

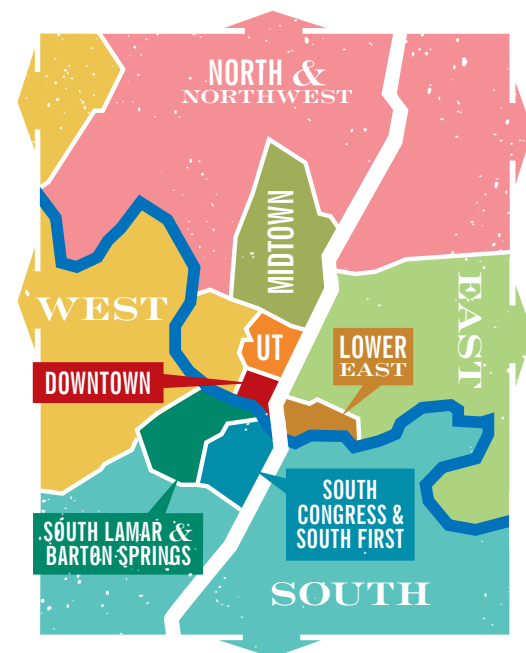


THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE'S FIRST PLATES  
**100** RESTAURANTS  
DEFINING AUSTIN DINING NOW  
2017

# THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE'S FIRST PLATES

# 100 RESTAURANTS

## DEFINING AUSTIN DINING NOW



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Dang. It's been a tough year. Almost nothing seemed to go how I wanted it to go, from the geopolitical climate to the timing of this issue. Over the last week or so, I moved apartments, had to replace my phone, and found a family of brown recluse spiders living inside my truck's tailpipe. Needless to say, I've been eating a lot of pizza.

For better or worse, I've always found it impossible to feel stressed in the moment of eating. Yes, there's the immediate pleasures of salt and fat, but it has always been more than that. Anxiety does its damage by making us feel alone. Comfort food gives us an opportunity to feel connected.

For many of us, stirring a béchamel into mac & cheese or licking the chocolate batter off a beater is our earliest introduction to the idea that food is really about community. Those memories stick to our ribs – we remember an aunt beaming with pride when a meringue didn't weep or a boyfriend who made us migas on the first sleepover.

Even the meals we eat alone – like the giant bowls of pho I would stretch over three meals when I could barely afford rent – are part of that continuum, the product of a people whose love of community is so strong that they risk the razor thin margins and brave the long hours of running a restaurant. That love is a constant reminder that we are all in this together. □

I am fortunate that I got to work with a community of writers in coming up with the list of 100. Thanks to Emily Beyda, Mary Bryce, Jessi Cape, Melody Fury, Dan Gentile, Melanie Haupt,

Lauren Jones, Josh Kupecki, Veronica Meewes, and Adrienne Whitehorse and special thanks to interns Sierra Diaz and Thea Newell, who went above and beyond. Our proofing team – Danielle White, Kat McNevens, and Greg Stitt – worked double time to handle all the copy before an early press deadline.

Our ever-impressive creative director Jason Stout created the sharp look of this issue, and production manager Chris Linnen, and graphic designers Zeke Barbaro and Carrie Lewis were uncommonly patient in the face of my many last-minute changes. Staff photographer John Anderson with help from frequent *Chronicle* contributor David Brendan Hall are responsible for the beautiful photography throughout.

Behind the scenes, web director Brian Barry and digital strategist Mike Barnett took care of all the difficult computer stuff necessary for the success of an issue. And marketing director Sarah Wolf, marketing manager Karena Rogers, special events guru Dan Hardick, and digital coordinator Tamar Price put together not one, not two, but four special events to celebrate First Plates. Thanks so much for the teams at El Chile Group, Cuvée Coffee, Peached Social House, and the ABGB for lending their venues and expertise.

Last but not least, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many people who I am fortunate enough to get to work with every week – the men and women who make Austin's food scene so special. There's no greater comfort than knowing they are there to share a meal. – Brandon Watson

## BRANDON WATSON'S TOP 10



Kemuri Tatsu-ya

- 1) Kemuri Tatsu-ya**
- 2) Apis Restaurant & Apiary**
- 3) Emmer & Rye**
- 4) Olamaie**
- 5) Barley Swine**
- 6) Dee Dee**
- 7) Odd Duck**
- 8) L'oca d'oro**
- 9) Otoko**
- 10) Dai Due**

ALL PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON UNLESS NOTED

# VIRGINIA B. WOOD HALL OF FAME

There's no doubt that the restaurants listed below define Austin dining now. Together, they have defined Austin dining for more than a century, racking up awards and making more Top 10 lists than we can count. By induction into the Virginia B. Wood Hall of Fame (named after the former *Chronicle* food editor and dean of Austin food media), we recognize that they will always have a place on the Austin hospitality scene – and on First Plates – even as we make room for some new upstarts on our list of 100.

– Brandon Watson



Uchi

## Chez Nous

510 Neches, 512/473-2413  
www.cheznousaustin.com

Comfort, warmth, and a dash of romance makes this little bistro live up to its name. Started by three Parisian friends in 1982, it's a classic take on traditional French fare, and an excellent spot for relishing in conversation over escargots de Bourgogne and bubbles while hidden away from the Downtown melee.

## Quality Seafood

5621 Airport, 512/452-3820  
www.qualityseafoodmarket.com

Did you know that this Austin institution supplies many of your favorite restaurants with fresh Gulf seafood? Even better, their own menu will satisfy just about any seafood craving you've got: peel-n-eat shrimp, grilled Texas black drum, and buttery lobster. Plus, they've got that family reunion-style mac & cheese you not-so-secretly love.

## Uchi

801 S. Lamar, 512/916-4808  
www.uchiaustin.com

South Lamar's Uchi has been setting the gold standard for Austin cuisine for years, and shows no signs of slowing down. James Beard Award winner chef Tyson Cole continues to serve intricate and exquisite renderings of Japanese cuisine that will be the most worthwhile, treat-yourself splurge you make all month ... maybe even all year.

## Eastside Cafe

2113 Manor Rd., 512/476-5858  
www.eastsidecafeatx.com

There once was a little house on Manor Road that served the best artichoke manicotti in all the land, but carrot pasta and sun-dried tomato cream sauce were only the beginning of the story. It's a tale with plenty of romance (those sparkling limosas) and some very deep drama (the chocolate almond torte), perfect for all our happily-ever-afters.

## Home Slice Pizza

1415 S. Congress, 512/444-7437  
www.homeslicepizza.com

Despite the many new pizza places that have popped up around town since it first made a splash, Home Slice still packs the house with both out-of-towners and locals. The reason? Hot, fresh, New York-style pies that haven't lost their luster in more than a decade.

## wink

1014 N. Lamar, 512/482-8868  
www.winkrestaurant.com

In an Austin that often mistakes fine surfaces for fine dining, chefs Stewart Scruggs and Mark Paul's strip mall eatery is the real deal. Maybe there's no miles of carrara marble and the fixtures may not require weekly wipe downs with Brasso, but wink has it where it counts – beautiful food made with the best ingredients, immaculate service, and a wine program that's worth raising a glass to.



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DAVID BRENNAN HALL

## NO SLEEP 'TIL BREAKFAST

**THE FIRST PLATES GUIDE TO EATING IN BED**  
BY EMILY BEYDA

I'm not here to sell you on the concept of eating in bed. Either you get it, or you're one of those mythically virtuous people who gets up at 7am on Saturdays and goes for runs or something horrible like that, and it's far too late for me to help you. In the past, pillow-propped picnickers the world over were limited by their own cooking skills or the sad stack of menus in their kitchen junk drawer. But we have the internet now, and independent contractors willing to stop by almost all of the restaurants on our First Plates list, giving you time, as you wait for their arrival, to seek out and stream an appropriate piece of visual media, the eating-in-bed equivalent of a fine wine pairing.

