surroundings from the newly re-decorated dining room, while savoring the world class work of Chef Dave Ryan. Chef Ryan was one of eight chefs representing Canada at the '96 Culinary Olympics this September in Berlin. **2nd:** Eldorado Hotel. **3rd:** Vintage Dining Room.

BEST COFFEE HOUSE/BISTRO

Starbucks. First the world, then the Okanagan. Starbucks entered the local market with a big splash (of coffee!). There are now five outlets from Penticton to Vernon, with a sixth on the way (opening this month) in Westbank. Coffee lovers love this influx of gourmet java imbibing spots. **2nd:** Bohemian Bagel. **3rd:** Perks.

BEST DELI

Bunches Bistro/Deli City. The operative word for Bunches and Deli City for '96 was 'expansion.' People love their light, fresh fare, their energetic and friendly service and their entertainment nights so much that their new Deli City Cafe at Kelowna Crossing and Deli City and Bunches Bistro combination in Acorn Plaza on the Westside are all doing well. Plus they have been one of the valley's top caterers since 1984. **2nd:** Bohemian Bagel. **3rd:** Mediterranean Market.

BEST HOTEL RESTAURANT

Hotel Eldorado. The 'El' won by a nose in this race. Ever since owner Jim Nixon made headlines in 1990 by floating the old Eldorado Arms Hotel up the lake to the present location, and then restoring it to its historical glory, the hotel has been a popular venue for diners. Chef Brian serves up a wonderful selection of savoury delights in the Hotel's various dining spots. **2nd:** The Vintage Room (Coast Capri Hotel). **3rd:** The Dolphins Restaurant (The Grand Okanagan).

BEST PLACE TO CELEBRATE

Kelly O' Bryans. We've heard

it claimed that Kelly O's pioneered the 'free birthday dinner.' If they didn't, they may just be the best known for it. Like they say, "There's only two kinds of people in the world: those that are Irish... and those who want to be Irish"... because they know how to have a good time! **2nd:** Hotel Eldorado. **3rd:** (tie) Joey Tomatoes; The Vintage Room.

BEST PLACE TO TAKE OUT-OF-TOWNERS

Hotel Eldorado. You can't beat a mixture of heritage, fine dining and the allure of the lake to provide a visitor with an culinary highlight. Plus guests have their choice of a lively lounge, elegant dining room or casual patio on the water's edge. **2nd:** Earl's. **3rd:** Joey Tomatoes.

BEST WINE SELECTION

The Vintage Dining Room. Wine lovers enjoy the Vintage Dining Room for a variety of reasons. Greg Capozzi of the Capri claims they have one of the widest selection of wines by the glass, which allows their guests to sample different vintages with their food. Each month they also celebrate a "Winery

before ordering. Don't be too concerned, however, since everything that proprietor and chef Grant de Montreuil concocts is delicious. **2nd:** Joey Tomatoes. **3rd:** Mon Thong Thai Restaurant.

BEST MEAL FOR THE MONEY

Oodles Restaurant. We got lots of answers in this category, which is good, since lots of restaurants are apparently feeding their patrons well. Oodles skyrocketed to the front of the pack in their first year. Owner Bill Raine, who hopes to franchise his new Kelowna pasta house, says they serve over 100 pasta combinations and vows no one will leave hungry. **2nd:** Joey Tomatoes. **3rd:** (tie) Finer Choice, Kelly O' Bryans and Water Street Grill.

BEST EATING ADVENTURE

de Montreuil. This category also got a wide variety of votes, including the snack bar in City Park. That wasn't quite the kind of adventure we had in mind. For those that take their eating adventures seriously, de Montreuil was the top vote-getter. It's definitely the place to go for something

Best Casual Restaurant

Earl's on Top. Always a hotly contested category, Earl's came out on top (no pun intended) this year. The Kelowna location has one of the nicest views around. The vista from the restaurant and 'rooftop' patio may have given them the edge. Of course, wherever you go, Earl's is known for their energetic, courteous servers and friendly atmosphere. It's tough to be grumpy and uptight with a bunch of bright colored parrots around. **2nd:** (tie) PJ's; **3rd:** Joey Tomatoes. **3rd:** Red Robin.

of the Month," showcasing the history of the winery and their wines. And, of course, their wine list features excellent Old and New World wines. **2nd:** Finer Choice. **3rd:** The Country Squire.

