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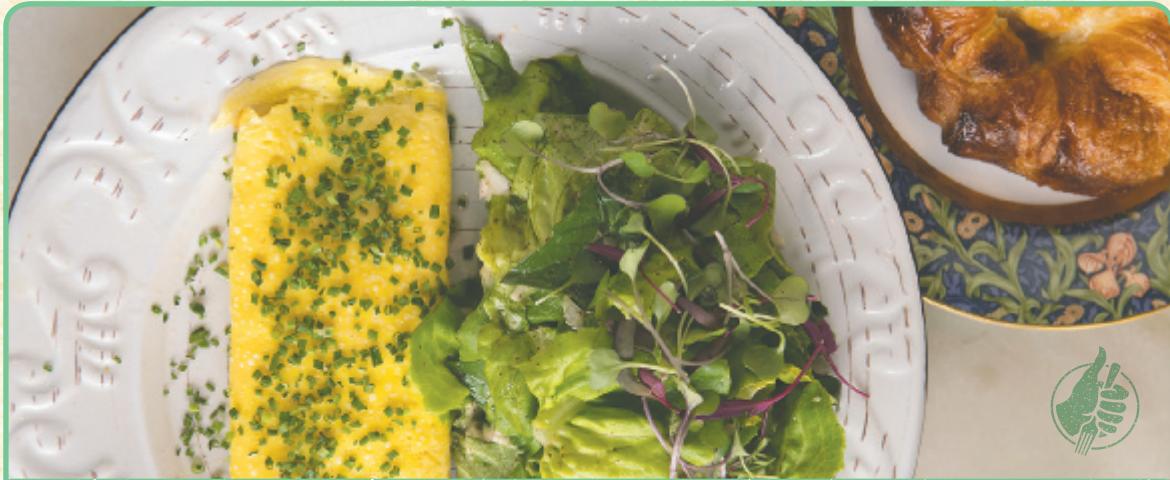
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Essential dishes, according to Chronicle staff



French omelette at 1417 French Bistro

JOHN ANDERSON

DINING ON A HOT PLANET

DOES THE SECOND ANNUAL BEST OF AUSTIN: RESTAURANTS SIGNAL A SEA CHANGE?

BY FOOD EDITOR MELANIE HAUPT

Best of Austin: Restaurants is a fantastic way to spot trends. Sure, the hottest new joints always make a big splash, and there are certain restaurants that are always going to top folks' lists when it comes to service and margaritas. But the really interesting stuff is in the downballot categories, your sushi and tacos and sandwiches and whatnot. It's a great snapshot in time in terms of what our readers value when choosing where to dine out.

The 29th annual World Vegan Day was just a couple of days ago, on November 1. Meant to commemorate the 50th anniversary founding of the Vegan Society in the UK, World Vegan Day is a day to celebrate the benefits of a plant-based diet, including the benefit to the environment.

This summer was one of the hottest in recorded history. We are moving swiftly from climate emergency to climate disaster, and we're looking for ways to pump the brakes. Study after study reveals that industrial meat production is one of the biggest contributors to climate change, accounting for about 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Americans are the biggest consumers of meat on the planet, taking in more than half a pound of meat per person, per day.

Now, I'm not trying to proselytize the Good News of plant-based dining. I like a bacon, egg, and cheese taco and plate of smoked meats almost as much as the next guy. I'm saying all this to underscore how remarkable it is to see how plant-based dining has become mainstream here in Austin. Just look at Community Vegan, Nori, and Rebel Cheese on the lists of finalists in their respective general cuisine and dish categories. And then there's our Best Established Restaurant this year: a local South First stalwart that doesn't serve a lick of meat.

Are we, as a community, embracing a more climate-friendly dining-out ethos? Are we on the cusp of a plant-based dining boom? Could this extend to more climate-friendly takeout packaging and a decline in car-based food delivery services? I'm certainly watching this space to see what unfolds.

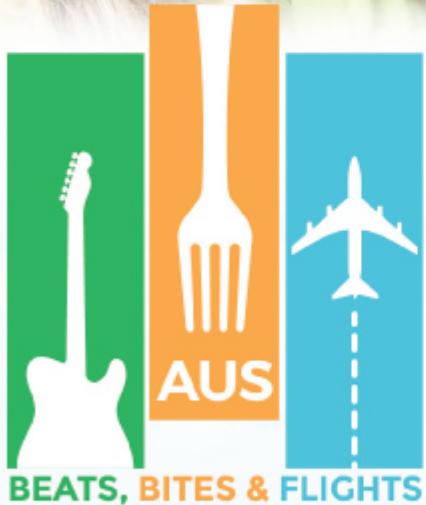
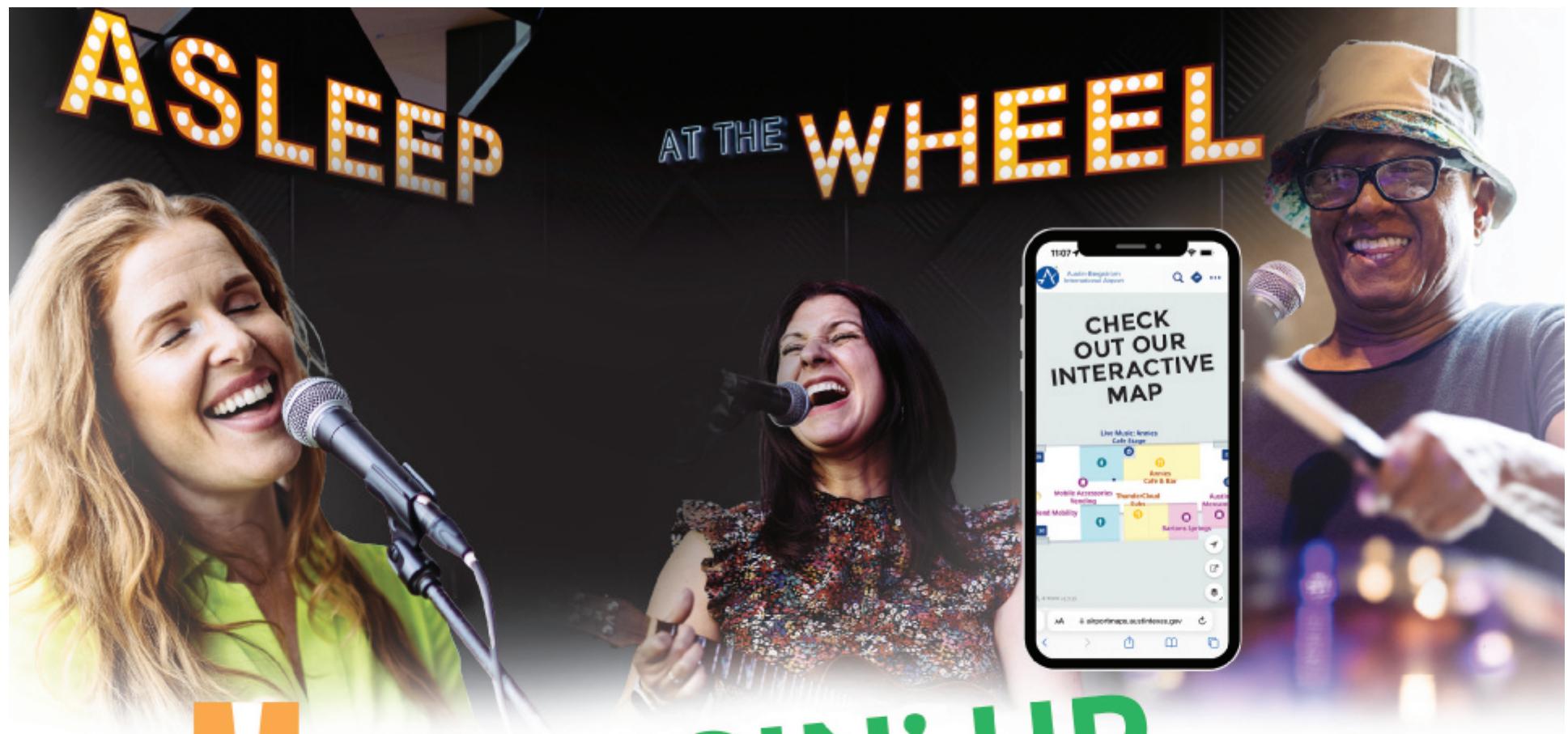
Naturally, there are lots of folks to thank after pulling off the second annual Best of Austin: Restaurants. This special issue truly is a team effort, with essential contributions from every corner of the Chronicle's operations: editorial, web, marketing, social media, production, the folks who supply the snacks in the kitchen to help fuel all these brains. This

MELANIE HAUPT'S 10 FAVORITE AUSTIN RESTAURANTS

- 1) Eldorado Cafe
- 2) Allday Pizza + Flo's Wine Bar
- 3) Micklethwait Craft Meats
- 4) Uchiko
- 5) Tiki Tatsu-ya
- 6) 1417 French Bistro
- 7) Titaya's Thai Cuisine
- 8) Little Deli & Pizzeria
- 9) Joe's Bakery
- 10) Ezov

year's contributing writer team - Kat McNevins, Eric Puga, Evan Rodriguez, Taylor Holland, Jessi Cape, A. Richmond, Haris Qureshi, Deven Wilson, and Taylor Tobin - bring a wealth of knowledge and strong opinions to the table. As ever, I'm grateful for the leadership and guidance of Editor-in-Chief Kimberley Jones and Managing Editor James Renovitch. Zeke Barbaro and Lauren Johnson do a truly awe-inspiring amount of project management in terms of how gorgeous this issue looks. Can't forget the eagle eyes of Nick Barbaro!