### PAPERBOY

We begin with a classic: the humble yet delicious breakfast sandwich. Ordering pickup from this adorable Eastside food truck is the perfect Sunday morning (OK, afternoon) solution for those moments when you could really go for a classic bacon, egg, and cheese, but cannot, for the life of you, imagine actually leaving the house.

**What to Order:** Cold brew, obviously, and their B.E.C., with thick hunks of bacon, a runny egg, and the small miracle of their homemade pimento cheese, barely contained by a fluffy brioche bun.

**What to Watch:** Sunday morning calls for cartoons. Seek out one of the trippier YouTube compilations of golden age Looney Tunes and let nostalgia take you away.

### EASY TIGER

There are many good things to order from this justifiably famous local bakery and cafe, from the many delicious sandwiches to their house-made sausages, and there is certainly an argument to be made for holing up with a couple of nice beers and a stash of their small-batch fancy Chex Mix. But there's a special decadence to eating baked goods in bed, and nobody bakes like the folks at Easy Tiger.

**What to Order:** One of every pastry they have, from the glaze-slicked spiced pecan tiger claw to the ridiculously flaky chocolate croissants.

**What to Watch:** Vera Chytilová's 1966 film *Daisies*, which features a scene of the two heroines smashing mountains of glistening cakes and cream puffs in a decadent banquet hall. Follow their example, as you embrace the disastrous potential of pâte à choux and white sheets.

### VIA 313

The Detroit-style crust of Via 313's pizza is simultaneously pillowy and crisp, with a fluffy, yeasty center, and buttery edges reminiscent of a much, much fancier version of those little mail-style personal pan pizzas you were probably mildly obsessed with as a child. Plus, the thicker slice makes for less droop, and a more convenient horizontal eating experience for the tidily inclined.

**What to Order:** Pizza is personal, and we're not gonna tell you how to live your life, but it's worth noting that The Rocket is genuinely out of this world, with savory hot soppressata and shaved Parmesan cheese topped with a crispy pile of arugula.

**What to Watch:** *The Evil Dead* strikes the perfect balance between kitschy fun and genuine terror, and, bonus, premiered in Detroit.

### TEXAS FRENCH BREAD

Unlike the other places on this list, which are ideal for undignified solo consumption, Texas French Bread takeout is an occasion in the most serious way, ideal for when you have some candles on the bedside table and an overnight guest to impress, or if you were just really good (or really bad, I guess) this week and are feeling the urgent need to treat yo'self with a three-course dinner in bed.

**What to Order:** Start with the breakfast radishes with Maldon sea salt and cultured butter, or some nice pâté, a second course of steak frites with aioli, and something chocolatey from the bakery. You know that nice bottle of wine you've been saving in the back of the pantry? Snag it.

**What to Watch:** Jean Cocteau's 1946 version of *Beauty and the Beast* is beautifully shot and surreally romantic, the perfect pairing for a quiet night in with a soufflé.

### JULIE'S NOODLES

Some people will tell you that you shouldn't be eating noodles in bed, that disaster and drenched sheets are inevitable. Those people are amateurs, and should not be trusted. This is especially true of the noodles made at Julie's, which are chewy and thick-cut, with the snap and bounce you only get from truly hand-pulled dough.

**What to Order:** As many dumplings as you think you can handle, and soup with hand-cut noodles and tender chunks of braised beef.

**What to Watch:** *In the Mood for Love*, a lushly colorful Wong Kar-wai film set in 1960s Hong Kong with a central romance that emerges at the local hand-pulled noodle stall.



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## CAMPUS AREA



Hopfields

### Hopfields

3110 Guadalupe, 512/537-0467  
www.hopfieldsaustin.com

The relaxed gastropub atmosphere is a welcome respite from the chaotic energy of nearby UT. And its French-bistro inspired menu and fabulous beer and wine list is a far cry from the fast food and bro bars that litter the Drag. With moules frites and a superlative salade niçoise, consider this the grad school version of campus dining.

### Via 313

3016 Guadalupe #100, 512/358-6193  
www.via313.com

It's been six years since brothers Brandon and Zane Hunt opened their upstart food truck, serving crispy-cornered Detroit-style square pizza and Faygo pop to late-night bar hoppers on the Eastside. In that time, they've established themselves as leaders in Austin's pizza space, with a flagship location in the North Campus area.

### Julie's Handmade Noodles

2512 Rio Grande, 646/508-3303

We were glad to hear the news last year that Julie's had expanded to a new North Austin brick-and-mortar, but we still like remembering our college days at the food truck. Affordable, quick, and filling, Julie's is a pro-tip that's passed down with each new class – perfect for students or just those of us who still live like one.

### Olamaie

1610 San Antonio St., 512/474-2796  
www.olamaieaustin.com

They're so much more than their biscuits. Fans know that the heart-achingly tender, buttery pastry is just a foreshadowing of the goodness to come. Grounded in history, chef Michael Fojtasek and his team plate up inventive Southern fare that pays homage to seasonality and locality. They steal hearts with a fine-tuned balance between comfort and haute cuisine.

### Texas French Bread

2900 Rio Grande, 512/499-0544  
www.texasfrenchbread.com

Texas French Bread is one of the oldest names in the Austin hospitality business, but it still feels like a well-kept secret. With a relaxed bistro feel, it continues to delight with a creative wine and beer selection, beautifully prepared local food, and some of the friendliest staff in Austin.

### Crown & Anchor

2911 San Jacinto, 512/322-9168  
www.crownandanchorpub.com

You may not hear the opening piano melody from *Cheers* as you enter this nautically themed neighborhood pub, but the genial delinquents at the Crown & Anchor will make you feel right at home, whether it's your first visit or your 500th. It's a port in the storm of pretentious brewpubs (you know who you are), offering a stellar burger and oodles of beer options, and they won't cost a pirate's booty.



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# DOWNTOWN



Red Ash Italia

## Red Ash Italia

**303 Colorado #200, 512/379-2906**  
[www.redashitalia.com](http://www.redashitalia.com)

Upscale cuisine doesn't always have to equate to tweezer plating or trendy ingredients. Sometimes all it takes for you to feel like royalty is a good bowl of pasta and a stack of garlic bread. The recent Italian explosion in Austin brought us many permutations of the world's comfort food – some fussier than others. Red Ash proves there's nothing wrong with keeping it simple.

## My Name Is Joe Coffee Co.

**503 Colorado**  
[www.mynameisjoe.com](http://www.mynameisjoe.com)

Chef Philip Speer's trailer serves up good food, good coffee, and a good cause – employing addicts in recovery and donating a portion of its proceeds to the Serenity Star Recovery Center. The masterful savory oats and almond butter toast will put your sad morning cereal to shame.

## Wu Chow

**500 W. Fifth, 512/476-2469**  
[www.wuchowaustin.com](http://www.wuchowaustin.com)

The upscale Chinese restaurant has one of the best Instas in the biz, splitting the posts between photos of lovingly plated food and the occasional visiting celebrity. It's no wonder it's a frequent stop for the jet set. Wu Chow's soup dumplings are mouthwatering and bursting with everything that is good in the world.

## La Condesa

**400-A W. Second, 512/499-0300**  
[www.lacondesa.com](http://www.lacondesa.com)

There are enough new restaurants in the Downtown core that La Condesa is something of a grande dame, but the hip interiors from famed designer Joel Mozersky and the contemporary Mexican small plates from chef Rick Lopez still feel as fresh as ever. We recommend a margarita la clásica and a barbacoa taquito.