MOST CREATIVE MENU

de Montreuil. In an effort to make things simple, de Montreuil offers a choice of appetizers, entrees, desserts, etc. on one easy to read page at one easy price. But that's where the simplicity ends. You're always sure to find 'the unusual' on the list. Be prepared to ask questions



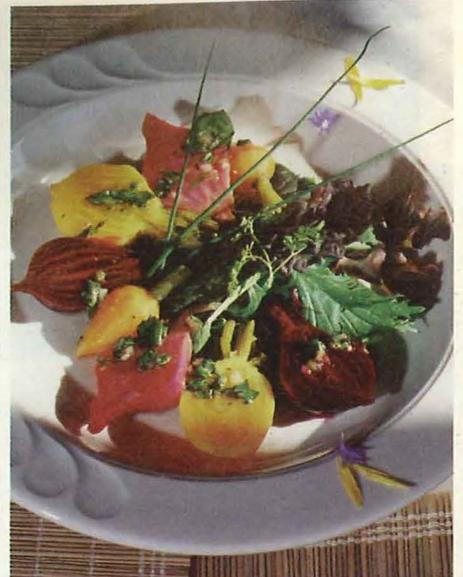
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Best Vegetarian

de Montreuil. 'Fresh regional foods in an easy atmosphere,' is how they describe themselves, and it's true. In a short time de Montreuil has become known for its unusual and tasty dishes made from foods grown, farmed, harvested, raised and caught in the Pacific Northwest. Many of their delicious creations are vegetarian, often using vegetables you may not have heard of, let alone know how to spell. **2nd:** Bohemian Bagel Cafe. **3rd:** Bunches Bistro.

deliciously different. **2nd:** (tie) Joey Tomato's and The Country Squire. **3rd:** Mon Thong Thai Restaurant.

BEST PLACE TO EAT AND HEAR LIVE MUSIC

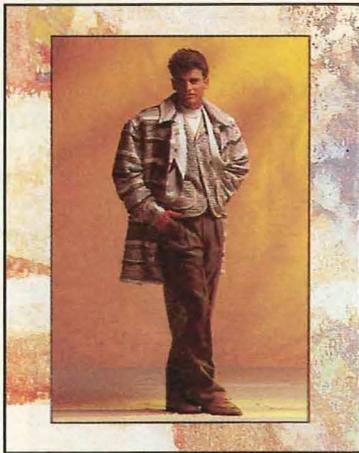
Swiss Italia. Besides the fabulous European cuisine, patrons frequent the Swiss Italia to enjoy the sounds of Marcel playing the alphorn, violin or mandolin on Friday and Saturday nights. Always the consummate entertainer, Marcel moves from table to table serenading each couple or group. **2nd:** Kitchen Cowboy. **3rd:** (tie) Kelly O'Bryans; Rose's Pub.

BEST PATIO DINING

Hotel Eldorado. In the summer the 'El' is the only place you can actually fall into the water if you lean too far back in your chair. You dine on the wharf (sort of) and benefit from cool lake breezes, warm sunshine and a parade of boats navigating the glittering water. This category is always a contest between these top three, all having fabulous lakeside view locations. **2nd:** Earl's. **3rd:** Coyote's.

MOST ROMANTIC

Hotel Eldorado. Formula for romance: intimate lighting, a view of the sun setting over the water, a quiet corner for sensual



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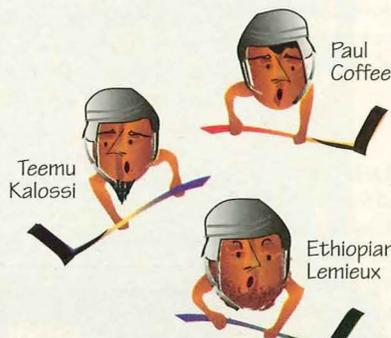
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suggestions, food that whets the appetite, a drink or two, or three... that's the Eldorado! **2nd:** The Vintage Dining Room. **3rd:** (tie) William's Inn and The Finer Choice.

BEST PUB GRUB

Pheasant & Quail. It's in the name. Just kidding. They don't serve pheasant, or quail, but this quaint watering hole, modeled after an old English pub of the same name, has been known for good grub since first opening. They serve a tasty selection of pasta and seafood, along with regular pub fare, in a comfortable, almost restaurant-like setting. **2nd:** McCulloch Station Pub. **3rd:** Black Mountain Brew Pub.

BEST FAST FOOD

Wendy's. Dave says... thanks! Lots of people claim it's those delicious square hamburgers, but we have the inside scoop on this one. Our production department swears it's their Grilled Chicken Salads (which they've been caught sneaking out to get). **2nd:** Dairy Queen. **3rd:** Burger King and Taco Time.