Thank you for reading and thank you for voting. Here's to a cooler year and even more good eats. ■



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OVERALL



JOHN ANDERSON

NEW RESTAURANT

ESTE

FINALISTS: BILL'S OYSTER, EL RAVAL, ELEMENTARY, EZOV

Fermín Núñez's coastal Mexican seafood joint on Manor Road has quickly established itself as the place to enjoy fresh ceviches, grilled fish, and shellfish, along with innovative vegetarian dishes like the hongos tacos (on Núñez's signature, transcendent corn tortillas). Derrick Flynn's magnificent desserts, the array of creative cocktails, and the swanky-yet-relaxed ambience, all work together to offer the best new dining experience in Austin.

2113 MANOR RD, ESTEATX.COM



JOHN ANDERSON

CHEF

LING QI WU (QI, LIN ASIAN BAR, LING KITCHEN, LING WU)

FINALISTS: TRACY MALECHEK-EZEKIEL (BIRDIE'S), FERMÍN NÚÑEZ (SUERTE, ESTE), BERTY RICHTER (EZOV), EDGAR RICO (NIXTA)

Ling Qi Wu has been quietly establishing herself as a formidable chef on the Austin dining scene, having worked her way up from the kitchens of Wu Chow and Chinatown to owning her own dim sum dynasty of four restaurants (and counting). Further proof that being an overnight sensation takes years of hard work, Wu's acumen in the kitchen and in business has earned her the title of Best Chef in Austin.



JOHN ANDERSON

EMERGING CHEF

HARVARD ANINYE (CANJE)

FINALISTS: JOEY ATTWATER (LENOIR), LAILA BAZAHM (EL RAVAL), KAREEM EL-GHAYESH (KG BBQ), MARIO FORTUNA (FEZ)

As Chef de Cuisine at Caribbean powerhouse Canje, Harvard Aninye brings creator Tavel Bristol-Joseph's vision to spicy, vibrant, savory life. The Nigerian American chef, who hails from San Antonio, previously ran the ship at Downtown Japanese restaurant TenTen and has quickly distinguished himself as one to watch in Austin dining.



JANA BIRCHUM

ESTABLISHED RESTAURANT

BOULDIN CREEK CAFE

FINALISTS: DAI DUE, SUERTE, UCHI, UCHIKO

In an increasingly transplant-populated city, rock-steady restaurant homes are a special kind of comfort. Entirely vegetarian and complete with a super skilled barista crew, Bouldin has treats even grumpy omni/carnivores will enjoy, like spicy chipotle Texas pecan pesto, the Veggie Royale, and a stuffed oatmeal cookie sammie. Here's lookin' at you, Bouldin.

1900 S. FIRST, BOULDINCREEKCAFE.COM

PASTRY CHEF

DERRICK FLYNN (ESTE, SUERTE)

FINALISTS: TAVEL BRISTOL-JOSEPH (CANJE), MARIELA CAMACHO (COMADRE PANDERIA), SUSANA QUEREJAZU (LUTIE'S), AMANDA ROCKMAN (NEW WATERLOO)

If you've enjoyed dessert following a meal at La Condesa, Swift's Attic, or Este (and more), you've experienced the playful and elegant style of pastry chef Derrick Flynn. Being a pastry chef means being a scientist who marries evocative flavors that also trigger nostalgia. To wit, his Choco Taco dupe on Suerte's menu.

MOST MISSED / DEARLY DEPARTED

GORMANDS

FINALISTS: BARLATA, BENTO PICNIC,
CREMA BAKERY & CAFE, LEANN MUELLER

College football watch parties never met a better friend than bread bowls of beer cheese soup. Legions of fans made lifetime memories at this Webberville Road staple, around so long some former freshmen enjoyed menu faves like the Foghorn Leghorn with their kids before Gourmands said adieu. Rest in epic sandwich power, old friend.

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DINING OUT



JOHN ANDERSON

LATE-NIGHT DINING

JUSTINE'S BRASSERIE

FINALISTS: 24 DINER, HOBOKEN PIE, KERBEY LANE CAFE, ROCKIN' ROLLS

Possibly the coolest restaurant in town, Justine's is the only true brasserie in Austin. It is a must-visit if you crave late-night steak frites, classic French onion soup, or a rich, refined burger, the Royale With Cheese, to go with your nightcap. It's dark, it's sexy, it's secluded – the perfect destination for those who like to party with the night creatures.

4710 E. FIFTH, JUSTINES1937.COM

BAKERY

QUACK'S BAKERIES

FINALISTS: COMADRE PANADERÍA, OVENBIRD, SWEDISH HILL, UPPER CRUST

A walnut scone to start the day, a sour cream coffee cake or salty oat cookie for afternoon tea, a magnificent carrot cake to celebrate a special occasion (do Tuesdays count as special occasions?) – these are just a few of the scratch-made baked treats that siren-song us to this 40-year-old Austin original.

411 E. 43RD, WWW.QUACKSBAKERY.COM; 5326 MENCHACA RD., CAPTQUACKS.COM; 1900 SIMOND AVE #300, LADYQUACKS.COM

COFFEE SHOP

RADIO COFFEE & BEER

FINALISTS: AFUGĀ COFFEE, DESNUDO COFFEE, EPOCH, MAHA COFFEE

In its 10-year history on Menchaca Road, Radio Coffee & Beer has become one of South Austin's most beloved hangouts and remote-work destinations. Java fans flock to Radio for its neighborly vibes, live music, top-tier food trucks, fast Wi-Fi, and locally roasted signature coffees like full-flavored Bluegrass Blend and mellow Coyote Coffee.

4204 MENCHACA RD., RADIOCOFFEEANDBEER.COM



LAUREN JOHNSON

DRIVE-THROUGH

P. TERRY'S BURGER STAND

FINALISTS: BUDDY'S BURGER, EL TACORRIDO, FLYRITE CHICKEN, FRESA'S, SANDY'S HAMBURGERS

Patrick Terry bet big on Austin's obsession with homegrown restaurants, investing in 32 locations since 2005, but hungry patrons are the real winners. The menu, a small but mighty jackpot, boasts badass burgers, one of the best veggie patties around, and a hella good spicy chicken option. (Debut a gluten-free bun, Terry fam, to truly reign supreme.)

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, PTERRYS.COM

FOOD TRUCK

SPICY BOYS FRIED CHICKEN

FINALISTS: BUNBOY, CUANTOS TACOS, PLANTAIN BAR, ROGUES OVER THE TOP PIEROGI

According to legend, perfectly golden brown extra crunchy chicken with a scorching Scoville level is of greater value than the pot o' gold at rainbow's end. Couple Spicy Boys' Pan-Asian flair with love language-style sides like Sichuan tater tots and som tam, and you've found paradise.

1701 E. SIXTH; 440 E. ST. ELMO RD. STE. G-2; 10609 METRIC BLVD. #108; 75 1/2 RAINIE ST.; SPICYBOYSCHICKEN.COM



PLACE TO TAKE YOUR KIDS

HOME SLICE PIZZA

FINALISTS: HAT CREEK BURGER COMPANY, MEANWHILE BREWING CO., PHIL'S ICEHOUSE, WATERLOO ICE HOUSE

A great pizza place is a win-win for parents and kids. At Home Slice, not only are the slices some of the best in town (though don't ignore the calzones or sandwiches), but the well-worth-it wait passes quickly with balls of actual dough for kids to knead and sculpt. The North Loop location even features a small playscape.

1415 S. CONGRESS; 1421 S. CONGRESS; 501 E. 53RD; HOMESLICE.COM

PLACE TO TAKE YOUR PARENTS

LORO

FINALISTS: CHEZ ZEE, FONDA SAN MIGUEL, HYDE PARK BAR & GRILL, JACK ALLEN'S KITCHEN

Whether your parents' culinary tastes trend more basic or adventurous, Aaron Franklin and Tyson Cole's "Asian smokehouse" on South Lamar will surely satisfy everyone. Frozen cocktails, local beers, rice bowls and salads, platters of brisket and smoked pork belly, fully loaded burgers: You'll find all that and more at Loro's stylish but approachable indoor-outdoor dining space.

2115 S. LAMAR, LOROEATS.COM

SOLO DINING

RAMEN TATSU-YA

FINALISTS: BIRDIE'S, COUNTER CAFE, BOULDIN CREEK CAFE, GARBO'S

Slurp like no one is watching, belch like no one is listening (OK, don't do that last part). With rich broth-soaked noodles and flavorful embellishments in the capacious bowls, skip trying to get someone to join you when the craving strikes and chow down on your own without care at one of five locations from Lakeline to Slaughter.