## Fixe

**500 W. Fifth, 512/888-9133**  
[www.austinfoixe.com](http://www.austinfoixe.com)

Fixe is the place to take your East Coast friends who boast the superiority of their New York pizza and bagels. Southern food has just as much to offer when it comes to craft and flavor, and Louisiana chef James Robert is ready to prove it with his fine-dining twist on the classics. And you can enjoy yourself watching them try to eat their words around a mouthful of one of the best fried chicken dishes in Austin.

## Second Bar + Kitchen

**200 Congress, 512/827-2750**  
[www.secondbarkitchen.com/second](http://www.secondbarkitchen.com/second)

With its sprawling leather banquettes and a menu of slightly wonky twists on classic American flavors (think pepperoni soup with garlic croutons or buffalo fried pickles with Gorgonzola and hot sauce), this Downtown favorite continues to please. It certainly doesn't hurt that their patio is the best place for people-watching in the city.

## Emmer & Rye

**51 Rainey #110, 512/366-5530**  
[www.emmerandrye.com](http://www.emmerandrye.com)

Chef/owner Kevin Fink's genius amalgamation of table and dim sum ordering may seem just as foreign as his repertoire of ingredients, but rest assured that although you may not know what you just ordered, it will be just what you wanted – proof that Fink knows his craft, inside and out. Thanks to Emmer & Rye, "Rainey Street" and "sophisticated" are no longer mutually exclusive terms.

## Counter 3. Five. VII

**315 Congress #100, 512/291-3327**  
[www.counter3fivevii.com](http://www.counter3fivevii.com)

Austin's Downtown concept may seem like advanced algebra at first, but in reality it's a very simple equation: Choose a three-, five-, or seven-course tasting menu, with optional wine pairings, and Eric Earthman and his team will take care of everything else. They've really only got one question: How hungry are you?

## Banger's Sausage House & Beer Garden

**79 Rainey, 512/386-1656**  
[www.bangersaustin.com](http://www.bangersaustin.com)

Rainey is chaotic no matter the day of the week, but all that hubbub seems miles away when you are sitting on the patio at Banger's. Known for their homemade sausage, Southern sides, "the largest tap wall in Austin," and their giant "manmosas," the easygoing eatery can turn all your Sunday morning coming-downs to Sunday fundays.

## Easy Tiger

**709 E. Sixth, 512/614-4972**  
[www.easytigeraustin.com](http://www.easytigeraustin.com)

Susan Sarandon may soon be rolling into town, but we will still play our table tennis at Easy Tiger. The huge whiskey selection, delicious beer cheese, and house sausages make ELM Group's flagship concept an essential stop before we get dirty on Dirty. In the morning hours, we lick our wounds with a pastry and an Americano from the upstairs bakery.

## Boiler Nine

**800 W. Cesar Chavez, 512/220-9990**  
[www.boilernine.com](http://www.boilernine.com)

We came to the smokestacks for the beer bread (that smoked. beef. fat. butter.) and stayed for a subterranean nightcap. Chef Jason Stude's wood-fire-focused menu roasts, sears, and chars vegetables and proteins to perfection, and beverage director Jason Stevens' cocktail cave below serves standout spirits from a Seventies-themed "playlist." A third level, the Observatory Bar, offers a stunning view and alcoholic slushies. You can work it all off while walking up and down the stairs.

## Irene's

**506 West Ave., 512/298-0853**  
[www.irenesaustin.com](http://www.irenesaustin.com)

The Xavier Schipani iconography sets the tone. Part midcentury clip-art, part contemporary graffiti; it tells you that Irene's honors the past while looking to the future. Sandwiches, rotating blue plate specials, and classic snacks like pimento cheese and pigs in blankets are the focus here, but you won't find them using dried onion soup. Be warned that the cocktails pack a punch, but you can go to the coffee window the next morning if you need a pick-me-up.



Boiler Nine

# FABI + ROSI

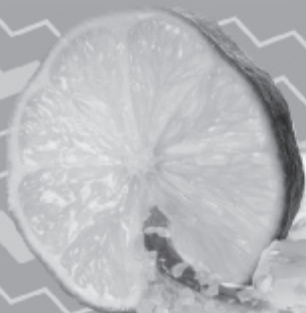
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# EAST



Blue Dahlia

## Blue Dahlia

1115 E. 11th, 512/542-9542  
[www.bluedahliaastro.com](http://www.bluedahliaastro.com)

Blue Dahlia's array of inexpensive tartines, lush salads, and decadent desserts make it a perennial favorite for Mother's Day brunch. But it also happens to be the ideal place to throw back a bottle of Pinot during happy hour. It's good that you two can finally agree on something.

## Abo Youssef

2101 Manor Rd., 512/815-6804  
[www.fb.com/abo-youssef-1637500513173618](http://www.fb.com/abo-youssef-1637500513173618)

Operating out of a brightly decorated Airstream, Abo Youssef is as cheerful as the food it serves is delicious. Look for enormous platters of shawarma, gyros, and falafel, plus cucumber salad, legendary lemon mint tea, homemade hummus, and some of the best tzatziki in town.

## Salty Sow

1917 Manor Rd., 512/391-2337  
[www.saltysow.com](http://www.saltysow.com)

While some of us at the *Chronicle* Food section care about the difference between Kylie and Kendall and some of us are still hoping Lindsay Lohan will finally make it through the storm, there is one thing that brings us together. The duck fat fries – only \$5.50 at happy hour – are GOAT.

## Unit-D Pizzeria

2406 Manor Rd., 512/524-1922  
[www.unitdpizzeria.com](http://www.unitdpizzeria.com)

This Manor Road staple is like a long-distance lover: always on your mind, delicious every time, but only available for dinner. Their Neapolitan pies feature quirky toppings like sweet drop peppers and cauliflower, and a delightful menu of ambitious sides, salads, and desserts. Pencil in this hot spot every chance you get, especially on the \$2 pint night.

## Hillside Farmacy

1209 E. 11th, 512/628-0168  
[www.hillsidefarmacy.com](http://www.hillsidefarmacy.com)

The Thonet chairs, penny tiles, and art nouveau wallpaper in the dining room of Hillside Farmacy might convince you that you've traveled back in time. And, truth be told, the facial hair of the clientele certainly won't tell you different. But with a sprightly farm-to-table menu and a view of the hippest stretch of East 11th, this cafe is anything but old hat.



L'oca d'oro



Old Thousand

## Old Thousand

1000 E. 11th, 737/222-6637  
[www.oldthousandatx.com](http://www.oldthousandatx.com)

At this stunner, old-school can mean a few things: the care they put into their modern takes on Chinese classics like mapo tofu, clay pot pork belly, and congee; the hip-hop vibe that informs everything from the decor to the soundtrack; even the cheeky names of the cocktails. Put together, they remind us that dining out should be fun. That's about as old-school as you can get.

## Franklin Barbecue

900 E. 11th, 512/653-1187  
[www.franklinbarbecue.com](http://www.franklinbarbecue.com)

If you don't know about Franklin by now, we'll gladly send this in a letter to that rock you've been living under. That brisket is witchcraft – good enough to convince us to wait for hours and (gasp) start up conversations with complete strangers. You'll want to get all your chattiness out in the line anyway. Once you reach the end, you'll be speechless.

## L'oca d'oro

1900 Simond, 737/212-1876  
[www.locadoroaustin.com](http://www.locadoroaustin.com)

You're not going to find meatballs drowning in red gravy and endless breadsticks at this casually upscale Italian restaurant. But you outgrew all that somewhere around your 18th birthday. Celebrate the pleasures of adulthood with chef Fiore Tedesco's locally sourced, seasonal dishes (the wood-roasted mushroom lasagna is already legendary) and botanical cocktails – all served by fairly paid workers in a breathtakingly beautiful space.