BEST KEPT SECRET

The Gathering Room. Tucked away in Tutt Street Square in the Mission, this Victorian tea room is enjoyed by all who discover it. Included with Devonshire cream and scones for tea, or your choice of a lunchtime delicacy, is a browse through their gift shop and a walk through the fascinating boutiques in the Square. **2nd:** (tie) de Montreuil and The Country Squire. **3rd:** Mama Rosa's.

places

BEST PLACE FOR PEOPLE WATCHING

City Park. Judging by the answers in this category the only two places people congregate is near the water or in malls. Conveniently, there are usually benches in both places, occupied by people blankly staring at the masses wandering by. City Park in Kelowna takes the honors here, still the place to see people walking, playing, swimming, eating and sunbathing. Other answers included: Waterfront Park, Water St. Grill, the

Eldorado, the Grand, Earls, Rose's Pub, Malibu, Perks, Starbucks, Gyro Beach and "any beach." Tip for people watching at the park or a beach: dark sunglasses. Among the stack was one suggestion of the Willow Inn. Hmmm. **2nd:** Orchard Park Mall. **3rd:** The Sails.

BEST PLACE TO TAKE THE KIDS

Children's Water Park. A place where kids entertain themselves and the parents get to socialize and sunbathe. No contest! The Water Park was the runaway winner here. Parks and hiking areas were popular choices. Among the other attractions named were Flintstones, Wild Waters, Malibu Grand Prix, Old MacDonald's Farm and Okeefe Ranch. Wonder what the kids think? **2nd:** (tie) Scandia Golf and Games and 2 Much Fun. **3rd:** Wild n' Wet.

BEST PLACE FOR A FIRST DATE

Hotel Eldorado. It's no surprise that the restaurant voted to have the Best Atmosphere and to be the Most Romantic won here. Nothing like a candlelight dinner and a romantic sunset to impress your date. Other 'Don Juan' suggestions: 2 Much Fun, winery tour, City Park, Knox Mountain, the patio at Twin Lakes Golf Course, Westbank Bowling Alley, the Fintroy Queen and a bunch of other romantic spots. We thought "the back seat of a

Best Winery

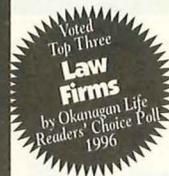
Mission Hill. This is another closely contested category. The wide vote spread reflects the great number of quality wines produced in the valley. Two years ago Mission Hill garnered a lot of press by winning the Avery Award for the 'best Chardonnay in the world.' Since then, New Zealand winemaker John Simes has unveiled many new award winning wines. Visitors also enjoy the picturesque view from the winery's hilltop location on Kelowna's Westside. **2nd:** Quail's Gate. **3rd:** (tie) Summerhill and Grey Monk.



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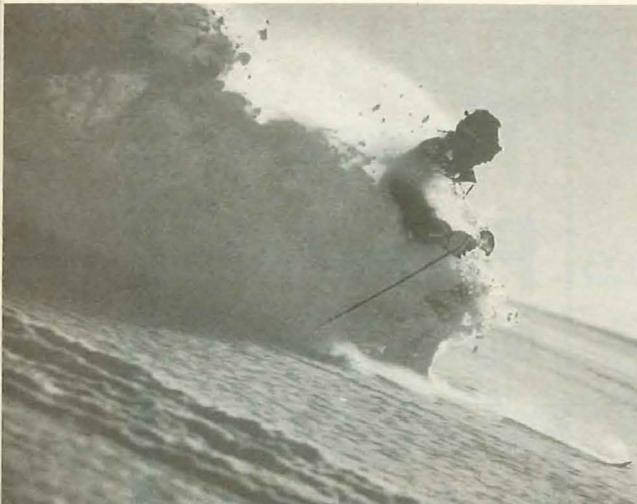
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Best Ski Area

Big White. In the midst of a multi-million dollar expansion which will open up another 1,000 acres of skiable terrain via the new Gem Lake Express chairlift, Big White was the top voter-getter. Known for its quantity and quality of snow, Big White, under the guiding hand of the Schumann family, is one of the reasons skiing in the Okanagan is moving into the big leagues. Of course, they have help from the world class developments at the 'Star' and Apex. **2nd:** Silver Star. **3rd:** Apex Mountain.

car" and "the Love Shop" might be moving a tad too fast! **2nd:** Movies. **3rd:** Water Street Grill.

BEST PLACE TO PROPOSE

Knox Mountain. It's a little rocky to kneel on but the view is great. The strategy is to so overwhelm her with the beautiful scenery that she overlooks the zit on your chin and the nervousness in your voice. If she says 'no' you can conveniently threaten to jump off a cliff. Good scenery, flowers and nature were common themes in many of the answers. The romantic couple who suggested the back seat of a car for a first date felt it was an all-purpose location. They suggest proposing there as well. (Sounds to us like there's a story behind this one). **2nd:** Hotel Eldorado. **3rd:** Kasugai Gardens.

