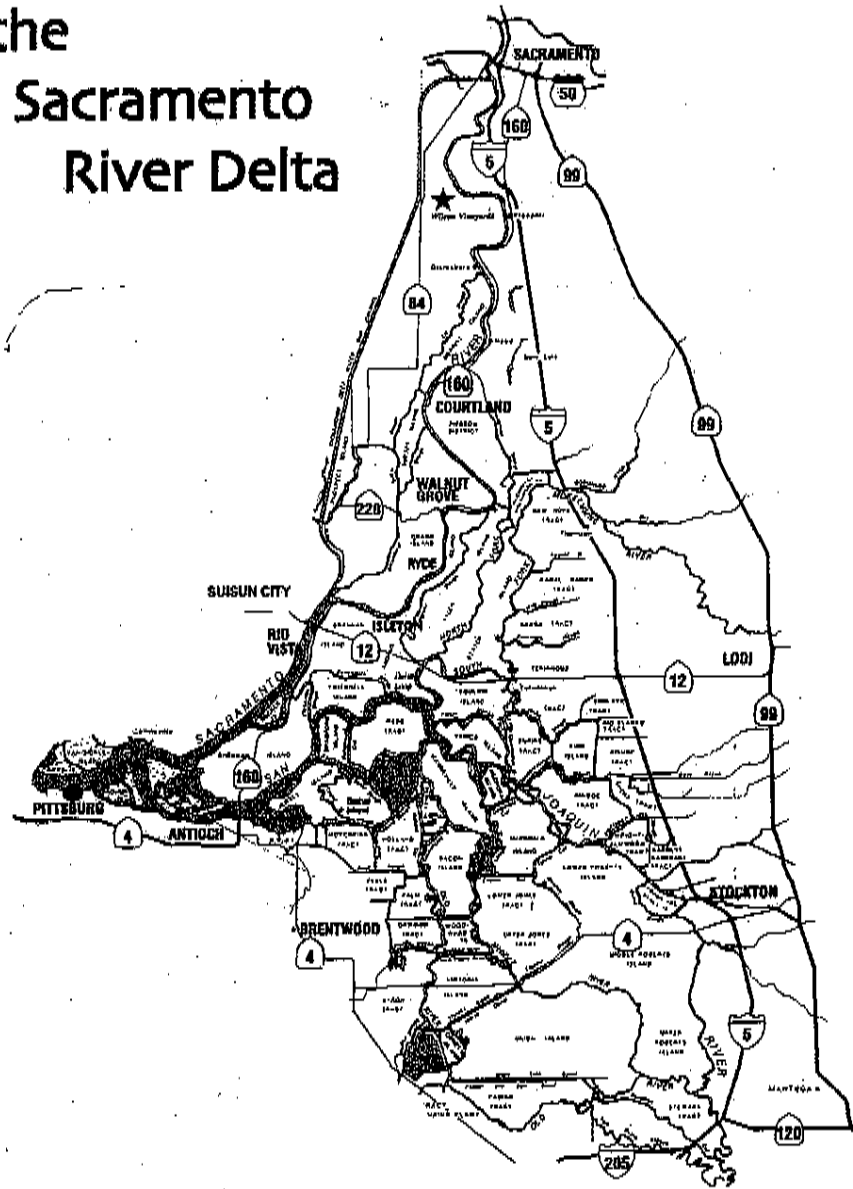


# the Sacramento River Delta



## DINING ON THE DELTA by Nicky Suard

**T**he variety of Epicurean delights one can experience in the California Delta region is astounding. This large but quiet area of California, set between the hubbub of Sacramento and San Francisco, offers explorers tasty delights not found elsewhere west of the Mississippi. The delta is often associated with the bayous of Louisiana because of the quaint and beautiful waterways that make up this area of California. But THIS delta branches out beyond Cajun classics to authentic Italian, Chinese, Mexican, French and the new upscale "California Cuisine" type ventures. It's just a matter of deciding what you feel like eating today, and then hopping into your car or boat to visit the eatery of your choice.