## Contigo

2027 Anchor, 512/614-2260  
[www.contigotexas.com/austin](http://www.contigotexas.com/austin)

We're not saying you want all the drama of George Cukor's 1939 classic *The Women*, but we bet you wouldn't turn down an invitation to its dude ranch. At Contigo, you don't need to be a socialite in town for a quickie divorce. But if you wrap yourself in a Mexican blanket, order an El Pepino and a skillet of rabbit & dumplings, you'll feel as glamorous as one.

Kyoten Sushiko



Kyoten Sushiko

4600 Mueller Blvd. #1035, 512/888-7559  
www.kyotensushiko.com

Some Austin sushi places are all flash and no substance. At Kyoten Sushiko, you get the opposite of all that. The dining room is austere, and chef Otto Phan does not spend much time glad-handing, but none of that really matters. The toro with fresh wasabi or the Miyazaki A5 Wagyu will demand all your attention anyway.

Dai Due Butcher Shop & Supper Club

2406 Manor Rd., 512/524-0688  
www.daidue.com

A lot of Austin restaurateurs talk the locavore talk, but few walk it as religiously as Dai Due's Jessie Griffiths. Everything at his eatery and butcher shop comes from around these parts – from the wine and beer to the proteins to the tea. That in itself is enough of a reason to go and go often. It also helps that their Sunday fried chicken dinner is so good you'll forget to be upset your weekend's over.

Patrizi's

2307 Manor Rd., 512/522-4834  
www.patrizis.com

On a spring evening, there is something magical about sipping on a glass of rosé and watching the neighborhood go by. But if you live in certain parts of East Austin, you want to be able to see it from your front porch. The gang is all at Patrizi's, scarfing down handmade semolina pasta with vibrant pomodoro and beef fat toast covered with grana at a boho backyard party where everybody gets an invitation.



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## LOWER EAST



Grizzelda's

### la Barbecue

1906 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/605-9696  
www.labarbecue.com

You might have to stand in line at la Barbecue. This is a good thing, because once you get to the front, place your first order (say, the Chi-Town Pinta, an unholy amalgam of a Chicago-style street dog and a late-night L.A. bacon-wrapped gutbuster), consume it, and then rapidly decide you want to try something else (la Frito Loco sounds good, doesn't it?), you'll have plenty of time to digest while you wait for round two.

### Grizzelda's

105 Tillery, 512/366-5908  
www.grizzeldas.com

With its bright beachy decor and Tex-Mex meets traditional Mexican cuisine, dining at Grizzelda's feels like spring break in Cancún, only with better food, decidedly better booze, and way less embarrassing memories. Their equally fun cocktail menu features the playful mezcal-based "Bad Girl Ri Ri" and the vodka and banana liqueur "Tropic Thunder." We won't judge if you let out a few celebratory "woooooos!"

### Eden East

755 Springdale, 512/428-6500  
www.edeneastaustin.com

Sonya Coté's farm-to-table wonderland still specializes in fancy fresh. You can't go wrong with the lovely prix fixe option (with complimentary Deep Eddy cocktails!), but their Saturday breakfast is a lovely choice, too – especially when paired with a stroll through Springdale Farm's market.

### Bufalina

1519 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/524-2523  
www.bufalinapizza.com

Steven Dilley's obsessive devotion to quality is the hallmark of this beloved Neapolitan pizza joint. The dough is expertly aged, perfectly chewy and nutty; the seasonally rotating toppings are fresh and frequently local; the wine list is unique and scrupulously compiled; and the house-made mozzarella is to die for. Go early and stay late.

### Kemuri Tatsu-ya

2713 E. Second, 512/893-5561  
www.kemuri-tatsuya.com

When it seemed like Ramen Tatsu-ya couldn't possibly impress Japanese food lovers more, they launched a buzzing drinks & small-plates concept to enthusiastic reception. In this eclectic crossover between a Texas roadhouse and an izakaya, they serve up smoke-kissed dishes designed to pair with sakés, cocktails, and cold beer. There's something for all adventure levels, from the BBQ Boat to the downright funky shiokara and stingray fin.

### Dee Dee

1906 E. Cesar Chavez  
www.deedeeatx.com

The Dee Dee Northern Thai trailer is a family affair. Lakana Trubiana kicks out the jams in the back while husband Justin helps customers navigate the entrées at the order window. Their om gai – a spicy, brothy, dill-laden chicken dish – is perfect for sweating out a hangover, and the damn good tofu stir-fry is far from a vegetarian afterthought. Sharable boats of mango sticky rice and papaya salad round out the limited offerings, but we couldn't ask for anything more.

### Salt & Time Butcher Shop & Salumeria

1912 E. Seventh, 512/524-1383  
www.saltandtime.com

If there was ever a reason to risk gout, the cured meat selection at Salt & Time is a good one. Focused on both traditional and artisanal butcher cuts and charcuterie, the menus also feature local veggie and bread purveyors, and a rockin' beer and wine selection to wash it all down.

### East Side King

1618 E. Sixth; www.eskaustin.com

The Peeler Yellow graffiti on the outside of the food truck is sure to capture anyone's attention, but we're more intrigued with what's inside. The neighborhood may look very different from when ESK first opened, but some things don't ever change. The beet fries, pork buns, and brussels sprouts are still kicking it.



Kemuri Tatsu-ya



Justine's Brasserie

### Justine's Brasserie

4710 E. Fifth, 512/385-2900  
www.justines1937.com

The atmosphere at this French brasserie is sexy enough that it can almost convince you that you are having dinner on the Rive Gauche instead of the Eastside. The actual food is almost beside the point, but you'll be glad that the steak frites are as tasty as the cocktails. Justine's continues to impress and get better with age like Catherine Deneuve or a fine bottle of wine. Ooh la la.

### Launderette

2115 Holly, 512/382-1599  
www.launderetteaustin.com

Chefs Rene Ortiz and Laura Sawicki have created the near-impossible – a restaurant that is simultaneously effortless and special. The menu feels upscale, but the space is comfy and convivial, and there's something for everyone, from kids on a family outing to courting lovers on a first date. Be sure to save room for Sawicki's now-legendary birthday cake ice cream sandwiches.

### Paperboy

1203 E. 11th; www.paperboyaustin.com

Paperboy keeps it simple and casual with only four seasonal dishes served out of their 11th Street trailer until 2pm every day. But simple doesn't mean boring. They still offer up one of the best breakfast/brunch options in all of Austin with a sweet potato hash that is scientifically proven to cure hangovers and a B.E.C. sandwich that is so good it even manages to attract crowds of Austinites to a site where no liquor is served.

### Fukumoto

514 Medina, 512/770-6880  
www.fukumotoaustin.com

Chef Kazu Fukumoto's focus on intricately composed izakaya classics combines a menu of Edomae sushi with yakitori specialties like toe to tail chicken parts marinated in sugar and soy, pork belly, and bacon/asparagus skewers. All of it is grilled over Japanese oak branches and all of it demands to be accompanied by a couple of glasses of grassy saké.

CONTINUED ON P.14

*Kimchi Jal Scramble*

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Curcuma

**Curcuma** 2207 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/956-6550; [www.eatcurcuma.com](http://www.eatcurcuma.com)

We try to eat healthy, but to be honest a lot of health food tastes like sawdust and dirt. Curcuma chef/owner Rachel Musquiz has found a better way. Everything is plant-based, and friendly to those eating paleo or gluten-free. And just because there is a list of ingredients that they don't use doesn't mean you'll ever feel like you are missing out.

## Boteco ATX

**1403 E. Seventh; [www.botecoatx.com](http://www.botecoatx.com)**  
Step out of your burger and breakfast taco comfort zone and embrace the easygoing Brazilian vibes of this food truck. If you've had Brazilian food before, you probably already know about Boteco, and if you haven't, let Boteco's coxinhas (Brazilian croquettes), fresh mango juice, and Sunday feijoada convince you that ramen isn't the only international food Austin can brag about.