BEST GOLF COURSE

Harvest Golf Club. This is always one of the most closely contested categories. People love to golf in the Okanagan and love their golf courses. Almost every golf course in the valley was named. Harvest Golf Club may have got the nod because it presents a fabulous view of the lake and valley from the East Kelowna bench it's perched upon. The course is not that intimidating at first glance, but its

length, and the fruit trees that line each fairway, take their toll on the unwary golfer. **2nd:** (tie) Kelowna Golf & Country Club; Quail Ridge. **3rd:** Gallagher's Canyon.

BEST PUB OR NEIGHBORHOOD BAR

McCulloch Station. Wow, judging by the votes, everybody has their favorite watering hole! McCulloch Station came out in front in a tight race. It's a little bit out of the way (like many in this category are) but once people find it they like the lively atmosphere, the tranquil orchard surroundings and the food. Having two golf courses next door and another just up the road also helps. **2nd:** Pheasant and Quail. **3rd:** (tie) Turtle Bay; Rose's; 97 Street Pub.

BEST PLACE TO REGAIN SANITY

At home or in the yard. A surprising winner! People really do see their home as a sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of 90's living. Well... not everybody. One reader with an obviously hectic home life said "at work." The range of answers included lots of nature spots (Idabel Lake, Ellison Park, Knox Mountain, Okanagan Mtn. Park, Bear Creek Park, etc.), activities (walking in Peachland,

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running in S.E. Kelowna, floating on the River Channel, fishing, bicycling, golfing, skiing) and restaurants, plus the more aesthetic such as Beyond Wraptide Urban Day Spa, Kelowna Art Gallery and Okanagan Game Farm! **2nd:** Waterfront Park. **3rd:** Boating on the lake.

services

BEST DRY CLEANER

Busy Bee. No it's not a franchise. Spall Plaza Busy Bee owner Ian Blackford says the secret of their success is having good, long-term employees and state-of-the-art equipment in order to consistently provide excellent service. We're sure everyone has received at least one Busy Bee coupon in the mail. Ian swears by offering customers good deals, thereby increasing awareness of his business at the same time. **2nd:** Capri Cleaners. **3rd:** Mission Cleaners.

BEST LAW FIRM

Salloum Doak. What can you say about a law firm without getting sued? Salloum Doak is one of the longest serving law firms in the valley and, as such, has corporate and personal

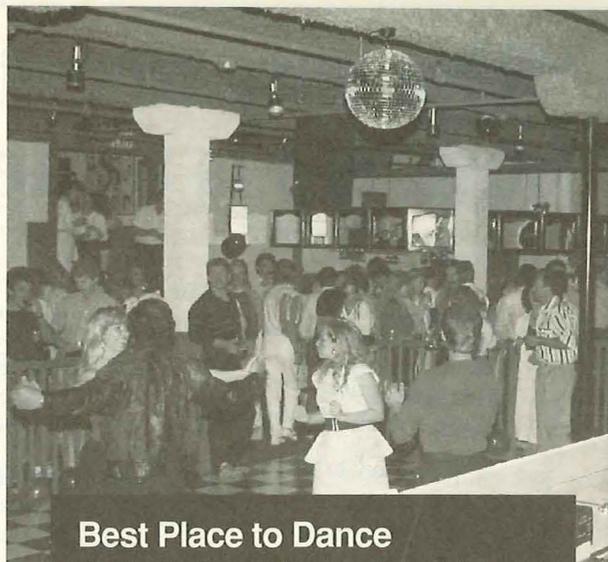
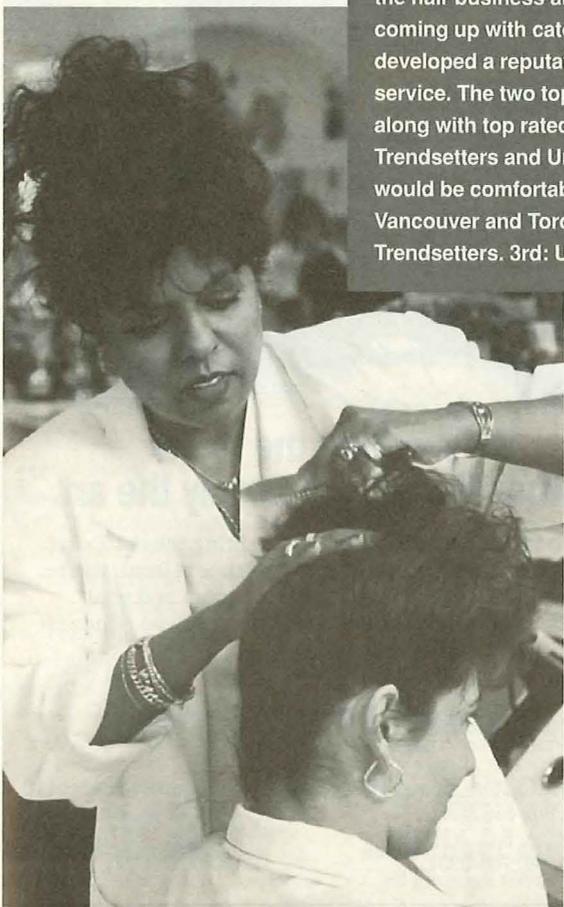
clientele throughout the region (whew!). Actually we heard that all those golf tees handed out by Larry Salloum, labelled "We sue for you," may have given them the extra boost needed to win this popularity race. **2nd:** Thiessen Petraroia. **3rd:** Pushor Mitchell.