8557 RESEARCH #126; 1234 S. LAMAR; 1600 E. SIXTH; 8601 S. CONGRESS; 14028 N. U.S. HWY. 183, BLDG. G, #310; RAMEN-TATSUYA.COM

FINE DINING

UCHI

FINALISTS: BARLEY SWINE, INTERO, JEFFREY'S, RED ASH ITALIA

The elegant, elevated sushi menu and next-level service set a new standard in Austin and ushered in our ongoing food renaissance. After training in Japan, chef/owner Tyson Cole expanded his vision and scope to offer unexpected flavor combinations and premier seasonal ingredients in his restaurants across five cities. Winning multiple categories every year is no coincidence.

801 S. LAMAR, UCHIAUSTIN.COM



JOHN ANDERSON

BREAKFAST

KERBEY LANE CAFE

FINALISTS: BOULDIN CREEK CAFE, PAPERBOY, PHOEBE'S DINER, SPREAD & CO.

This steadfast Austin staple will satisfy all palates with its range of sweet to savory ways to start the day. Imagine a fat stack of wild blueberry pancakes, Tex-Mex essentials chilaquiles and migas, and inventive spins on a Benedict, like our fave, the Eggs Francisco. All together now: Queso! For! Breakfast!

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, KERBEYLANECAFE.COM

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CUISINE



JANA BIRCHUM

BARBECUE

TERRY BLACK'S BBQ

FINALISTS: LA BARBECUE, LEROY & LEWIS, MICKLETHWAIT CRAFT MEATS, STILES SWITCH BBQ & BREW

Having great barbecue available for both dinner and lunch is a rarity, even in Austin, but this descendant of Lockhart BBQ royalty does it seven days a week from its prime location on Barton Springs Road. The Texas trinity excels, including a jalapeño cheese sausage. There's even a beef rib for big eaters and banana pudding on the way out the door.

1003 BARTON SPRINGS RD., TERRYBLACKSBQ.COM

AFRICAN

TASTE OF ETHIOPIA

FINALISTS: ASTER'S ETHIOPIAN RESTAURANT, DISTANT RELATIVES, HABESHA, TAILAT KITCHEN

Chef Woinee Mariam's classic Ethiopian cuisine – spicy tibbs, kitfo, and doro wot – will get those carnivorous taste buds humming. There's plenty available for plant-based eaters, like yemisir wot (berbere-spiced lentils) and fesolia (mixed vegetable stew). Get yourself a sampler platter and dig in!

1100 GRAND AVENUE PKWY., PFLUGERVILLE; 3801 S. CONGRESS #107; TASTEOFETHIOPIAAUSTIN.COM

CAJUN

EVANGELINE CAFE

FINALISTS: CYPRESS GRILL, SHOAL CREEK SALOON, UPTOWN SPORTS CLUB, VIC & AL'S

Evangeline Cafe has been beloved in South Austin for almost 20 years, with owner Curtis Clarke serving tasty Louisiana staples such as boudin, jambalaya, and étouffée. Let's not forget the robust music calendar booked with live Cajun and zydeco music. Grab an Abita and some gator bites at the bar and transport yourself to the bayou, *cher*.

8106 BRODIE LN., EVANGELINECAFE.COM

CARIBBEAN

CANJE

FINALISTS: EL COQUÍ, HABANA, PLANTAIN BAR, TONY'S JAMAICAN FOOD

Chef Tavel Bristol-Joseph set the city ablaze when he launched, as part of the Emmer & Rye restaurant group, this Caribbean concept that centers huge island flavors. The critically acclaimed menu combines dishes like Guyanese roti and wild boar pepper pot with piña coladas and ceviche in hip digs off of Sixth and Chicon.

1914 E. SIXTH STE. C, CANJEATX.COM

CHINESE

LIN ASIAN BAR + DIM SUM

FINALISTS: CHINA FAMILY RESTAURANT, DIN HO CHINESE BBQ, HOUSE OF THREE GORGES, WU CHOW

Chef Ling Qi Wu learned her craft from her grandmother in China, studied under chef William Wong, and honed her skills in New York and top-notch Austin restaurants. She brings all that to the table here, offering traditional dishes like Kung Pao chicken alongside a delightful dim sum menu starring their famous dumplings.

1203 W. SIXTH, LINASIANBAR.COM

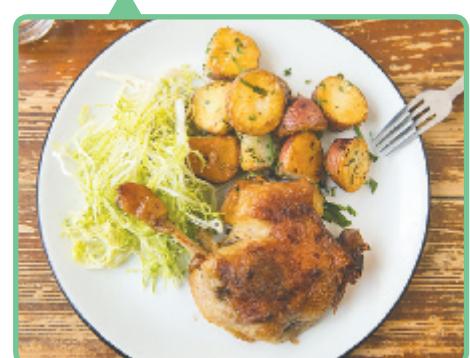
FRENCH

JUSTINE'S BRASSERIE

FINALISTS: 1417 FRENCH BISTRO, ÉPICERIE, HOPFIELDS, PÉCHÉ

Let them eat cake?! How about moules frites, confit de canard, boeuf tartare, and soupe à l'oignon? Bien sûr, I mean, that's what the queen's eating! Chased with a sublime pairing from the old country, you'll be singing La Marseillaise in no time. Santé, y'all.

4710 E. FIFTH, JUSTINES1937.COM



JOHN ANDERSON

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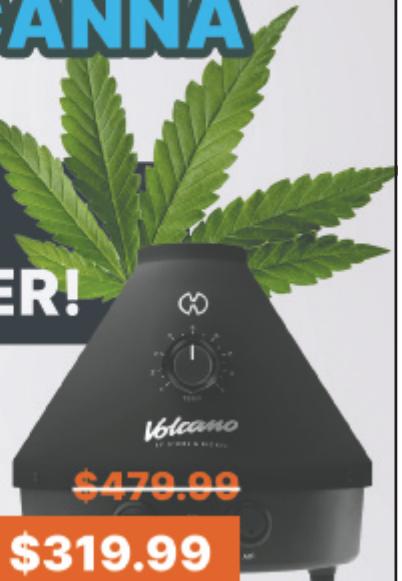
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INDIAN

CLAY PIT

FINALISTS: ASIANA INDIAN CUISINE, NASHA, SAFFRON, SANGAM CHETTINAD INDIAN CUISINE, TARKA INDIAN KITCHEN

Conveniently located between UT-Austin and Downtown, Clay Pit has been serving up iconic Indian dishes like tikka masala, samosas, butter chicken, and plenty of vegetarian options since 1998. The South Indian-inspired cocktails (mango margarita or Indian Nights gin and tonic, anyone?) and overstuffed couches make it a great hangout spot, too.

1601 GUADALUPE, CLAYPIT.COM



ITALIAN

PATRIZI'S

FINALISTS: INTERO, L'OCA D'ORO, MANDOLA'S, RED ASH ITALIA

Strip down a pasta dish and see that the make-or-break aspect of each plate is their noods. Patrizi's is proof of the power of fresh noodles in Italian dishes, having expanded from a solo food truck on Manor Road to a second location, a brick-and-mortar, in the Cuernavaca neighborhood. Heritage sauces coat the monstrously large meatballs and pastas to bring a taste of Rome to the Lone Star State.

BEHIND VORTEX THEATRE, 2307 MANOR RD; 1705 CUERNAVACA N.; PATRIZIS.COM

INTERIOR MEXICAN

FONDA SAN MIGUEL

FINALISTS: COMEDOR, EL NARANJO, HECHO EN MEXICO, SUERTE

Fonda San Miguel might as well be the Mexican Embassy because eating there is a passport to the Land of the Sun, with elevated offerings inspired by Oaxaca, Puebla, Veracruz, and the Yucatán. Moles, rellenos, and pescados take the lead, alongside a memorable mango margarita. Corazón contento.

2330 W. NORTH LOOP, FONDASANMIGUEL.COM



JOHN ANDERSON

MEDITERRANEAN

PHENICIA BAKERY & DELI

FINALISTS: ABA, MEZZEME, THE PEACOCK, YAMAS GREEK KITCHEN & BAR

With locations on South Lamar and Burnet Road, the family-owned Phenicia Bakery & Deli is determined to keep all Austinites well-stocked with Mediterranean and Middle Eastern groceries and flavorful dishes from the region. Stop in for aromatic falafel, imported feta cheese, fresh-made pita, savory shawarma, creamy hummus, and perfectly flaky baklava.

2912 S. LAMAR; 4701-A BURNET RD; PHENICIABAKERY.COM

MIDDLE EASTERN / ARAB

HALAL BROS

FINALISTS: EZOV, KG BBQ, PEACE BAKERY & DELI, REEM'S FALAFEL

Inspired by their father's cooking, the Attal brothers have cultivated a fan base on the strength of their generous portions and addictive sauces (that white sauce!). Try a shawarma or kebab plate with rice and greens and see why everybody around town is hooked.