## The Hightower

**1209 E. Seventh, 512/524-1448**  
**[www.thehightoweraustin.com](http://www.thehightoweraustin.com)**  
For \$6 you can buy a scratched record or maybe part of a Tidal subscription. We prefer to hear the angels sing when we spend it on ceviche. Chef Chad Dolezal puts the happy in happy hour by discounting some of his most sought-after small plates like peanut butter brussels sprouts or three-cheese queso fundido – all of it for less than you used to spend on a Third Eye Blind CD.

## Jacoby's Restaurant & Mercantile

**3235 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/366-5808**  
**[www.jacobysaustin.com](http://www.jacobysaustin.com)**  
Some folks start their Sunday organizing the week ahead or strapped to some infernal workout machine. We're sorry, but those people just ain't that bright. The smart set is at Jacoby's, pouring syrup from a hobnail milk glass bottle onto a heaping plate full of chicken-fried steak & waffles and washing it all down with one of the best Bloody Marys in town.

## Chicon

**1914 E. Sixth; 512/354-1480**  
**[www.contigotexas.com/chicon](http://www.contigotexas.com/chicon)**  
We were sad to see Gardner close without enough time in the sun, but the truth is that replacement Chicon isn't really much of a change. Chef Andrew Wiseheart's cooking here still does innovative things with vegetables. It still feels suitably grown up. Only the trappings have changed from Scandinavia to Santa Fe.

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Wu Chow

DAVID BRENDAN HALL

## ORDERING FROM THE HEART

### WHY DIM SUM IS THE ULTIMATE CHINESE COMFORT FOOD BY DAN GENTILE

A takeout box of sesame chicken undeniably falls into the realm of comfort food, but fans of Chinese cuisine know there exists a wealth of dishes beyond the Americanized staples that hit the same pleasure centers. For restaurateur C.K. Chin of Wu Chow, few meals give more comfort than a dim sum feast.

“When people say comfort food, my belief is things that bring you back to a certain time. I remember waking up on days when my grandmother would be making dumplings for our family. There’s so much work involved in making something simple that’s just one bite,” says Chin.

Although dim sum is commonly translated to “touch the heart,” Chin says the more correct translation is “order from the heart,” an apt description for the seemingly endless selection of appetizers served alongside tea. Most restaurants send out carts loaded with delicacies, encouraging diners to order with their eyes. The small nature of each dish (most are 3-4 bites) encourages a shotgun ordering process which can quickly cover an entire menu without becoming too costly. Most Chinese meals are best enjoyed family style, but for dim sum, it’s the only way.

“There’s not a lot of meals out there that are designed for the more the merrier. The lazy Susan is basically designed for dim sum service,” says Chin.

The serving style traditionally focuses on Cantonese dishes, with standouts like Chinese broccoli, turnip cakes, steamed buns, and unusual meats like chicken feet. But dumplings in all their permutations play the starring role.

“One could say that we have three different types of dumplings, six different types of dumplings, or 18 types of dumplings depending on how you define them,” says Chin.

Wu Chow’s best known for their soup dumplings packed with pork and mouth-

scorching broth, but the dish is actually unconventional for dim sum because it originated in Shanghai. Beyond that, other dumplings include pork belly & shrimp, shrimp & cilantro, and rabbit (if you happen to go on Easter Sunday). Plus they offer an array of near-dumplings like an open-faced chicken and shiitake shumai or steamed bao buns.

Another way the comforts of dim sum differ from most Chinese meals is an emphasis on sweets. Granted, the average cook sneaks plenty of sugar into a sesame chicken sauce, but typically the closest thing to dessert at Chinese restaurants is a plate of orange slices. Dim sum on the other hand includes egg tarts, egg cream baos, and red bean sesame balls, delivered throughout the meal instead of at the end, making for an even more indulgent experience.

Wu Chow strives for authenticity to the point that they send orders to the kitchen in Chinese rather than English, but they do depart from convention in a few ways. The restaurant’s layout doesn’t allow for cart service, but it means that food’s always delivered at its hottest and crispiest instead of cooling as it travels through the restaurant. They also source as much as they can locally, avoiding the commodity ingredients that mom-and-pop Chinese restaurants work wonders with.

“In Chinese food, adherence to fresh and local, it wasn’t a thing, I’d never heard of it before. But I always thought, how good would this dish be if we used eggplant from HausBar Farms and Gulf shrimp?”

It’s a difference you can taste and, more importantly, feel. That’s not to say eating a meal of 15 dumplings will earn a pat on the back from a nutritionist, but when so many comfort foods rely on artificial ingredients to lull diners into satiation, knowing that Wu Chow’s barrage of fried dim sum snacks aren’t filled with mystery meat is a comfort unto itself. ■



PHOTO BY ROBERT JACOB LERMA

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## MIDTOWN



Bonhomie

### Bullfight

4807 Airport, 512/474-2029  
www.bullfight-austin.com

You won't find crumpled napkins and remnants of food littering the floor at Bullfight, but their jamón croquettes and impressive list of dry sherries will transport you straight to the noisy tascas of Madrid. Here there's an occasional fútbol game blaring, too, but unlike the crowded dive bars of Granada, we like Bullfight's open-air dining room for date night over game night.

### Bonhomie

5350 Burnet Rd., 512/243-8558  
www.bonhomieaustin.com

This buzzy newcomer has the aesthetics of a minimalist production of *Barbarella*, and a menu that could fool you into thinking you've snagged a seat at the hippest cafe on the French Riviera, with dishes like crispy octopus Lyonnaise, an already legendary burger, and an extensive menu of pommes rosti, crispy potato nests filled with everything from applesauce to foie gras. They say they'll be serving brunch soon; we suggest you get in line now.

### Barley Swine

6555 Burnet Rd. #400, 512/394-8150  
www.barleyswine.com

You can get almost anything at Barley Swine, from pigskin noodles to steak bavette, all of it compellingly strange and locally sourced. But what you want is the tasting menu, 10 courses of chef Bryce Gilmore's best ideas. The menu varies seasonally, but there will be fresh herbs and pickled things and unusual animal bits, all of it house-made and plated like a series of tiny, perfect jewels.

### Picnik

4801 Burnet Rd., 737/226-0644  
www.picnikaustin.com

Brightly lit, airy, and full of plants, the interior of Picnik is so fashionably cheery that you can't help but feel a little dour in comparison. Don't worry; a dose of bullet-proof coffee (made with grass-fed butter and organic espresso) or a cup of one of their lush bone broths will put you in a positively angelic mood.

### Flyrite

6539 Burnet Rd., 512/243-6258  
www.flyritechicken.com

Serving up fast-casual chicken sandwiches for the socially conscious and buy-local set, Flyrite offers fresh ingredients, local coffees and beers, and innovative craft sandwiches (the Eastside is a cool, crunchy bet on a hot day). The breakfast tacos include a chicken tender wrapped in a waffle, a surefire way to brighten up a humdrum weekday morning.

### Black Star Co-op Pub and Brewery

7020 Easy Wind #100, 512/452-2337  
www.blackstar.coop

It's hard to imagine a scrappier gathering place in Austin than Black Star Co-op. It's got all the things Austinites love: inventive house-brewed beer, pub fare made with locally sourced ingredients (the chips are life-giving), and a progressive, worker-friendly cooperative model that gives back to the community. A recent financial struggle has only made them stronger.

### Komé

4917 Airport, 512/712-5700  
www.kome-austin.com

Drive past this unassuming little sushi joint on Airport Boulevard on any given night of the week and witness a throng of people patiently waiting to be seated. It's no wonder, as Také and Kayo Asazu consistently deliver fresh, high-quality Japanese comfort food, from the quirky sushi rolls to grilled octopus at dinner and piping-hot ramen and rice bowls at lunch.