This Historic Region of the Delta features some of the long time favorites of the locals, or those who know the best spots. For example, Fosters Big Horn, located downtown on Main Street in Rio Vista, is a frequent stop for visiting hunters and fishermen. Its walls and ceilings and every crevice is covered with remnants of the hunting forays of Foster's original owner who hunted big game

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with natives and the like. The food is good and the ambiance, very unusual. But I would not recommend this place for young children or those who get upset from seeing the past hunting habits of Americans. Also, lunches are very affordable, starting around \$7 and dinners don't go over \$15.

Another Delta classic in Rio Vista is the Point Restaurant, located just south of Main Street in the Delta Marina area. The Point is situated on the waterfront; and from the circular bar area or the wide open restaurant rooms, the wide expanse of the Sacramento River fills the view where large and small ships can be seen voyaging north to Sacramento or south to the San Francisco Bay. The Point features traditional seafood and steaks, and the chef has a flair for great sauces. The fresh local fish, prepared with garlic or other toppings, is cooked to perfection. But this writer's favorite lunch at The Point is offered Thursdays only, the Monte Cristo Portions can be big enough for two here. Lunches and dinners can range from \$7 to \$25.

If you like Mexican food, downtown Main Street in Rio Vista is a good spot. Called the "Taqueria," this restaurant offers the best chicken burritos I've ever tasted. The burrito is huge, stuffed with spicy chicken, rice and beans, and only the hungriest teen boy can finish one of these in one sitting. And at less than \$5 for the entire meal, you could even order two!

Before leaving Rio Vista, you might want to check in on a new restaurant called The Grill at Rio Vista Golf Course. This is an extremely upscale facility with excellent food - very reasonably priced for a golf course setting. Lunches here are in the \$8 to \$15 range... dinners, a bit more.

Venturing to other Historic Delta towns, Isleton offers several restaurants worthy of your pallet. The Del Rio is well known for their week end evening steaks and Prime Rib, and even better known for where local politics, news and gossip is exchanged and rehashed. Located on Hwy 160, a wide variety of people come here from all over as the locals watch from outside the café tables to see view the visitors. Some like to guess the occupations of visitors based on what they look like, and even make bets! So if someone asks you what you do, be aware you may be the subject of a bet, and you'll probably make someone's day!

Another good Isleton stop is Rojellios, which serves Mexican, Chinese and Italian foods - no kidding! Located on the older section of Main Street in Isleton, a husband and wife team own and operate this eclectic restaurant. Their extended families each add dishes based on their own ethnic backgrounds creating a very interesting menu. The setting is shady and cool making this a favorite stop for locals, especially in summer time. For breakfast, the bright pink Catfish Café in old town Isleton hops with the locals... good hearty traditional breakfasts and lots of smiles.

Moseying on up Hwy 160, crossing a bridge and continuing north for a few more miles you'll come to the Ryde Hotel and Restaurant. The Ryde is a refurbished 1880's speakeasy and considered one of the upscale restaurants of this area. Sunday brunch is consistently good, as are all lunches and dinners. This



Near California Delta's Suisun City

restaurant is creative in further defining "California Cuisine" as the chef continues to experiment with new culinary concepts, making the chef specials especially fun here. While more pricey than most Delta area restaurants, you'll probably spend only half of what you would for the same meal in a metropolitan setting.

Continuing north on Hwy 160 travelers shouldn't miss stopping at the quaint river town of Walnut Grove. A great traditional breakfast stop is Alma's, where the local ranchers are always in residence on early mornings. The "best crops to plant" and "will the Farmers' Almanac be correct this year?" are common spirited discussions at Alma's. Another funky, fun Delta eatery is Guisti's, located off Walnut Grove Road, east of Hwy 160. Guisti's has been here for years and is decorated with baseball style caps from all over the world hanging from the ceilings, bar tap, pool cues and anywhere else that will hold a hat! Mark, the bartender, will happily take additions to their collection. The menu offers a variety of hearty "family style" portions that are served at your table while everyone digs in! This writer favors the steaks smothered in garlic butter and the great home made soups!

The historic Delta region offers about 75 of the more than 300 unique restaurants found in the Delta. Plan to stay in one of the local resorts, such as Snug Harbor, a nearby establishment that offers cute Cape Cod style waterfront vacation cabins for rent. Fishing, camping, swimming, bicycling, boating and other area activities can make for the perfect weekend while you work off the calories from all the good foods you've been sampling as you eat your way around the Delta!