2712 GUADALUPE; 1910 W. BRAKER #800; 11521 FM 620 N. #1300; THEHALALBROS.COM

NEW AMERICAN

ODD DUCK

FINALISTS: BIRDIE'S, CHEZ ZEE, HESTIA, SWIFT'S ATTIC

Somehow both homey and upscale, these farm-to-table dynamos offer seasonal menus incorporating innovative takes on American classics such as skillet cornbread with radish/kimchi butter or a wagyu burger adding mushroom, pickled peach, and chèvre. Creativity extends to dessert, with intriguing combos like sourdough ice cream with pecans, tarragon, and peaches.

1201 S. LAMAR, ODDDUCKAUSTIN.COM

SEAFOOD

QUALITY SEAFOOD MARKET

FINALISTS: BILL'S OYSTER, THE BOAT, ESTE, GARBO'S

If Garth Brooks' beloved tune "Friends in Low Places," a celebration of all things humble and unfancy, were a seafood restaurant, it'd surely be this Airport Boulevard vet, open since 1938. Part fish market, part restaurant with killer daily specials, it's always fresh seafare and friendly staff. If you've never had spaghetti mac & cheese, show up in boots to enjoy this casual affair.

5621 AIRPORT, QUALITYSEAFOODMARKET.COM

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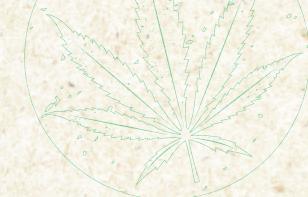


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JOHN ANDERSON

JAPANESE**KOMÉ**

FINALISTS: NORI, RAMEN TATSU-YA, UCHI, UCHIKO

We've been crushing on this superfly Japanese eatery on Airport since the get-go, but after their pandemic-era revamp, we've all got heart-eye emojis. Relish the well-rounded menu featuring delicious classics like takoyaki and a tarantula roll and sexy twists like a Texas surf-and-turf and brie tempura. Ask to peek at the secret menu if you really wanna swoon.

5301 AIRPORT BLVD., KOME-AUSTIN.COM

SOUTH AMERICAN**BUENOS AIRES CAFÉ**

FINALISTS: CASA COLOMBIA, FOUR BROTHERS, LIMA CRIOLLA, PASTELARIA SÃO PAULO

This cafe, founded by Reina Morris, combines the Argentinian love of great wine and smoked/grilled meats with delicious pastries and desserts. Order a famed lomito sandwich along with some empanadas and crème brûlée or chow down on Argentine pizza (a dish recently popularized by Miami resident Lionel Messi).

13500 GALLERIA CIR., U-120, BEE CAVE; 1201 E. SIXTH; BUENOSAIRESCAFÉ.COM

SOUTHERN / SOUL**HOOVER'S COOKING**

FINALISTS: COLLEEN'S KITCHEN, COMMUNITY VEGAN, OLAMAIE, MOONSHINE GRILL

An Eastside institution for more than two decades, Hoover's is the seat of Southern comfort, with its chicken-fried steak, po'boys, barbecue, and more. Make sure you stop by for their Wednesday special of chicken and dumplings, and don't forget the peach cobbler.

2002 MANOR RD., HOOVERSCOOKING.COM

TEX-MEX**MATT'S EL RANCHO**

FINALISTS: CHUY'S, ELDORADO CAFE, ENCHILADAS Y MAS, MAUDIE'S TEX-MEX

To some, Austin is the Patio-Hang Capital of the World, and we're fairly certain the fan who coined that lesser-known moniker was a regular at this classic South Lamar Tex-Mex oasis. Any dish you order will be delicious, any margarita will be your new fave. We only wish their queso came by the bucket.

2613 S. LAMAR, MATTSELRANCHO.COM

VEGAN / VEGETARIAN**BOULDIN CREEK CAFE**

FINALISTS: THE BEER PLANT, COMMUNITY VEGAN, NORI, REBEL CHEESE, THE VEGAN YACHT

One of the last remaining bastions of a bygone era, this "Old Austin" staple has helped sustain many generations with hearty plant-based eats and treats. Meat-free long before it was cool, longtime staff and patrons have created a cruelty-free community as warm and weird as the local folklore insists.

1900 S. FIRST, BOULDINCREEKCAFE.COM

VIETNAMESE**ELIZABETH STREET CAFE**

FINALISTS: 888 PAN ASIAN RESTAURANT, PHO PLEASE, SIP PHO, SUNFLOWER VIETNAMESE CUISINE, TAN MY

The vibes and ambience at this beautiful oasis in Bouldin Creek match the bold and fresh flavors of Vietnamese cuisine for entry-level and seasoned diners alike. Spring rolls, bún, bánh mì, pho, and an array of specialty dishes abound, including savory fried rice with rib-eye or redfish and succulent crépes bursting with pork and shrimp.

1501 S. FIRST, ELIZABETHSTREETCAFE.COM

KOREAN**OSEYO**

FINALISTS: CHOSUN GALBI, JJIM BBQ, KOREA HOUSE, SEOULJU

Great cocktails and small plates served within a homey yet minimalist space provide a welcoming, inclusive, and upscale introduction to the Korean dining experience. Here you'll find classic noodle dishes, bulgogi, and stews, with plenty of vegetarian and vegan options. Don't skip the bar menu, chock-full of soju delights and even a kimchi michelada.

1628 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, OSEYOAUSTIN.COM



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AUSTIN'S DINING DISTRICT IS ON 2nd

Savoring the Best Restaurants Austin Has to Offer at the 2nd Street District

The home of seriously good and authentically Austin food is in the 2nd Street District. From award-winning restaurants to brand new dining destinations that are already becoming local favorites, the District has it all. **Your 1st Stop for Austin's best restaurants is on 2nd.**

Bill's Oyster

205 W. 3rd St · Austin, TX 78701

Prepare your taste buds for an oceanic journey courtesy of Bill's Oyster. Co-founded by lifelong Austinite Stewart Jarmon and acclaimed executive chef Daniel Berg, this seafood and cocktail haven opened its doors in the 2nd Street District this summer. **From an enticing raw bar featuring East and Gulf coast treasures to dinner plates like steak tartare and a brisket and short rib burger, their menu is a symphony of flavors.** The cocktail menu is equally impressive, offering classic and inventive concoctions that include the Siberia and Dangerous Curves. With a stylish interior inspired by old New Orleans charm, Bill's Oyster promises an ambiance as charming as its menu.



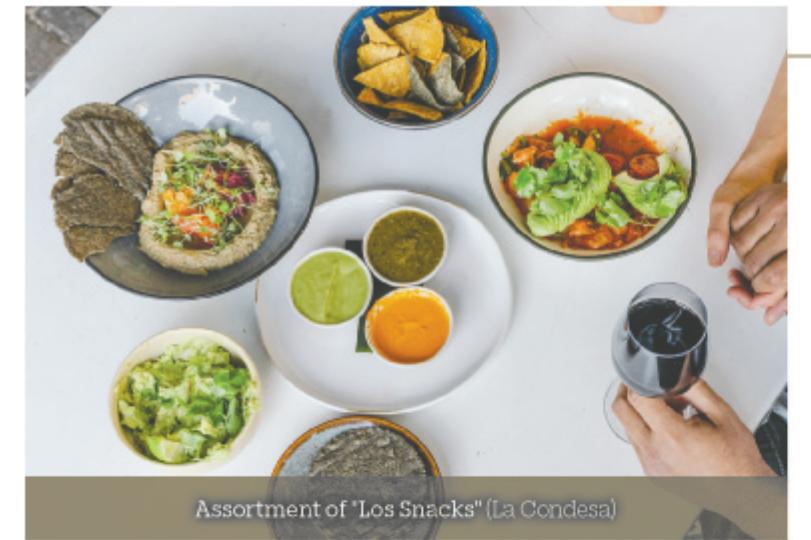
"The Colorado" Seafood Tower (Bill's Oyster)



Signature Cocktails (Bill's Oyster)



Antipasto Emiliano (Taverna)



Assortment of "Los Snacks" (La Condesa)

La Condesa

400A W. 2nd St · Austin, TX 78701

An Austin dining icon 14 years in the making! La Condesa just celebrated their 14th birthday with their second James Beard Award semifinalist nomination. Nestled in the heart of the 2nd Street District, La Condesa perfectly blends Mexico City flavors with modern sensibilities. Boasting an elevated menu curated around local ingredients and one of the city's largest selections of 100% blue agave tequila and mezcal, La Condesa is a sanctuary for food enthusiasts. Whether indulging in weekend brunch favorites like barbacoa plates and chilaquiles or savoring happy hour delights, each visit to La Condesa is a celebration of exceptional flavors and culinary craftsmanship.



"Pac Man" Shrimp Dumplings (RedFarm)

RedFarm

201 W. 3rd St · Austin, TX 78701

A burst of modern Chinese flavors awaits at RedFarm. The famed New York restaurant is the newest addition to the 2nd Street District scene, and it's a welcome one! Co-founded by the late Chinese restaurateur Ed Schoenfeld and dim sum maestro Joe Ng, RedFarm is renowned for its innovative dishes that bridge tradition with contemporary flair. Their Austin location offers RedFarm's signature dishes including Peking duck, pastrami egg rolls, and whimsical Pac Man dumplings. Embark on a delicious journey through modern Chinese cuisine at RedFarm's newest rendition in the 2nd Street District.