BEST AUTO MECHANIC

(tie) **Canadian Tire and Winn Automotive.** The big guy vs. the little guy. Canadian Tire was one of the first to make auto repair an

Best Hair Salon

(tie) **Gini's Hairport and Dewey Cuttem and Howe.** Maybe our readers thought they were voting for the hair salon with the cutest or most clever name. Seriously, both stylists seem to have secured a loyal clientele who remain faithful despite the extreme trends in hair styling. Gini's is operated by Rosalind Satar (pictured below) who named the salon after her childhood nickname. Her creative work with the shears have won her numerous awards over the years. Maureen Anderson of Dewey Cuttem and Howe is an old hand at the hair business and, besides coming up with catchy names, has developed a reputation for great service. The two top vote getters, along with top rated salons Trendsetters and Untouchables, would be comfortable in Vancouver and Toronto. **2nd:** Trendsetters. **3rd:** Untouchables.



Best Place to Dance

Flashbacks. Apparently our readers prefer good ol' rock and roll when it comes to gyrating on the dance floor (with a little jive, reggae and hip hop thrown in for good measure). Two steppin' and line dancing down at the Corral is also popular – for those that own a pair of cowboy boots. One practical reader suggested a ballroom might be appropriate. An even more practical, happy-go-lucky homemaker suggested their kitchen (nothing like freshly polished lino.) **2nd:** OK Corral. **3rd:** Gotcha.

efficient 'art'—in a big way! It's amazing to watch their 'assembly line' service in full gear when you're one of the dozen desperate souls lined up at the service counter first thing in the morning. Winn Automotive, on the other hand, was a one-man operation 11 years ago and has grown to be a well-respected 10-person (including five technicians) auto repair company. The reason: "Honesty and service," says owner Bruce Winn, "and the little extra things we do to take the pain out of auto repair." **2nd:** Jacobsen. **3rd:** Williams' Service.

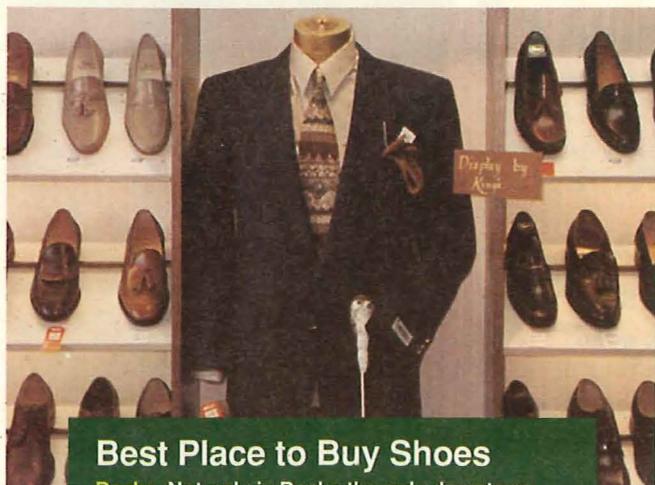
BEST FITNESS CLUB

The Womens Place. No muscle-bound males flexing in front of the mirror can be seen here. The top fitness spot is a club exclusively for women and that's something owner Noreen Dodgson is extremely proud of. She has no qualms about the fact men are deliberately excluded from her gym. Her goal is to provide a "safe and non-threatening environment for women." It is

so popular, the Women's Place has doubled in size in the last three years. It now provides 50 aerobics classes a week and all equipment is designed with women in mind. Watch out guys, a new ladies only gym, The Train Station, tied for third. **2nd:** Gold's Gym. **3rd:** (tie) Courtplex; The Train Station.

BEST ACCOUNTING FIRM

MacKay and Partners. "People like our people," says Don Turri of MacKay and Partners. "Accountants have been accused of having the personality of a stick, so we've kept that in mind as we've grown." That explains why Don's client Christmas parties have been given the theme: "Accountants just wanna have fun." Seriously, though, the MacKay gang has been in Kelowna for 26 years and offers a wide range of services, including tax and computer specialists. **2nd:** Thalheimer & Co. **3rd:** (tie) Rutherford Bazzett, Snowsell Jennens and Peat Marwick Thorne.



