

Alfaia (Frommers) Portuguese

This lovely neighborhood restaurant, tucked away off Avenida N.S. de Copacabana, has been serving up great Portuguese food for 15 years. The house specialties are the dishes made with *bacalhau* (salted codfish). Start off with the perfectly deep-fried *bolinhos de bacalhau* (codfish dumplings). The most popular main course is the *bacalhau à Bras*, oven-baked codfish served with potatoes, scrambled egg, onion, and olives. The cod dishes also come in half portions. We found that with appetizers and dessert the half dish was plenty for two people. Other dishes include the classic sole *à belle meunière* sauce, with butter, garlic, and mushrooms and side of potatoes and vegetables. The grilled octopus with red peppers, onions, and roasted potatoes is also a good choice.. For dessert there are delicious Portuguese pastries. The bestseller is the pastel de nata, a flaky pastry stuffed with creamy custard. Rua Inhangá 30, Copacabana; Mon-Sat noon-midnight; Sun noon-11pm; Main courses R\$46-R\$85 for 2

Churrascaria Carretão (Frommers) *churrascaria*

For a churrascaria meal without breaking the bank, try Carretão. It's an all-you-can-eat *rodízio* system: Meats are delivered to your table by a constant parade of waiters carrying a variety of cuts, and you can help yourself to a large buffet with a selection of 20 salads, sushi, and even grilled salmon or trout. Carretão also serves up a variety of pork, sausage, chicken, and turkey cuts. Children 4 and under eat free, those ages 5 to 9 pay only half price. Just keep them away from the fruit smoothies and desserts so eagerly pushed by the waiters; these aren't included in the price, and jack up the bill pretty quickly. Rua Ronald de Carvalho 55, Copacabana; Also: Rua Visconde de Pirajá 112, Ipanema. tel. 021/2267-3965 Rua Siqueira Campos 23, Copacabana; 11am-midnight; R\$35 all-you-can-eat, drinks and desserts extra

Gero (Frommers; others) Italian

The Rio branch of a highly successful São Paulo restaurant brings the same sophisticated styling to the room and the same meticulous preparation to the meals. Signature dishes include rack of lamb with a black truffle and foie gras sauce, or *osso buco* with mushrooms. Pastas include gnocchi with squid, and a ravioli of veal with a mushroom sauce. The room is open but warm, with a hardwood floor and exposed brick walls. Wines lean to the higher end -- avoid the overpriced token Brazilian vintages, and seek out the midpriced Chilean and Argentine vintages. Rua Anibal de Mendonça 157, Ipanema; Mon-Fri noon-4pm and 7pm-1am; Sat noon-2am; Sun noon-midnight; Main courses R\$35-R\$65

Giuseppe Grill (Frommers) Steak

With outstanding steak, an affordably priced wine list, and excellent and attentive service, what's not to recommend? The house specialty is beef. You can choose from grilled beef or slowly roasted beef on a charcoal grill. Both options include numerous cuts -- prime rib, Argentine chorizo steak, filet mignon, and rump steak as well as beef ribs, pork, and chicken. Each main course comes with a side dish; you can choose from salads, rice, and potatoes served fried, roasted, baked, or sautéed. In addition, the restaurant also serves up outstanding fresh seafood. There's shrimp and *namorado* and catch of the day -- ask for the waiter's recommendation. Av. Bartolomeu Mitre 370, Leblon; Mon-Thurs noon-4pm and 7pm-midnight; Fri-Sat noon-1am; Sun noon-11pm; Main courses R\$36-R\$65

Gula Gula Italian

Housed in a 1920s mansion on a side street off Rua Visconde de Pirajá, Gula Gula, the lead outlet of this classy steak-house chain, is a stalwart dining option that attracts upper-crust Carioca regulars with its well-executed grilled meats, chicken, and fish. Rio's daily *O Globo* newspaper, however, singled out the

vegetarian options—palm hearts and watercress with raisin dressing; Andean corn with a piquant pineapple sauce; smoked salmon with mint leaves; and the Mediterranean Salad, a towering mound of shrimp, squid, zucchini, and tarragon-marinated hearts of palm—for its Best Salad prize in 2010. The cavernous dining rooms include an airy antechamber with two-tone floor tiles and potted palms and a wood-clad bar with orange acrylic seating. The street-facing terrace is great for admiring Ipanema's bright and beautiful. 57 Rua Henrique Dumont, Ipanema; Tel: 55 21 2259 3084

Margutta (Frommers) Italian

Margutta offers Mediterranean cuisine with an emphasis on seafood. The room is cozy and intimately lit. Owner Paolo Neroni often greets guests at the door and provides a word or two of recommendation. We started off with deliciously sautéed mushrooms, followed by the *farfalle al gamberi e zafferano*, bow-tie pasta with prawns in creamy saffron. For our entree we tried the signature dish, the *Pesce alla Neroni* (oven-roasted fish with fine herbs and a side of roasted potatoes and tomatoes). What impresses is the simplicity of the dishes. No convoluted sauces, long lists of ingredients, or fancy fusion. Most dishes seem to consist of three or four ingredients and just the right amount of herbs to balance the flavors. Av. Henrique Dumont 62, Ipanema/Leblon; Mon-Fri 6pm-1am; Sat and holidays noon-1am; Sun noon-midnight; Main courses R\$35-R\$75

Porcão (various) *churrascaria*

This *churrascaria* chain is a hungry-man institution—after all, the name charmingly translates into "big pig." Come starving, and don't burn out too soon. First up is a massive buffet "salad" bar, with cold cuts, sushi, hearts of palm, salad, cheeses, and seafood casseroles. Meanwhile, waiters push around carts of drinks and make fresh juice-and-alcohol concoctions. Then come the meats, delivered tableside: pork, chicken wrapped with bacon, chicken hearts, all manner of beef preparations (including a sumptuous cheese-rubbed one). The best cut of all is *picanha*—the equivalent of filet mignon. Sides include black beans, french fries, *farofa*, onion rings, and cheese balls. You can only stop the onslaught by flipping your coaster from the green side to the red. Except for drinks and dessert, it's all included in the per-person price. Don't plan anything afterward—except a nap. There are locations throughout the city, but this one, in Ipanema, is consistently the best. 218 Rua Barão da Torre, Ipanema. Open Mondays through Thursdays noon to midnight, Fridays and Saturdays noon to 12:30 am, and Sundays noon to 11 pm.; Tel: 55 21 3202 9158 **Price:** \$39 per person.;

Siri Mole (Various) Brazilian/fish

Siri Mole is one of the best Bahian restaurants in town. Although the location on the corner of the busy Rua Francisco Otaviano is less than inspired, the food is worth the trip. The *moquecas* are outstanding, perfectly balancing the mix of coconut milk, red dendê palm oil, and fresh cilantro that give this dish its signature flavor. Try a *moqueca* with prawns, octopus, fish, or lagoustine. The grilled seafood or fish are also excellent. Portions are a reasonable size and can often be shared. During Saturday's lunch buffet (noon-5pm) the restaurant serves up a variety of delicacies (R\$42 per person, all you can eat). Make sure to save room for dessert. There's *quindim*, a creamy coconut pudding, or *cocada* -- pure coconut mixed with pure cane sugar -- then wash it down with a hot and black *cafezinho*. Rua Francisco Otaviano 50, Copacabana; Mon 7pm-midnight; Tues-Sun noon-midnight.; Main courses R\$60-R\$95