Meatballs Al Sugo, Taverna Focaccia & Paglia E Fieno (Taverna)

Taverna

258 W. 2nd St · Austin, TX 78701

A true culinary gem, Taverna stands out as one of the city's best restaurants, offering an authentic Italian experience without the need for a passport. With a warm and inviting atmosphere, it transforms patrons into friends and family. **Boasting a farm-to-table ethos, their carefully crafted menu includes seasonal ingredients being transformed into northern Italian delights.** From comforting pasta dishes to exquisite risotto and delicate pan-seared sea bass, each entree is a testament to their commitment to culinary excellence. Taverna is more than a restaurant; it's a celebration of rustic charm and genuine Italian flavors that make it a hot spot in Austin's vibrant culinary scene.

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INTENTIONALLY BLANK



DISHES



JANA BURCHUM

SUSHI

UCHI

FINALISTS: KOMÉ, NORI, NEIGHBORHOOD SUSHI, SOTO, UCHIKO

There's no glitch in the matrix: This level of excellence deserves its multiple accolades each year. Their stellar sushi selection changes in a blink but regularly boasts the crème de la crème of contemporary Japanese classics, exciting bluefin and uni options, and delightful menu oddities like tempura greens, candied quinoa, and five-spice quail.

801 S. LAMAR, UCHIAUSTIN.COM

TACO

VERACRUZ ALL NATURAL

FINALISTS: CUANTOS TACOS, NIXTA, TACODELI, TORCHY'S TACOS

To earn top rank for Austin's best taco and best breakfast taco is a huge win, and these flavor geniuses are so deserving. With five locations across Austin, you're always within reach of the happiness-inducing shrimp macha taco and Doña Reyna mole negro taco. Buy an extra to share and you'll have a friend for life.

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, VERACRUZALLNATURAL.COM

BREAKFAST TACO

VERACRUZ ALL NATURAL

FINALISTS: TACO JOINT, TACODELI, TORCHY'S TACOS, THE VEGAN NOM

If there's a better way to satiate a dual hankering for Tex-Mex and fresh fruit smoothies, no one's told Austin. Owned and operated by the wonderful Vazquez sisters since 2008, Veracruz is an internationally recognized hometown hero. Start your day correctly with their famous migas poblanas tacos and cold-pressed La Jarocha juice.

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, VERACRUZALLNATURAL.COM

BREAKFAST SANDWICH

BIRD BIRD BISCUIT

FINALISTS: DAVID DOUGHIE'S, NERVOUS CHARLIE'S, OVENBIRD, SPREAD & CO.

Bird Bird crown jewel the Queen Beak is a master class in heat and sweet: perfectly crunchy fried chicken breast sidling up to bacon-infused chipotle mayo and a peppery honey you can feel in the back of your throat, for a breakfast that will keep you full all the way to dinner.

2701 MANOR RD.; 1401 KOENIG LN.; BIRDBIRDBISCUIT.COM

BURGER

JEWBOY BURGERS

FINALISTS: CASINO EL CAMINO, HOPDODDY BURGER BAR, P. TERRY'S BURGER STAND, TURNSTILE

The JewBoy burger is best because of the meat: Owner Mo Pittle takes the time to cook onions right into his 80% lean, 20% fatty patty (ground by hand at Longhorn Meat Market) before nestling it into a soft Martin's potato roll. Then there are those El Paso-inspired toppings, as meaty and cheesy and spicy as you can stand.

5111 AIRPORT, JEWBOYBURGERS.COM

CHICKEN-FRIED STEAK

HOOVER'S COOKING

FINALISTS: HYDE PARK BAR & GRILL, JACK ALLEN'S KITCHEN, MOONSHINE GRILL, WATERLOO ICE HOUSE

Hoover's take on the Southern comfort food classic features a fork-tender seasoned steak coated in a crispy, golden-brown crust. Served with creamy gravy made with bacon fat and chicken stock, it's homey and satisfying, an avatar of Southern comfort itself. Don't forget the fluffy mashed potatoes on the side.

2002 MANOR RD., HOOVERSCOOKING.COM

ENCHILADA

ELDORADO CAFE

FINALISTS: CHUY'S, ENCHILADAS Y MAS, MAUDIE'S, MATT'S EL RANCHO

Do you want to know the perfect order at Eldorado Cafe? It's a plate of Esme's Magic, three corn tortillas filled with savory mashed potatoes, topped with ancho chile sauce and shredded lettuce and cabbage. Sub cheese 'n rice for the Eldorado rice, get a house marg to drink, and you're in comfort-food heaven.

3300 W. ANDERSON, ELDORADOCAFEATY.COM



JOHN ANDERSON

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The Austin Chronicle has commissioned the renowned, award-winning local artist, Billie Buck, to create merchandise in an effort to support Whole Woman's Health, an abortion clinic and virtual abortion care provider.

100% of the net proceeds from the sale of *Austin Chronicle* "Aid and Abet" merchandise will go towards helping Whole Woman's Health open their new clinic in New Mexico.



AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM /**STORE**



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COURTESY OF JEFFREY'S

STEAK

JEFFREY'S

FINALISTS: ALC STEAKS, BARTLETT'S, JUSTINE'S BRASSERIE, MAIE DAY

If you're craving a delectable prime cut of beef, it doesn't get any better than a thoughtfully sourced New York strip or wagyu fillet from Jeffrey's, expertly grilled over live oak and finished in a 1,200-degree broiler, excellent on its own but available topped with complements like a marrow-roasted bulb of garlic.

1204 W. LYNN, JEFFREYSOFAUSTIN.COM

DUMPLINGS

LIN ASIAN BAR + DIM SUM

FINALISTS: 1618 ASIAN FUSION, JULIE'S NOODLES, QI AUSTIN, TASTE OF HOME, HANDMADE DUMPLINGS, WU CHOW

Winning for the second year in a row, Lin has proved its mettle in the dumpling game, wowing us with a variety of finely executed steamed or fried pillows enveloping savory meats, seafood, and veggies, including the superstar: a massive Shanghai seafood soup dumpling with an addictive broth.

1203 W. SIXTH, LINASIANBAR.COM

NOODLES / RAMEN

RAMEN TATSU-YA

FINALISTS: JULIE'S NOODLES, MICH RAMEN, MARUFUKU RAMEN, SAZAN RAMEN

If there's a comfort food that crosses all boundaries, it has to be tonkotsu ramen with its rich, porky broth and copious amounts of noodles. Not only was Tatsu-Ya one of the first top-shelf ramen joints in town, it also remains one of the best. With five locations and counting, there's ramen for all.

8557 RESEARCH #126; 1234 S. LAMAR; 1600 E. SIXTH; 8601 S. CONGRESS; 14028 N. U.S. HWY. 183, BLDG. G, #310; RAMEN-TATSUYA.COM

PIZZA

HOME SLICE PIZZA

FINALISTS: BUFALINA, CONANS PIZZA, HOBOKEN PIE, VIA 313

Again, Austinites thoroughly agree that the best pizza in town is what emerges from the stupefying heat of Home Slice's brick oven: their New York-style Neapolitan. The crust is always the perfect chewy-crisp texture that makes every slice of your slice of pizza perfectly foldable. Have it your way or go tried and true; there's no wrong answer.

1415 S. CONGRESS; 1421 S. CONGRESS; 501 E. 53RD; HOMESLICE.COM

SANDWICH

THUNDERCLOUD SUBS

FINALISTS: LITTLE DELI & PIZZERIA, OYE CHICO, PAPI'S HOAGIES, REBEL CHEESE

Proving fresh never goes stale, ThunderCloud lines its menu with cold-cut classics and coastal flavors. The Big Paul packs a carnivore's delight, while the California Club brings a touch of clean eating to the menu. They prove that slackers can still school our taste buds between daily-made buns.

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, THUNDERCLOUD.COM

VEGGIE BURGER

P. TERRY'S BURGER STAND

FINALISTS: BOULDIN CREEK CAFE, HOPDODDY BURGER BAR, MISSION BURGER, POOL BURGER

Some veggie burgers present as aggressively plant-based and – we'll say it – holier-than-thou. P. Terry's, not so much: This is a plausible dupe of their wildly popular beef burger, including the special sauce. In other words: fast food, elevated, and inhaled in five bites or less.

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, PTERRYS.COM

ICE CREAM / FROZEN TREAT

AMY'S ICE CREAMS

FINALISTS: GATI, LICK HONEST ICE CREAMS, LUV FATS ICE CREAM, MERRY MONARCH CREAMERY

Wherever you are, you're not far from an Amy's, the homegrown chain that brings real panache to the business of scooping ice cream. Menu stalwarts Mexican vanilla and the deliciously bracing Zilker Mint Chip are on Amy's Mount Rushmore, for sure, but save room for the seasonal specialties, too. (Here's looking at you, pumpkin butterscotch brownie!)