### Uchiko

4200 N. Lamar #140, 512/916-4808  
www.uchiaustin.com/uchiko

Uchi's baby is all grown up. The second-born in Tyson Cole's empire shines bright with a unique balance of classic Japanese and up-to-the-minute farm-fresh fusion that showcases food as an art form. Who said middle children aren't ambitious?

### Titaya's Thai Cuisine

5501 N. Lamar Ste. C-101, 512/458-1792  
www.titayasthaicuisine.com

Titaya's underwent major interior renovations in 2014, but their dishes have remained (blessedly) unchanged. Whatever the surroundings, patrons have always rhapsodized over their basil talay, tom-kha, tom yum fried rice, and crispy sweet corn taro fritters with just the right hint of sweet chili plum sauce.

### Foreign and Domestic

306 E. 53rd, 512/459-1010  
www.fndaustin.com

In a food scene crawling with influencers, we still like to stick with the innovators. Chef Ned Elliott was one of the first trailblazers that started Austin's current hospitality explosion, but he has never rested on his laurels. Now serving a French-inflected menu, F&D remains every bit as essential to Austin as when it was first started.

### The Peached Tortilla

5520 Burnet Rd. #100, 512/330-4439  
www.thepeachedtortilla.com

Southern comfort doesn't have to start in the South? Chef Eric Silverstein's menu bridges the cuisine of his international youth – Japanese, Chinese, and Malaysian from Tokyo and traditional Southern from Atlanta. We wish all memoirs were so delicious.



The Peached Tortilla



Bribery Bakery

## COLD COMFORT

### DOES FOOD REALLY HELP US GET THROUGH TRYING TIMES? BY MELANIE HAUPT

During trying emotional times (or just PMS), humans tend to seek out comfort foods to salve their negative emotions. Everyone's got their vice: Fried chicken. Ramen. Beef stew. Warm bread slathered in butter. Enchiladas. Ice cream. Booze. When we're under stress, we nurture ourselves with nostalgic foods, dulling existential despair with a coating of fat, carbohydrates, and sugar.

As a nation, we've undergone a hugely stressful election and a harrowing aftermath. Relationships have fractured, people are constantly angry and worried, and a question mark hangs over our collective future. We're marching, we're protesting, we're calling our congresspeople. We're exhausted and depleted. We need a damn cheeseburger.

A very informal Facebook poll reveals that lots of people have been seeking out more comfort food since the election. "I've gained 10 pounds since November," lamented one woman. "I've been doing a lot of rage eating," shared a usually beatific yogini. Others noted that they've been drinking more, for better or worse.

And while baking a batch of chocolate chip cookies or a huge tray of lasagna is certainly one route to soothing psychic wounds, lots of folks also seek solace from Austin restaurants. I've personally cultivated a habit of picking up breakfast tacos on the way to work at least once a week. There's something deeply satisfying about tearing into a migas taco from Paco's or Torchy's (or an egg-white based Blanco from Tacodeli if I'm trying to toe the line on my diet), savoring the fatty cheese and the umami of the scrambled eggs and enjoying the blood-sugar spike courtesy of the tortilla. Oh, and Moscow Muellers, pigs in blankets, and grilled cheese sandwiches at Contigo. Those really hit the spot on high-anxiety days. Others report seeking out fried chicken at Lucy's or cinnamon rolls from Upper Crust Bakery. ■

Research shows that there's nothing in the nutritional makeup of comfort food that makes us feel better after a bout of emotional eating, but that the associations we have with those foods make us feel less lonely, less isolated, more connected to our friends and family, particularly if we associate things like fried chicken, breakfast tacos, and chocolate cake with positive relationships and memories. This can manifest itself in co-workers bringing scores of cupcakes to the office to share, or an uptick in happy hour invitations.

"I think all our stuff is probably considered 'comfort food' so we're definitely the place people come to indulge," says Jodi Elliott of Bribery Bakery, which caters to the sweet tooth in the form of gigantic cinnamon rolls, slabs of chocolate cake, and Technicolor macarons. "I know that in the days following the election we definitely had people come in and buy much more at one time, and mentioned they were drowning their sorrows in cupcakes!"

Hoover Alexander of Hoover's Cooking has noticed a similar trend on the savory side. While there's not been an increase in sales, per se, he has observed that "the sales mix has shifted to more chicken-fried steak, chicken-fried chicken, and more of the carbs, specifically mashed potatoes and macaroni & cheese."

Of course, although tensions haven't necessarily waned, we might be moving toward reining in the overconsumption of comfort eats. Elliott reports that people's bulk purchases of treats seems to be waning. Swimsuit season is nigh, after all. Ultimately, though, it's the togetherness, the commensal act of enjoying food with family and friends, that brings comfort, whether it's over margaritas on the patio at Curra's, a slab of cake at Quack's, or a giant salad at Bouldin Creek Cafe. ■

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# NORTH & NORTHWEST



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## Deckhand Oyster Bar

500 Parker, 512/368-3379  
www.deckhandoysterbar.com

Tarzan, Tippy, and Ah serve up some of the best seafood in Austin in this no-frills family restaurant. The menu betrays a variety of cultural influences, serving lemongrass fragrant tom yum and pleasingly funky green papaya salad alongside stuffed catfish and crawfish étouffée, all of it made with Gulf seafood so fresh that you almost expect something to splash you.

## Garbo's Fresh Maine Lobster

14735 Bratton, 512/350-9814  
www.garboslobsteratx.com

Garbo's offers a delightfully unserious Texan take on Maine classics. They're famous for their lobster rolls (with either butter or mayo, satisfying both camps), but the lobster grilled cheese might be the best thing on the menu, the sweet lobster balanced out by rich cheddar and smoked Gouda, smokier bacon, and the echoing sweetness of cherry tomatoes. There is tomato soup on the side to dip it in. Yes, please.



**Rebel Pizza Bar**

## Rebel Pizza Bar

7858 Shoal Creek Blvd., 512/457-5757  
www.rebelpizzabar.com

Pizza and graffiti go together like tomatoes and cheese. Thin, crispy crust and oodles of topping and sauce options, plus a refreshing variety of sides and salads mean this isn't your average parlor menu. Oh, and their beer and wine selection will give you major heart-eye emoji face.

## Saffron

3616 Far West Blvd. #113, 512/241-1732  
www.saffronaustin.com

The lunch buffet at Saffron might actually qualify as a wonder of the world. For just \$10, you can fill up your plate with specialties from all over one of the most gastronomically diverse countries; southern, northern, Indo-Chinese, even some Nepalese momo thrown in for good measure.

## Thai Kun

11601 Rock Rose #100, 512/719-3332  
www.thaikun.com

Say a silent prayer for your taste buds before you sit down to one of the tastiest and spiciest meals you can get in Austin. We first fell in love with chef Thai Changthong's fiery cooking from the food truck, but the Rock Rose brick-and-mortar offers an extended menu for even more hurts-so-good options. Just don't say we didn't warn you.

## Asia Cafe

8650 Spicewood Springs Rd. Ste. 114-A, 512/331-5788; www.asiacafetx.com

Way up yonder, but worth a trek, this cafe's unassuming exterior houses an enormous menu stuffed to the brim with your usual Chinese fare, plus a few little extra sumpin' sumpin's for the more adventurous eaters. Close your eyes and pick an item. You're bound to love it.

## Salt Traders Coastal Cooking

2850 I-35 N., Round Rock, 512/351-9724  
www.saltraderscc.com

The mere mention of the name Jack Gilmore conjures images of hearty portions of Texas fresh fare, and this addition to the empire is no different. Focused on the Gulf Coast's seafood bounty, Salt Traders has got an excellent raw bar and a slew of entrées and sides so tasty they'll have you en route to Round Rock on the reg.

