

Weekend Pass | dining



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MARGELY/EXPRESS

There's nothing power players enjoy more than inking major deals, except maybe the steak, eggs and pommes frites at Bistro Bis.

Rise & Dine

Groom a candidate, balance the budget or plan a coup the way the Washington bigshots do — over a nice, warm breakfast

If you want to make a deal in D.C., plan to do it first thing in the morning. Politicos, lobbyists and policy wonks see breakfast as prime negotiation time — the calm before the day's onslaught of emails and phone calls begins. The relative quiet and privacy makes the morning meal the natural heir to the louder, rowdier power lunch. "It's a time of day when people are really focused," explains Bistro Bis' chef-owner Jeffrey Buben. "People can meet face to face and talk without being interrupted by all their electronics." If you want to see some heavyweights in action, you will need one piece of gadgetry, though — an alarm clock — because power brokers start early. **NEVIN MARTELL**

Who Ate Where?

All of these famous power players dined at the spots featured on this page. Can you guess who prefers Seasons to Old Ebbitt? Answers appear below.



Sean Penn



Arnold Schwarzenegger



Amelia Earhart



George Clooney



Hillary Clinton



Charles Lindbergh



Joe Biden



Theodore Roosevelt



Barack Obama



Ulysses S. Grant



Condoleezza Rice



Sinclair Lewis

Bistro Bis

The key to becoming a breakfast hot spot for D.C.'s wheeler-dealers is achieving Swiss-like neutrality. "When we first opened, someone asked if we were a Republican restaurant or a Democratic restaurant," says Buben. "I said, 'Whatever you are, that's what we are.'" Since 1998, his Capitol Hill eatery has served up an apolitical array of start-me-up dishes, including eggs Benedict with pommes frites (\$16); the Monte Cristo omelet with ham, gruyere cheese and chives (\$14.25); and cinnamon hazelnut French toast (\$13.50). No matter what guests order, Buben follows one golden rule: "Get diners coffee right away, because no deal gets very far without it."

Breakfast served: 7 to 10 a.m. (daily).
Bistro Bis, 15 E St. NW; 202-661-2700, Bistrobis.com.



MARGELY/EXPRESS

The Lafayette at The Hay-Adams

Located across the street from the White House, this insiders haven is a longtime favorite of visiting VIPs, though you don't have to have a Secret Service detail to make a reservation. Leak classified information over the cornflakes-crusting cranberry French toast made with focaccia bread and crowned with pear compote and caramel sauce (\$16), above. Or prosecute traitors with the help of the buttermilk whole-wheat waffles topped with yogurt (\$17) instead.

Breakfast served: 6:30 to 11 a.m. (Mon.-Fri.); 7 to 11 a.m. (Sat. and Sun.).
The Lafayette, 16th and H streets NW; 202-638-6600, Hayadams.com.



COURTESY CLYDE'S RESTAURANT GROUP

Old Ebbitt Grill

This D.C. institution began as Washington's first saloon, in what is now Chinatown. After several moves and changes of ownership, Old Ebbitt ended up at its current location on 15th Street NW. Along the way, it's hosted innumerable presidents, dignitaries and celebs. "During inauguration weekend, Morgan Freeman sat at [one of] the most popular tables in the front window," says general manager Christian Guidi. He recommends the oatmeal pancakes, above, or the French toast (\$11.95), which comes in flavors such as pumpkin during the fall and strawberry during the summer.

Breakfast served: 7:30 to 11 a.m. (Mon.-Fri.); (brunch) 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. (Sat. and Sun.)
Old Ebbitt Grill, 675 15th St. NW; 202-347-4800, Ebbitt.com.

Seasons

For more than three decades, Seasons has been helping high-profile players keep their business on the down low. "Sometimes we'll know who's going to be appointed before the press [does], because we'll see the deal go down over breakfast," says executive chef Douglas Anderson. While you're waiting to overhear tomorrow's news, order the much-loved lemon ricotta pancakes with slivers of candied lemon peel and warm maple syrup (\$17).

Breakfast served: 6:30 to 10:30 a.m. (Mon.-Fri.); 7 to 10:30 a.m. (Sat. and Sun.)
Seasons, 2800 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; 202-342-0444, Fourseasons.com/washington/dining.