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, AMYSICECREAMS.COM



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Austin, TX 78751



BEVERAGES



JANA BIRCHUM

WHISKEY SELECTION

THE GRACKLE

FINALISTS: NICKEL CITY, SEVEN GRAND, SWIFT'S ATTIC, WATERTRADE

Wooden signs hanging from the eaves advertise whiskey, whisky, whiskey again, and beer. So it comes as no surprise that this Eastside dive specializes in what Robert Louis Stevenson called "the king o' drinks." Pick your poison from dozens of options ranging from the good to the whoa.

1700 E. SIXTH

BEER SELECTION

BANGER'S SAUSAGE HOUSE AND BEER GARDEN

FINALISTS: DRAUGHT HOUSE PUB & BREWERY, TURNSTILE, WHICHCRAFT TAPROOM AND BOTTLE SHOP, WORKHORSE BAR

If you had one beer a day at Banger's, it would take more than six months to get through them all. But don't be overwhelmed: The seemingly endless tap wall is helpfully sorted to guide beer aficionados toward something refreshing, tart, wheaty, format-busting, et al., offering something for every palate.

79 RAINY, BANGERSAUSTIN.COM

CIDER SELECTION

AUSTIN EASTCIDERS

FINALISTS: CIDERCade, FAIRWEATHER CIDER CO., JESTER KING, TEXAS KEEPER CIDER

When this now-iconic brand first launched in 2013, no one could've predicted how many delicious seasonal iterations their team would dream up. They've perfected the classics and expanded to tantalize even the cider nonbelievers. For a drier, less sweet version, go with the brut light; for some extra pizzazz, try the blackberry or the Imperial Tropical Punch.

979 SPRINGDALE #130, AUSTINEASTCIDERS.COM



ZEKE BARBARO

DISTILLERY

STILL AUSTIN

FINALISTS: DESERT DOOR, FIERCE WHISKERS, GARRISON BROTHERS, TREATY OAK

Is this still Austin? We can't tell anymore, especially now that we've got our own whiskey distilleries, but thank Colonel Sanders we do. Smooth sippin' and elevated, Still's dark, toasty, barleycorn dew can be taken neat, or as the Burnt Orange, a bourbon cocktail with lemon juice, peach syrup, and simple syrup. Hooked on 'em.

440 E. ST. ELMO, STILLAUSTIN.COM

BREWERY

MEANWHILE BREWING CO.

FINALISTS: JESTER KING, LAGO VISTA BREWING CO., LAZARUS BREWING CO., ST. ELMO BREWING CO.

Winning this category is like winning one of the Big Four at the Grammys. We'll creatively categorize this as Record of the Year for the Austin food service industry, and as such, Meanwhile Brewery just Beyoncé'd all other challengers for the second year running. The star power comes from its strong backbone of mainstay smash hits: Secret Beach West Coast IPA, Tender Robot Hazy IPA, and 2021 Great American Beer Fest gold medalist Meanwhile Pilsner.

3901 PROMONTORY POINT, MEANWHILEBEER.COM

TEQUILA SELECTION

SUERTE

FINALISTS: COMEDOR, LA CONDESA, LA HOLLY, LAS PERLAS, TECHO MEZCALERIA & AGAVE BAR

What pairs best with tequila? Good luck y corn, two acclaimed specialties of this Eastside staple. Consistently ranked among Austin's finest, the spirit menu is thoughtful and surprising, with tequila concoctions aplenty. Don't miss the Don Dario with reposado, tamarindo, lime, and sarsaparilla bitters.

1800 E. SIXTH, SUERTEATX.COM

**GONE BUT NOT
FORGOTTEN**

R.I.P. OLD AUSTIN

From Liberty Lunch to Raul's, Dobie Theatre to Armadillo World Headquarters, Sound Exchange to Shady Grove ... Austinites can't help but miss the places that kept us weird.

We want everyone to carry a piece of "Old Austin" with them, so we created this shirt in memory of iconic local restaurants, bars, clubs, and businesses past.

Whether you're a long-time Austinite looking for a trip down memory lane or a newcomer eager to embrace the city's past, don't miss your chance to wear a piece of Austin history.

R.I.P. OLD AUSTIN

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With you,
we're DE NADA!

De Nada
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austinchronicle.com **BEST OF AUSTIN: RESTAURANTS 2023** THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE 23



JANA BIRCHUM

MOCKTAILS

ARMADILLO DEN

FINALISTS: EQUIPMENT ROOM, HOLIDAY ON 7TH, SANS BAR, WU CHOW

A wide selection of draft mocktails lets everyone get in on the fun of palomas, sangria, and more, offering refreshing and tasty blends like a ranch water made with Thai basil seltzer, cucumber, and lemon or a Southside Sipper combining fresh watermelon and lime juice with mint.

10106 MENCHACA RD., ARMADILLODENAUSTIN.COM



WINERY

WANDERLUST WINE CO.

FINALISTS: AUSTIN WINERY, GRAPE CREEK VINEYARDS, LOST DRAW CELLARS, WILLIAM CHRIS VINEYARDS

Founded in 2013 by Sammy Lam, Wanderlust offers a unique wine experience with its adventurous selection of handcrafted wines inspired by global destinations. This urban winery reduces waste by offering 56 wines from all over, all on tap. There's no passport needed to travel the world, one glass of adult grape juice at a time.

702 SHADY; 610 N. I-35; WANDERLUSTWINE.COM

WINE SELECTION

LOLO WINE

FINALISTS: AVIARY WINE + KITCHEN, EL RAVAL, HOUSE WINE, LENOIR

LoLo Wine boasts a diverse and approachable natural wine selection, carefully curated to satisfy every palate. Their extensive menu, which can be enjoyed on the spacious patio or cozy indoor bar, spans the globe, from funky orange wines to big, bold reds. The unstuffy staff is friendly and knowledgeable, plus you can listen to the music from next-door neighbor Hotel Vegas.

1504 E. SIXTH, LOLO.WINE

MARGARITA

DE NADA CANTINA

FINALISTS: CURRA'S, EL ALMA, ELDORADO CAFE, LA CONDESA, MATT'S EL RANCHO

The classic margarita at De Nada Cantina on East Cesar Chavez packs a serious punch, so the bar will only allow guests to order two per service. But the genius of this frosty cocktail lies in its balance: Because the premium tequila is perfectly tempered by lime and orange liqueur, the booze never dominates the flavor.

4715 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, DENADACANTINA.COM

JUICE / SMOOTHIES

JUICELAND

FINALISTS: ALCHEMY JUICE, COMMUNITY GARDEN, THE SOUP PEDDLER, WONKY BLENDS

At some point in the future, Austin will probably become one gigantic JuiceLand, but until then, we're pretty sure there's one nearby. The daily specials are always a value, and frequently hefty enough to surrogate lunch. For those feeling even more health-conscious, they offer juice packages made for one-, three-, and five-day cleanses.

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, JUICELAND.COM

MILKSHAKES

P. TERRY'S BURGER STAND

FINALISTS: AMY'S ICE CREAMS, BUDDY'S BURGER, HOPDODDY BURGER BAR, MILKY WAY SHAKES

We could fill this whole space waxing rhapsodic about the standard-bearers – vanilla, strawberry, and double chocolate: all excellent – but it's the rotating Shake of the Month that reminds us what it's like to fall in love again for the first time. Birthday cake, orange Creamsicle, peppermint chocolate: Is it because they are fleeting that they taste so sweet?

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, PTERRYS.COM



JOHN ANDERSON

CREATIVE COCKTAILS

TIKI TATSU-YA

FINALISTS: DRINKWELL, EL RAVAL, HERE NOR THERE, NICKEL CITY, ROOSEVELT ROOM

Have you ever spent an evening drinking from a neon fishbowl? Experienced celebratory sirens and flashing lights upon ordering an adult bev? What about dry ice and improv? Make a(nother) rez to this Tatsu-Ya family hot spot for some of the most delicious, sure-to-bring-a-smile drinks anywhere. Try the Strip 'N Go Naked and Skeleton Cruise for a flavor explosion.

1300 S. LAMAR, TIKI-TATSUYA.COM



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EXPERIENCE



COURTESY OF AUSTIN OYSTER CO.

POP-UP

AUSTIN OYSTER CO.

FINALISTS: BAD LARRY BURGER CLUB, CHEF BAR, CHILLY'S PHILLYS, ZEE'S WIENER SYSTEM

"Fresh oysters delivered to your home" is Austin Oyster Co.'s pretty self-explanatory tagline. They're experts in the delectable bivalve, throwing slurping parties all over the area. Hell, you can even book them to come shuck and serve oysters in your backyard. You definitely want to catch these guys if mollusks are your thing.

ALLERGY-FRIENDLY

MR. NATURAL

FINALISTS: PICNIK, PLANTAIN BAR, WILDER WOOD, THE WELL

Whether you've drawn the short straw for food sensitivities/allergies or you're just skipping inflammatories in your quest to feel better, take solace in ordering food strategically designed to work with your body and your dietary needs. (Note: Tree nuts are not an accommodated allergen.) We love their tomato-based tortilla soup and verde vegan spinach enchiladas.