Best Place to Buy Shoes

Dacks. Not only is Dacks the only downtown store among the top five chosen by our readers, it's the only exclusively male shoe store, which to proprietor Kevin Breisch speaks volumes for the respect Dacks has gathered over the years. Staff use the old-fashioned technique of measuring their patron's foot before recommending a size, and since the store offers more than just standard sizes, everyone is guaranteed a comfortable fit. The Dacks line is Canadian-made, offering another incentive to clientele who wish to support domestic products. **2nd:** (tie) Ingledeus and Aldo. **3rd:** (tie) Naturalizer and Bata.

retail

BEST PLACE TO BUY WOMEN'S CLOTHING

(tie) Brambles and Scalas. Despite the apparent trend towards shopping in big malls, two independent women's retailers scored tops in the view of our readers. Janice of Scalas calls her Bernard Street store the "Holt Renfrew of Kelowna," and says the boutique's popularity is due to its uniqueness. "I wanted to create a store in Kelowna where women could buy the latest fashions without having to go to Vancouver." Brambles owner Ruth Munro would agree that both stores have provided high quality clothing and excellent customer service in building a loyal following. Kudos to all the top finishers in this race, who sat on top of a large pack of other vote-getters. **2nd:** Eatons. **3rd:** (tie) Drydock and Lee and Kettle Creek.

BEST PLACE TO BUY MEN'S CLOTHING

Milano Clothing Co. It appears

many readers prefer European flair. To proprietor Khalid Amin of Milano it's no surprise. He says his stores offer something different for the discriminating male shopper with no compromise when it comes to quality. The Bay and independent men's store, The Black Door, in Capri Centre were close runner-ups in a race that featured big retailers versus the specialists. **2nd:** (tie) The Bay and The Black Door. **3rd:** Eatons.

BEST PLACE TO BUY LINGERIE

La Senza. People not only like their lingerie, they like the name. Plus the convenience. Preferring mall retailing, the La Senza chain offers a wide range of styles and prices. Local Kelowna boutiques Intimo and Fashion Foundations gave them a run for their money. They specialize in personal service, with the latter offering complete mastectomy services as well. **2nd:** (tie) Intimo; Fashion Foundations. **3rd:** Silk and Satin.

MOST COOL GIFTS

Gull Cottage Gifts. Kathie

Rousseau's store on Pandosy Street in the Mission specializes in quality Canadian handcrafts. It is a veritable potpourri of interesting items that fit every gift giving need and budget. "Our stock is always changing," says Kathie. "People enjoy seeing what's new since their last visit." Plus their gift wrapping service may have garnered them a few extra votes (eh, guys?). **2nd:** Pandoras Box. **3rd:** (tie) Modern Accent; Terwilliger P. Jones.

BEST COMPUTER STORE

Northern Computer. Buying a computer can be a frightening experience for the novice and intimidating for everyone else, since there are so many rapid changes in the industry. "Our staff is dedicated to providing a smooth transition into the computer world," says Northern Computer's Ross Dickie. He attributes their success to their professionalism and stability (15 years). Plus, their ratio of one technician for every salesperson amongst their 26 employees indicates their

working its magic. They finished a close second, with Don Folk nipping at their heels. **2nd:** Jacobsens. **3rd:** Don Folk Honda.

BEST MAJOR RETAILER

The Bay. Why do our readers love The Bay? Perhaps it's all those "Scratch n'Save" promotions, or the five 'Bay dollars' that come with your credit card statement, or perhaps it's the unexpected discount you get when they enter the product number into their computer (didn't see the 'All Men's Hosiery On Sale' sign), or maybe it's just that our readers like the merchandise and friendly, no-pressure service. Or maybe it's the new look in the expanded Kelowna store... **2nd:** Eatons. **3rd:** Costco.

BEST GARDEN CENTRE

Art Knapp. Volume, value and friendly, knowledgeable service are the reasons behind Art Knapp's success in the Okanagan according to Kelowna outlet operator Jeff Vander Zalm. Being a chain has enabled the garden



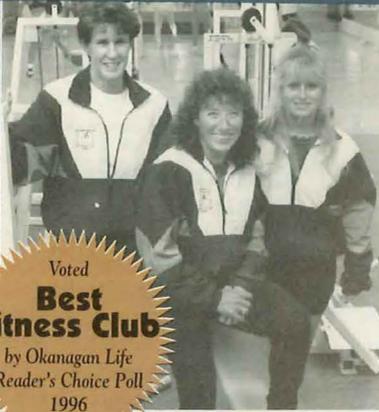
Best Place to Buy Fresh Fruits & Vegetables

Paul's Produce. "If we won it's because we held a gun to their heads," jokes Ann Andrews, of Paul's Produce. But in all seriousness, the high quality and freshness of the store's merchandise is the real reason behind it's success, she says, pointing to the fact a second store was recently opened near Costco. **2nd:** Quality Greens. **3rd:** (tie) Farmer's Market; Orchard Park Mall.

commitment to service. **2nd:** London Drugs. **3rd:** Future Shop.