## General Tso'Boy

11501 Rock Rose #152, 512/339-6959  
www.generaltsoy.com

New York hospitality industry veterans Jessica and Gary Wu put a spin (or a bun) on Chinese-American cuisine by sandwiching classics such as General Tso's chicken and black pepper beef between two slices of Easy Tiger's fresh baked bread in traditional Southern po'boy style. In a way, you could say they're fusing fusion. Meta, dude.



**General Tso'Boy**

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The Little Darlin'

## SOUTH

**The Little Darlin'** 6507 Circle S Rd., 512/814-0999  
[www.fb.com/thelittledarlinbar](http://www.fb.com/thelittledarlinbar)

This South Austin bar is everything Austin's laid-back culture should be: an unassuming dive bar with gruff locals, black T-shirts and tattoos galore, pool tables and horseshoes on the spacious dog-friendly patio with cheap drinks, and unpretentious bar food that doesn't sacrifice on flavor. It's the latter that earns it a spot on this list. All dive bars should serve up grilled Caesars.

### Winebelly

519 W. Oltorf, 512/487-1569  
[www.austinwinebelly.com](http://www.austinwinebelly.com)

Glassy eyes, full belly: This Oltorf neighborhood favorite boasts an impressive patio and an even better wine list. Plus, they've got shishito peppers blistered to perfection and some of our favorite tapas (halibut Veracruz! Veal-ricotta meatballs!) in town.

### Tuk Tuk

5517 Manchaca Rd., 512/326-1619  
[www.tuktukthaiatx.com](http://www.tuktukthaiatx.com)

We're not saying that Bob Dylan isn't a big deal, but whoever invented Tuk Tuk's bacon fried rice is really who deserves the Nobel. Oh, and if they came up with the great idea of BYOB too, we'll just go ahead and give them that EGOT.



Valentina's Tex Mex BBQ

### Veracruz All Natural

4208 Manchaca Rd., 512/629-8238  
[www.veracruztacos.com](http://www.veracruztacos.com)

Reyna and Maritza Vazquez are the best counterpoint to snobby Centralists' side-eyeing of South Austin. Frankly we would move to Siberia if it meant we could be closer to their chicken mole tacos. Sure, there are two other locations scattered about town, but this one has the generous taps of Radio Coffee & Beer.

### Soursop

440 E. St. Elmo, Bldg. G-2, 512/522-7710  
[www.soursopaustin.com](http://www.soursopaustin.com)

This "shamelessly inauthentic Southeast Asian" trailer slings bites that are salty, spicy, sweet, and sour – in other words, perfect drinking food. Which works out well, considering Soursop is parked in the backyard of the burgeoning St. Elmo Brewing Company. The fatty pork, panang eggplant, and flaky roti with a dipping curry are crave-worthy – with or without a beer.

### Valentina's Tex Mex BBQ

11500 Manchaca Rd., 512/221-4248  
[www.valentinastexmexbbq.com](http://www.valentinastexmexbbq.com)

If Valentina's were on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, we would pronounce "shante, you stay." If it were on *Survivor*, we'd vote to keep it on the island. Whatever the reality, we'd bet that the humble trailer could win any competition – especially when it brings out those brisket breakfast tacos.

### Mattie's

811 W. Live Oak, 512/444-1888  
[www.mattiesaustin.com](http://www.mattiesaustin.com)

The former site of Austin institution Green Pastures is kicking it back to the old-school in their refurbished, sprawling South Austin home with gorgeous interiors and an ambience that pays homage to everything that made Green Pastures the beacon of Southern hospitality it once was. For the full experience, join Mattie's for a leisurely brunch under their great live oak. Just don't pet the peacocks.

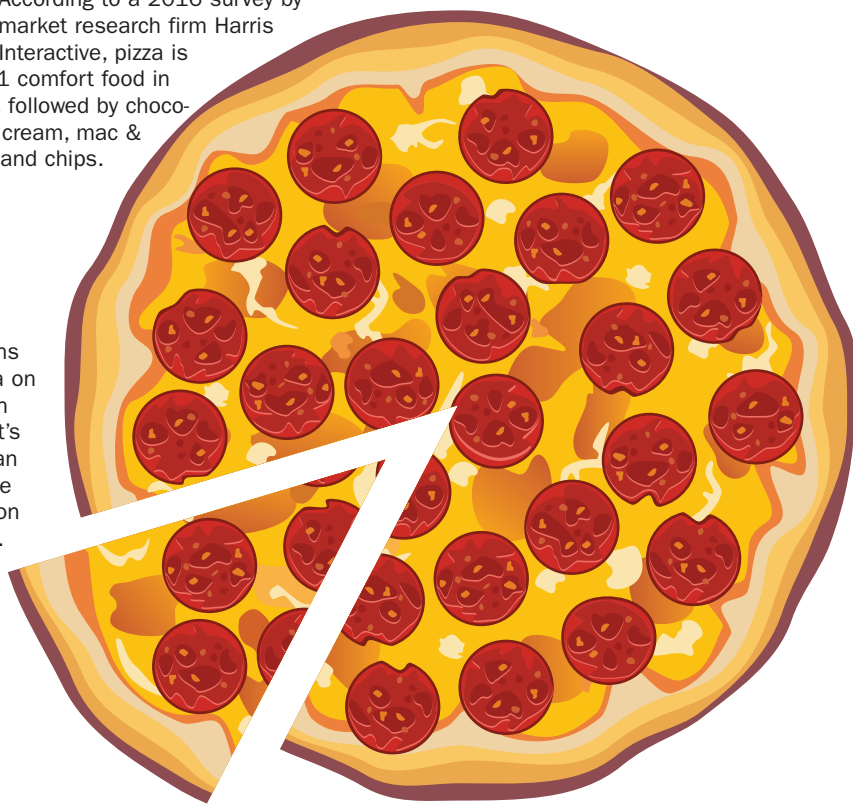


Tuk Tuk

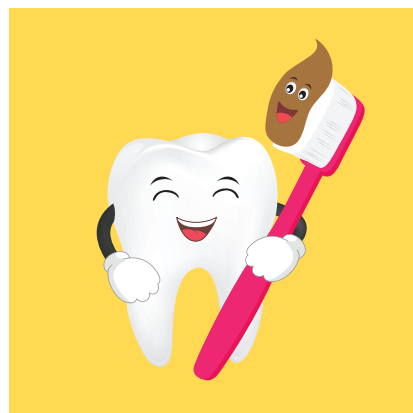
# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**1** According to a 2016 survey by market research firm Harris Interactive, pizza is the No. 1 comfort food in America, followed by chocolate, ice cream, mac & cheese, and chips.

**2** 13% of Americans eat pizza on any given day. That's more than the entire population of Texas.

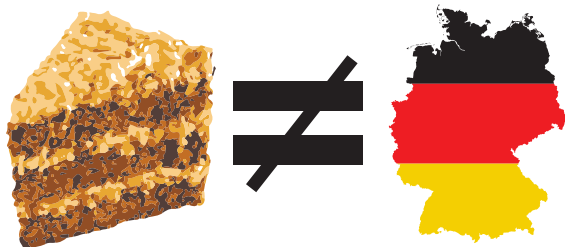


**3** Gender matters when it comes to comfort food. A Cornell University study showed that men tend to prefer foods that make them feel “taken care of” like pasta, soup, and pizza, while women tend to eschew foods that remind them of the labor of putting together a meal.



**4** Japanese researchers believe chocolate may have more uses than just comfort. Antibacterial agents in the cocoa beans may be able to fight tooth decay.

**5** German chocolate cake has nothing to do with Germany. The name comes from Sam German, who developed a baking chocolate that was used in the original recipe.