1901 E. CESAR CHAVEZ; 2414-A S. LAMAR; MRNATURAL-AUSTIN.COM

FOOD EVENT / FESTIVAL

AUSTIN FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

FINALISTS: AUSTIN CHRONICLE HOT SAUCE FESTIVAL, FIELD GUIDE FESTIVAL, HOT LUCK, TEXAS VEGFEST

For foodies, this event is akin to an F1 racing roster of local and national superstar chefs. Kiosks as far as the eye can see churn out thousands of handcrafted bites and sips. New tastes are crowd tested by legendary brands and the wine keeps flowin' all day. Stay chic with a shady water break so you don't become *that guy*.

AMBIENCE

FONDA SAN MIGUEL

FINALISTS: COMEDOR, EQUIPMENT ROOM, TIKI TATSU-YA, VIXEN'S WEDDING

Since 1975, Fonda San Miguel has focused on serving mouthwatering Mexican cuisine inside not a hacienda, but a finca: an agricultural country estate that has something beautiful everywhere you look. Together, the artwork, decor, and plant-filled dining room create a lush, tranquil atmosphere unlike any other in Austin.

2330 W. NORTH LOOP, FONDASNIGUEL.COM

HAPPY HOUR

LORO

FINALISTS: BOBO'S SNACK BAR, BUFALINA, EL RAVAL, SALTY SOW

Variety is the name of Loro's happy hour game, and on weekday afternoons, guests at the South Lamar smokehouse and bar can enjoy a bounty of \$6 snacks like brisket tostadas and smoked salmon dip, \$7-\$9 sandwiches like Loro's famous cheeseburger, \$4-\$5 wine, beer, and sake, and \$5 boozy slushies like mango sake and Vietnamese coffee.

2115 S. LAMAR, LOROEATS.COM

LAKESIDE DINING

MOZART'S

FINALISTS: THE COUNTY LINE, HULA HUT, OASIS TEXAS BREWING CO., SKI SHORES CAFE

Mozart's is a bit of a do-it-all establishment, with not only the coffee you'll smell roasting on their expansive lakeside deck but empanadas, personal pizzas, and, of course, dessert available as well. Listen to some tunes on their outdoor stage, or just read or study like so many locals do.

3825 LAKE AUSTIN BLVD., MOZARTSCOFFEE.COM



JANA BIRCHUM



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EMERGENCY
WORKPLACE
ORGANIZING

Let's organize together to create a city-wide workforce capable of wielding power in this industry so we can change it. If you want to build this movement, contact the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee.



EWOC workerorganizing.org

THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE'S **ONLINE**
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THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM /STORE

ROMANTIC DINNER**JUSTINE'S BRASSERIE**

FINALISTS: EBERLY, INTERO, LENOIR, NIDO

Is this the Chateau Marmont of East Fifth? Possibly. See and be seen, seduce a new lover, or gaze adoringly at your longtime squeeze. No matter the heartsy-artsy occasion, share some oysters, escargot, and bubbly in celebration of fashion, love, and sexy French bistro vibes. Bonus if you make a tintype photo to commemorate the evening.

4710 E. FIFTH, JUSTINES1937.COM

PATIO**COSMIC COFFEE & BEER GARDEN**

FINALISTS: BAR PEACHED, BOBO'S SNACK BAR, LAZARUS BREWING CO., THE LITTLE DARLIN'

Having an excellent outdoor atmosphere in which to lounge, nibble, and sip comes naturally to Cosmic Coffee & Beer Garden, but it goes beyond a vibe to permaculture. Look for shady spots, mini-waterfalls, and intentional functionality, not to mention the chill chickens foraging among the fresh-grown herbs.

121 PICKLE #111, COSMICHOSPITALITYGROUP.COM

PLAYSCAPE**MEANWHILE BREWING CO.**

FINALISTS: HAT CREEK BURGER COMPANY, HOME SLICE PIZZA, PHIL'S ICEHOUSE, WATERLOO ICE HOUSE

Meanwhile is not as much a brewery as it is a contortionist act: yes, a fantastic beerhouse, but also a food truck hangout, soccer burnout safe space, coffeehouse, and kids party station. Meanwhile's wood-and-metal playscape, which takes center stage in the brewery's shady biergarten, wins the day while mom and dad enjoy a latte or a Pilsner.

3901 PROMONTORY POINT, MEANWHILEBEER.COM

VIEW**THE OASIS**

FINALISTS: LAS BIS, NIDO, P6 AT THE LINE AUSTIN, SWAY

Come for the view and stay for the sunset. There's plenty of burgers and Tex-Mex on the menu to fill you up, but the true satisfaction comes from sitting back on one of the many decks and taking in Lake Travis, low water levels or not, for one of the best sights in Central Texas.

6550 COMANCHE TRL., OASIS-AUSTIN.COM



PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON

WILD CARD: OUTSIDE THE BOX**THE DIRDIE BIRDIE (DINING, DRINKING, AND MINI-GOLF)**

FINALISTS: HIGH TEA BY SKULL & CAKEBONES (PLANT-BASED, HEMP-INFUSED DINING EXPERIENCE), VISITANT SOCIAL CLUB (SPEAKEASY)

The influencer love child of Peter Pan Mini-Golf and a gastropub, the Dirdie Birdie gives locals a deliciously fun reason to be in the Domain (no mean feat in itself). Fantastically detailed fairways and a rich menu make it probably the only brunch spot where you can play a round between courses.

10910 DOMAIN DR., #120, DIRDIEBIRDIEATX.COM

WORTH THE DRIVE**JESTER KING BREWERY**

FINALISTS: ANGELS ICEHOUSE, LAGO VISTA BREWING CO., LUCKY RABBIT, THE SALT LICK

I'm at the brewery. I'm at the winery. I'm at the combination brewery and winery. I'm at the cabin inn. I'm at the wedding site. I'm at the combination cabin inn and wedding site. I'm at the scratch kitchen. I'm at the cidery. I'm at the combination scratch kitchen and cidery. I'm at the goat pen. I'm at the concert hall. I'm at the combination goat pen and concert hall. I'm at the hemp farm. I'm at the hiking trail. I'm at the combination hemp farm and hiking trail. I'm at the ...

13187 FITZHUGH, JESTERKINGBREWERY.COM

WEEKEND BRUNCH**CHEZ ZEE**

FINALISTS: HILLSIDE FARMACY, JACOBY'S, OVENBIRD, PAPERBOY

Everything you need to know about brunch at Chez Zee is the first item you see on the menu: A bowl of bacon. Nothing but green flags from here on out, friends. Here's a variety of Eggs Benedict offerings including beef tenderloin and lobster iterations, omelets, quiche, migas, a Belgian waffle. And that blessed bowl. Take home a slice of lemon rosemary or coconut tres leches cake for later; you'll thank us when you finally get hungry again.

5406 BALCONES DR., CHEZ-ZEE.COM

BATHROOMS**EBERLY**

FINALISTS: HIGH NOON, HOME SLICE PIZZA, KITTY COHEN'S, LITTLE BROTHER

Mickie Spencer must have been channeling the Wes Anderson aesthetic when designing the South Lamar restaurant's communal commode. Accented by old New York tavern occupancy lights, royal blue walls, and gold accents, these water closets are more palatial than plebeian. Take your mind off your need to go, soaking in the design while you wait for a stall.

615 S. LAMAR, EBERLYAUSTIN.COM

**SERVICE****UCHI**

FINALISTS: BARLEY SWINE, ESTE, INTERO, LUMINAIRE

Each professional at this eternally excellent fusion wunderkind has earned forever-clout for their understanding of Japan-meets-Austin flavors, sake and cocktail pairings, and sushi details. Continuously hailed as the local pièce de résistance, our pals in other cities now have the great fortune to also experience their impeccable taste and outstanding service.

801 S. LAMAR, UCHIAUSTIN.COM

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JOHN ANDERSON

FORKS OPTIONAL

CHRONICLE EDITORIAL STAFFERS SHARE WHICH LOCAL DISHES THEY'D AWARD A MICHELIN STAR

Food Editor Melanie Haupt: A few months back, I had the most exquisite agnolotti stuffed with caramelized sunflower seeds and roots at **Pasta | Bar**. It was so evocative of summer and very rooted in a sense of place and time. It was like Proust's madeleine for anybody who grew up eating sunflower seeds at summer camp.

1017 E. SIXTH, EXPLORETOCK.COM/PASTABARAUSTIN

Proofreader and Community Editor James Scott: After artistically intensive visits to both grayDUCK and MASS Gallery, I suggested to my companions that we lunch at **Komé**. My motives were selfish: At the time I nursed a weeklong hunger for their vegetable tempura, which consists of shishito peppers, Japanese sweet potato, and onion. Substantial slices of these hearty veg kept their bite without overwhelming the airy crunch of a light batter. My tempura-less sickness, cured!

5301 AIRPORT, KOME-AUSTIN.COM

Proofreader Jasmine Lane: Wheatsville's African peanut soup is the unsung, luxuriously cozy queen of comfort food options: nutty, spicy, creamy but with the pleasantly gentle crunch of chopped peanuts, and best of all, deeply filling. I drove 20 minutes each way to pick some up at the nearest Wheatsville last week. We should name a day in its honor.