BEST AUTO DEALER

Kelowna Plymouth Chrysler. Ernie Falk's Kelowna Plymouth Chrysler was the readers' choice. We think it's because nobody comes across better on T.V. than Ernie does. In fact, he's so good we think he could produce his own talk show. Just think Ernie, now that Donahue has retired... hmmm. Jacobsens "The Only Price" must be



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Best Local Band

Who's On Bass. Who's on drums, who's on guitar, who's on bass? Mike Jervis, Paddy Jervis and Jim LeGuilloux are three talented musicians who keep swapping instruments during their gigs - hence the name. They enjoy being the house band at Angie's Pub because "it's one of the few rooms you can turn things up!" The band is currently working on their second CD. 2nd: Retrograde. 3rd: (tie) The Cruzeros and Kinship.

centre to remain competitive and keep up with the trends, offering customers whatever is new and exciting in landscaping and gardening. However, these trends may at times be a little silly admits VanderZalm. He remembers a time 20 years ago when eight-foot tall tomato trees were all the rage. 2nd: (tie) Burnett's Nurseries and Bylands Nurseries. 3rd: Revy.

BEST PLACE TO BUY FRESH MEATS

Wim's Freezer Meats. One witty reader suggested Flashback's night club was the best place to find "fresh meat," but thankfully most people took the question seriously. The name may not advertise it, but Wim's Freezer Meats has gained a reputation for high quality fresh cuts during its 20 years in business in Kelowna. The fact the company now has three Okanagan locations speaks volumes for the loyal patronage Wim's has enjoyed despite the growth of major supermarket chains. 2nd: Illichmann & Son. 3rd: Costco.



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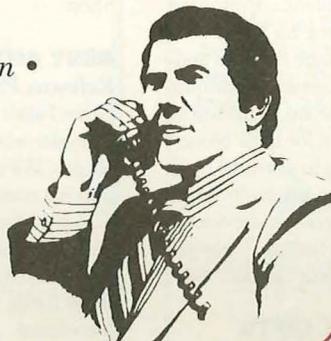
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BEST LOCAL WRITER OR COLUMNIST

John Thomson. 'JT,' as he is affectionately known, never thought he was much of a writer. But when he first began his column for *Okanagan Business* magazine, his collection of local and international business facts, figures, gossip, wit and insight, delivered in straightforward style, was instantly a winner. Many have admitted it's a great read over a cup of coffee or a stint in the 'oval' office. He now writes twice weekly for *The Daily Courier* and is well known for his Media Marketing Club events. **2nd:** Maeve Brennan. **3rd:** John Harding.

BEST ALDERPERSON

Robert Hobson. The teachers at Dorothea Walker Elementary School had no idea that the little Hobson kid in their first 'graduating' class would grow up to be an influential alderman in the City of Kelowna. Robert surprised us all by announcing that he is not running for Mayor in the upcoming civic elections. The others running for the office breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that Robert's hard work and common sense approach to issues have made him very popular. **2nd:** (tie) Ben Lee and Andre Blanliel. **3rd:** Shirley Staley.

BEST ARTIST

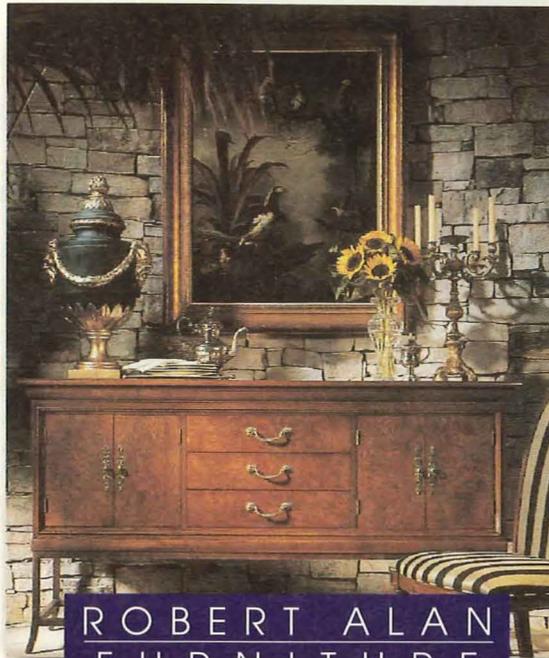
Robert Dow Reid. Robert's sculptures,

Best Sports Team

Kelowna Grizzlies. They're often confused with the Vancouver Grizzlies (these players are shorter and wear longer pants). The Kelowna Grizzlies brought first class baseball here two years ago and have gotten great support from local fans. Top quality college prospects give the Grizzlies an exciting on-field package. Junior football, hockey and soccer (the Okanagan Challenge) were all popular choices as well. **2nd:** Okanagan Sun. **3rd:** Kelowna Rockets.



