

LEFT, CENTER ABOVE BY ASHLEY M. BIGGERS; CENTER BELOW ISTOCK.COM



JEFF DOW / COURTESY INN OF THE MOUNTAIN GODS

Clockwise from left—At The Village Buttery, Becky Walston serves up slices of pecan and buttermilk pies. At Wendell's Steak and Seafood Restaurant at Inn of the Mountain Gods, drink in the views while savoring tenderloin beef tips in a Cajun bourbon *buerre blanc*. Wake up to pistachio pancakes at Chef Lupe's Family Restaurant.

BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER: RUIDOSO

# Tall Pines and Pistachio Pancakes

**RUIDOSO, A HAMLET OF ABOUT 9,000**

people roughly 200 miles southeast of Albuquerque on N.M. 48, is tucked into the pine-covered hills of the Sacramento Mountains. From here, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, and fishing in the Lincoln National Forest are all close at hand. In the winter, this haven from the summer heat is transformed into a picturesque ski village offering enough activities to keep you crossing your fingers for snow days.

During a weekend getaway in this family-friendly destination, my mother and I begin our day at **Chef Lupe's Family Restaurant**. This comfortable, unassuming establishment serves several New Mexican breakfast favorites and a scrumptious regional dish: pistachio pancakes. Heart of the Desert, the state's oldest and largest pistachio farm, harvests its nuts nearby, in sunny, southern New Mexico. The farm's pistachios and a drizzling of maple syrup give our pancakes extra zing.

Bellies full, we venture to the **Hubbard Museum of the American West**, where we take in centuries of local culture and history. The collection includes Native American artifacts, and an impressive

collection of the stagecoaches, buggies, and wagons that transported generations of hardscrabble folks across the rugged Western landscape.

We lunch at the charming **Village Buttery**—our favorite dining find in town. With summer in full swing, we enjoy light, refreshing salads and sandwiches on the shaded patio amid overflowing flowerpots, and welcoming service from owners Frank and Becky Walston and their staff. We top off our meal with a craving-worthy piece of buttermilk pie. The promise of the eatery's warming, hearty soups tempts us back for more during the winter.

We stroll Ruidoso's quaint downtown, which runs along Sudderth Drive, and indulge in the local clothing boutiques, home décor shops, and art galleries. After shopping till we nearly drop, we revive ourselves with flaky cinnamon scones and a wide selection of loose-leaf teas at **Atticus Books & Teahouse**. Rooibos teas in hand, we wander the aisles of used books, then settle on one of the plush couches for some good reads.

We conclude our day with a trip to the Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort and

Casino, in Mescalero, five miles south of Ruidoso on U.S. 70. The resort's breathtaking scenery alone merits a visit. Owned by the Mescalero Apache tribe, it's nestled at the foot of Sierra Blanca Peak, along Lake Mescalero. Inn of the Mountain Gods is also home to **Wendell's Steak and Seafood Restaurant**, a fine-dining restaurant serving a generous menu of tender cuts of meats and sinful desserts. If you're a vegetarian, be prepared to assemble a meal from their assortment of tasty, hearty side dishes—there are no vegetarian entrées. As the sun casts its blush hues over the nearby forest, we toast the day as our family does best: with dessert.

**Chef Lupe's Family Restaurant**, 1101 Sudderth Dr., (575) 257-4687; **Hubbard Museum of the American West**, 841 W. U.S. 70, Ruidoso Downs, (575) 378-4142, [www.hubbardmuseum.org](http://www.hubbardmuseum.org); **The Village Buttery**, 2107 Sudderth Dr., (575) 257 9251, [www.thevillagebuttery.com](http://www.thevillagebuttery.com); **Atticus Books & Teahouse**, 413 Mechem Dr., (575) 257-2665, [www.atticusbooksandteahouse.com](http://www.atticusbooksandteahouse.com); **Wendell's Steak and Seafood Restaurant**, 287 Carrizo Canyon Rd., Mescalero, (888) 324-0348, [www.innofthemountaingods.com](http://www.innofthemountaingods.com)

—Ashley M. Biggers