3101 GUADALUPE, 4001 S. LAMAR, WHEATSVILLE.COOP

Music Editor Rachel Rascoe: Baguettes handmade every morning by co-owner Nguyet Quach make strip mall stop **NG Cafe** my favorite bánh mì in town. I first stopped by after an ill-fated Craigslist sewing machine purchase in the nearby Target parking lot and still make the drive up north for the house-made tofu sandwich, with the perfect tofu crust and pickled carrots. The underpriced desserts are made with equal care, from a box of 15(!) lemon cookies to coconut cream milk bread.

13000 N. I-35 #200, NGCAFEATX.COM

Staffwriter Lina Fisher: Sometimes a mighty hankering takes you over and you don't know why. Mine came to me a few Sundays ago, in the form of an insatiable desire for an Italian sandwich: the kind with several meats, peppers, and various and sundry acidic crunchies. I scoured the internet for consensus and drove many miles to **Little Deli**, located in an out-of-time strip mall in Crestview. The setting was idyllic with neighborhood boys sharing hefty slices of pizza, bikes and skateboards resting against the outdoor gazebo. The Gourmet Italian sandwich, which differs from the Classic Italian in its inclusion of hot coppa, prosciutto, and roasted red peppers, was undoubtedly the most delicious I've ever had. Alas, rather than quenching the hankering, it has only intensified it. Be sure to pair with an ice-cold Coke in a glass bottle.

7101-A WOODROW AVE., 1804 BRIARCLIFF, LITTLEDELIANDPIZZA.COM

Editor-in-Chief Kimberley Jones: I don't know if the roast chicken and vegetable soup was on **Julio's** menu when it opened in Hyde Park in 1983, but it's the only thing I've ever ordered there. The pandemic kept me away for a few years, so a bowl ordered last fall ... well, I won't call it a revelation, just a reminder: This soup is perfection. Soulful broth, sliced avocado, essential add-on rice – it goes beyond nourishing. It's restorative. It tastes even better when you've stood in line 10 minutes to order. Throw in sweater weather and a table outside? Heaven.

4230 DUVAL ST., JULIOSAUSTIN.COM

Staffwriter Brant Bingamon: The barbecue at **Micklethwait Craft Meats** has not lost a step in 10 years. It remains some of the best protein consumable by any entity in any corner of the world, ever. This writer reencountered the smoked brisket during this year's South by Southwest. Nothing new about it, but it reduced me and several friends first to profound humility and then to a complete abandonment of personal dignity.

1309 ROSEWOOD, CRAFTMEATS AUSTIN.COM

News Editor Maggie Thompson: You don't see khao soi, as it's usually spelled, on menus enough. **Super Thai's** take on this northern Thai noodle soup is rich and comforting with a kick. Flat egg noodles are drenched in lavish yellow curry, then crowned with crispy noodles, green onions, and cilantro. You get some acid and crunch from pickled mustard, lime, and bean sprouts, and it all comes together in harmony.

2024 S. LAMAR, SUPERTHAI CUISINE.COM

Food Lieutenant Wayne Alan Brenner:

The newest restaurant from Tyson Cole and the crew at Hai Hospitality is **Uchibā**, an izakaya-inspired venue Downtown, and their rutabaga noodles with Gruyère and chicken furikake is one of the best things I've had all year. The noodles are wide and flat as tagliatelle and cooked perfectly to highlight their earthy flavor, the Gruyère a revelation in melted umami that drips from each noodle, abetted by the contrasting crunch of garlicky chicken.

601 W. SECOND, UCHIBA.UCHIRESTAURANTS.COM

Special Screenings & Community Listings

Editor Kat McNevins: We finally made it to **Wink** this year, and while everything on the five-course tasting menu was exquisite, a standout was the starter: seared tuna poke with wakame, sesame seed, cucumber, and orange, with a savory-sweet sauce that almost had us licking the bowl in an uncivilized fashion.

1014 N. LAMAR, WINKRESTAURANT.COM

Culture Editor Richard Whittaker: Austin's paucity of gluten-free fare can be infuriating, especially when the dessert options peter out at à la mode sans pie. So the fact that we have a completely celiac dining experience – one that steers clear of seed oils, soy, refined sugar, and GMOs, too – seems like something to celebrate. So make sure to save space for **the Well's** signature avocado mousse – a silky cloud of cacao and cinnamon with a jubilant topping of coconut and pistachio.

440 W. SECOND, 6317 BEE CAVES RD. #200, EATWELLATX.COM

Music Editor Rachel Rascoe: Surprise victory in a round of Go-Go's-themed trivia landed me a gift card to farm-to-table Italian restaurant **Intero**. Entering unresearched with no expectations, my partner and I were delighted to find the presence of timballo on the menu – aka timpano, the turducken-like mountain famously assembled by Stanley Tucci in the 1996 film *Big Night*. Intero's chic baby version is much simpler, featuring wagyu brisket wrapped in something like risotto, and I'm OK with that.

2612 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, INTERORESTAURANT.COM

News Editor Maggie Thompson: Dai Due's regionally sourced menu changes with the season. Asparagus is only available for a few weeks, apples come in the late summer, and apricots only come some years – but the cold meat board never disappoints. Pickled fruit and veg bring sugar and acid to surprisingly tender game. Boar and antelope are standouts. Anything that ends in "mousse" melts gloriously. Your curiosity at Dai Due will demand a tapas-style approach, and the meat board satisfies.

2406 MANOR RD., DAIDUE.COM



OVERALL

Chef: Ling Qi Wu (Qi, Lin Asian Bar, Ling Kitchen, Ling Wu)
Emerging Chef: Harvard Aninye (Canje)
Established Restaurant: Bouldin Creek Cafe
Most Missed/Dearly Departed: Gourmands
New Restaurant: Este
Pastry Chef: Derrick Flynn (Este, Suerte)

DINING OUT

Bakery: Quack's Bakeries
Breakfast: Kerbey Lane Cafe
Coffee Shop: Radio Coffee & Beer
Drive-Through: P. Terry's Burger Stand
Fine Dining: Uchi
Food Truck: Spicy Boys Fried Chicken
Late-Night Dining: Justine's Brasserie
Place to Take Your Kids: Home Slice Pizza
Place to Take Your Parents: Loro
Solo Dining: Ramen Tatsu-Ya

CUISINE

African: Taste of Ethiopia
Barbecue: Terry Black's BBQ
Cajun: Evangeline Cafe
Caribbean: Canje
Chinese: Lin Asian Bar + Dim Sum
French: Justine's Brasserie
Indian: Clay Pit
Interior Mexican: Fonda San Miguel
Italian: Patrizi's
Japanese: Komé
Korean: Oseyo
Mediterranean: Phoenicia Bakery & Deli
Middle Eastern/Arab: Halal Bros
New American: Odd Duck
Seafood: Quality Seafood Market
South American: Buenos Aires Café
Southern/Soul: Hoover's Cooking
Tex-Mex: Matt's El Rancho
Thai: Titaya's Thai Cuisine
Vegan/Vegetarian: Bouldin Creek Cafe
Vietnamese: Elizabeth Street Cafe

THE WINNERS

DISHES

Breakfast Sandwich: Bird Bird Biscuit
Breakfast Taco: Veracruz All Natural
Burger: JewBoy Burgers
Chicken-Fried Steak: Hoover's Cooking
Dumplings: Lin Asian Bar + Dim Sum
Enchilada: Eldorado Cafe
Ice Cream/Frozen Treat: Amy's Ice Creams
Noodles/Ramen: Ramen Tatsu-Ya
Pizza: Home Slice Pizza
Salad: Vinaigrette
Sandwich: ThunderCloud Subs
Steak: Jeffrey's
Sushi: Uchi
Taco: Veracruz All Natural
Veggie Burger: P. Terry's Burger Stand

BEVERAGES

Bear Selection: Banger's Sausage House and Beer Garden
Brewery: Meanwhile Brewing Co.
Cider Selection: Austin Eastciders
Creative Cocktails: Tiki Tatsu-Ya
Distillery: Still Austin
Frozen Cocktails: Loro
Juice/Smoothies: JuiceLand
Margarita: De Nada Cantina
Milkshakes: P. Terry's Burger Stand
Mocktails: Armadillo Den
Tequila Selection: Suerte
Whiskey Selection: The Grackle
Wine Selection: LoLo Wine
Winery: Wanderlust Wine Co.

EXPERIENCE

Allergy-Friendly: Mr. Natural
Ambience: Fonda San Miguel
Bathrooms: Eberly
Food Event/Festival: Austin Food & Wine Festival
Happy Hour: Loro
Lakeside Dining: Mozart's
Patio: Cosmic Coffee & Beer Garden
Playscape: Meanwhile Brewing Co.
Pop-Up: Austin Oyster Co.
Romantic Dinner: Justine's Brasserie
Service: Uchi
View: The Oasis
Weekend Brunch: Chez Zee
Worth the Drive: Jester King Brewery
Wild Card (Outside the Box): The Dirdie Birdie (dining, drinking, and mini-golf)

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