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notably the *Spirit of Sail* (or 'The Sails' as they are more commonly known) at the foot of Bernard, *Harmony* in the Grand Okanagan Hotel's lobby and *Rhapsody* which graces the roadside entrance to Waterfront Park, have become symbols of Kelowna and the Okanagan. Eight years ago Robert's hands 'unveiled' our first issue, including a feature about himself. It's no surprise to us that the popularity of his work places him at the top in the minds of our readers. We'd love to publish the long list of names we received for this category, but suffice it to say that it's worth checking local art galleries for works of the many accomplished and budding artists in the Valley. **2nd:** Lee Claremont. **3rd:** Rod Tribiger.

BEST REALTOR

Jim and Sylvia Mayne. They are probably the most recognizable couple in Okanagan Real Estate (although Jim confused a few people when he shaved off his beard). The Mayne 'team,' including their support staff, works like a well oiled machine—with the personal, friendly touch. RE/MAX is proud to have them 'flying their balloon!' **2nd:** Rob Archibald. **3rd:** (tie) Lorne Ayers; Bonnie Talbot.

miscellaneous

BEST OKANAGAN TRADITION

Wine Festival. Despite the fact the Okanagan is said to be a summer vacation mecca, perhaps the biggest tourist event actually takes place in October: the Fall Okanagan Wine Festival. Every year thousands of people flood into the area to taste the best the Okanagan has to offer and every year it gets bigger as the region gains greater respect for producing high-quality,

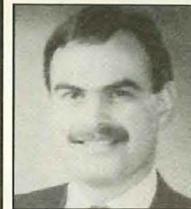
world class wines. This tradition always coincides with the harvest, making it an even greater time for visitors and residents alike. Not everybody is a wine-drinker, however. One reader's favorite tradition is a visit to the beer gardens during Rutland May Days. To each his own. It was nice to see Regatta, the tradition that refused to die (thanks to Ernie Winter and Kelly Blair), finish a close second. **2nd:** Regatta. **3rd:** Ogopogo.

CELEBRITY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE MOVE HERE

Wayne Gretzky. Our guess: people voted for Wayne thinking we'd be sure to get a new arena in Kelowna if he lived here. Second place was a little confusing since all the rumors we hear suggest Arnold Schwarzenegger is already here—somewhere near Kalamalka Lake. And perhaps Madonna picked up third because she is soon to start a family. The many other suggestions included: David Duchovny, Jim Carrey, Richard Simmons, Garth Brooks, Princess Di, Oprah, Mel Gibson, Margaret Atwood, David Suzuki and Ogoopogo! **2nd:** Arnold Schwarzenegger. **3rd:** Madonna.

Best Local Radio Personality

David, Kelly and Tony. Three for one. One for three. These three are promoted so much as a threesome, and spend so much time together, that people are starting to think they are one personality. We had to give them all the win in this category based on the many ballots that included all three names. It's true, when one of them is missing from SILK-FM's morning show it's just not the same. Ron moved into a tie with Barry for second when we realized the vote for "Skippy" meant "Zippy." **2nd:** (tie) Barry Clark and Ron 'Zippy' Gilmour. **3rd:** Rick Ball.



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Best Local TV Personality

Mike Roberts. Mike blew away the competition in this category capturing a whopping 80% of the votes cast (sorry Pat and Gord!) Never has someone who has been wrong so many times been so liked. We assume our readers forgive him because predicting the weather is not exactly an exact science. Actually we have evidence that he has been accurate once or twice since we received several entries in the "Quote heard all year" category from readers who wrote, "Mike said it would be like this!" He smiles so much, even when he's talking about torrential rain and -30°C temperatures, that he makes us feel good anyway. 2nd: Pat Kennedy. 3rd: Gord Visutti.

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THINGS THE OKANAGAN DOESN'T NEED MORE OF

Traffic. If all our readers had their way there would be no weather, no seniors, no teenagers, no seagulls, no malls, media, restaurants, developments, apples, tourists or people. In other words, the place wouldn't exist. It's not surprising, however, that the top complaint is traffic. More than a few unsavory words have been expressed on a hot Friday afternoon when the Okanagan bridge has been backed up. But a lot of motorists could use the reality check that a trip to downtown Vancouver or Toronto could easily provide. 2nd: Restaurants. 3rd: Pollution.

OLM