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# SOUTH CONGRESS & SOUTH FIRST



Bouldin Creek Cafe

## Bouldin Creek Cafe

1900 S. First, 512/416-1601  
www.bouldincreek.com

Beloved by families, hipsters, and OG South Austin hippies alike, Bouldin Creek Cafe is the beating heart of Austin. Their generously portioned vegetarian fare will sate even the most carnivorous diner, while never treating vegans and the gluten-free crowd like they're an afterthought. From the tasty chickpea "chikn salad" sandwich to the hearty soul food plate, this is unpretentious dining for the people.

## Central Standard Kitchen & Bar

1603 S. Congress, 512/942-0823  
www.centralstandardaustin.com

When we want surf and turf, we head to South Congress regardless of the time of day. Yellowfin ceviche and Wagyu tartare at brunch? Sure! A few East Coast oysters before an award-winning cheeseburger for lunch? Why not? A Gulf shrimp cocktail appetizer and the Berkshire pork chop for dinner ... YAS! The combinations are endless and keep Central Standard in regular rotation. The boozy house cocktails are icing on this decadent cake.

## Sway

1417 S. First, 512/326-1999  
www.swayaustin.com

Thai used to be the last thing that came to mind when we deliberated brunch options ... but then Sway debuted its a.m. menu last year. The modern kitchen's basil chicken & waffles is borderline supernatural, and the brioche French toast hits just the right sweet spot. Pro tip: The full dinner menu is also available during weekend brunch service, so don't let society tell ya you've gotta eat eggs in the morning. You do you.

## Lenoir

1807 S. First, 512/215-9778  
www.lenoirrestaurant.com

We just love it when our favorite restaurants truly support our area farmers. Lenoir's locally sourced "hot weather food" is inspired by what we – and cultures in similar latitudes – eat. The intimate dining room's prix fixe menu is constantly changing based on the season, so every visit impresses anew. The wine list and garden happy hour are equally divine.

## Perla's

1400 S. Congress, 512/291-7300  
www.perlasaustin.com

Our advice for Perla's? Sit at a chair facing in toward the building, where you can ignore the hustle and bustle of SoCo and embrace the laid-back beachcomber vibe with a bowl of bouillabaisse. You can watch the parade of cargo shorts anytime, but it's not every day that you can find yourself suddenly in Martha's Vineyard without ever buying a plane ticket.

## Otoko

1603 S. Congress 512/920-6405  
www.otokoaustin.com

It takes a moment for your eyes to adjust to the soothing dimness after stepping through the heavy door. But once they do, you've been transported to another world. Head chef Yoshi Okai orchestrates one of the most theatrical meals in town behind the intimate 12-seat counter. On that stage, he conducts a symphony of sushi omakase with refined kaiseki to showcase the flavors of the seasons. Bravo, maestro, bravo.

## Four Brothers

2201 S. First, 512/947-4510  
www.fourbrothers.net

Although Texas' obsession with south-of-the-border eats usually only extends as far as Mexico's southern border, Four Brothers' Venezuelan food truck is here to prove they can hang with the cool kids. Their patacones, arepas, and empanadas are so good, they might even convince Austinites to cheat on their beloved tacos. Maybe.

## Café No Sé

1603 S. Congress, 512/942-2061  
www.cafenoseaustin.com

Austin's latest draw for Outdoor Voices-clad brunchers is known for being a bit of a splurge, but reliable in taste and health nut-approved dishes like grain bowls, avocado toast, and poke. The interior is California chic and offers a perfect backdrop to highly 'grammable dishes that are also delicious enough to look past the girl standing on her chair at the next table over to get the perfect shot of her beet toast.



Otoko

## Fresa's Chicken al Carbon

1703 S. First, 512/992-2946  
www.fresaschicken.com

Fresa's on South First adds a touch of refinement to a menu that expands upon the original drive-through's taco and roasted chicken offerings. In the outdoor dining area, it's low-key chill with kids clamoring on a playscape nearby. Indoors is a sleek, modern space accented with pops of serape color. Sit and stay awhile, or take some tacos to go.

## June's All Day

1722 S. Congress, 512/416-1722  
www.junesallday.com

The ace-in-the-hole of this charming SoCo corner? June Rodil, the affable wine guru with whom the restaurant shares a name. Of course that means an adventurous wine list ranging from affordable to exquisite and diverse enough to accommodate a world of bold flavor in the cuisine. The real surprise is that an eatery filled with so many chic details can still feel like a neighborhood cafe.



## Elizabeth Street Cafe

1501 S. First, 512/291-2881  
www.elizabethstreetcafe.com

You can tell this is a McGuire Moorman joint from the moment you see the servers' custom printed wrap dresses and red chambray shirts. But that doesn't mean that Elizabeth Street is all style and no substance. Their contemporary takes on Vietnamese cuisine balance ngũ vị in innovative ways. Check out the bánh mì, filled with everything from short rib and kimchi to makrut lime fried chicken.

## Alcomar

1816 S. First, 512/401-3161  
www.alcomaratx.com

Chefs Alma Alcocer-Thomas and Jeff Martinez have long been Austin rock stars by helming the kitchens at El Chile Group restaurants. Alcomar is their supergroup, combining both their names and their love for simple coastal Mexican cooking. Need one more reason to applaud? Their seven-days-a-week happy hour features discounts on everything from oysters to margaritas.

## Hopdoddy Burger Bar

1400 S. Congress, 512/243-7505  
www.hopdoddy.com

Hopdoddy keeps customers coming back long after they checked the casual eatery off their bucket list. And it's for good reason. Their juicy burgers feature patties made of everything from bison to black bean, the green chile queso fries are to die for, and their shakes are the perfect ending to a delicious meal (that's if you still have any room left in your stomach).



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## SOUTH LAMAR & BARTON SPRINGS



Delicious

### VOX Table

1100 S. Lamar #2140, 512/375-4869  
www.voxtableaustin.com

Chef Joe Anguiano likes to play with his food (appetizers stacked on pipettes, a menu section titled “Hooves”), and the bar program is also in on the joke (the scotch cocktail named Sweat Pants With Uggs, mint juleps on tap). But humor aside, the food and drinks at VOX exhibit a sophistication that’s immediately recognized when items hit the table – adding a few OMGs to our LOLs.

### Delicious

1100 S. Lamar #1105, 737/802-3807  
www.deliciousatx.com

Though Delicious hasn’t been in town very long, the hefty sandwiches and loyal lunch crowd indicate that Delicious is here to stay. Located around the corner from the Alamo Drafthouse, Delicious is an ideal spot for grabbing a bite before a show or for discussing how you still don’t get Terrence Malick films after.

### Odd Duck

1201 S. Lamar, 512/433-6521  
www.oddduckaustin.com

Odd Duck’s penchant for unique and adventurous flavor pairings has earned them a perpetual rep as one of Austin’s most visited and celebrated restaurants. Grab a spot at the bar lined with fermenting vegetables for a perfect view of the open kitchen, or bring a date and show off how adventurous you are as you confidently order a pig face carnitas pretzel.

### The Austin Beer Garden Brewing Co.

1305 W. Oltorf, 512/298-2242; www.theabgb.com

Going to the ABGB feels a little bit like stepping inside a country song – not the kind where you cry over that cheating lout with a fifth of rotgut, but the kind where you invite all your rowdy friends over for a few dozen beers. Sure the South Austin staple might not be a roadhouse, but with live bands nearly every night of the week, a large selection of brews, and a seasonal pizza menu, you won’t miss those peanut shell places one bit.

### Juliet Ristorante

1500 Barton Springs Rd., 512/479-1800  
www.juliet-austin.com

Chef Jacob Weaver does a bang-up job with Italian classics like house-made pasta and pizza, but his creativity and craft truly shine on the rotating features menu. A knowledgeable and warm bar staff helps navigate the 10-plus-page wine list, and they’ll effortlessly whip out a perfect egg-white sour. Classy but comfortable, Juliet has panache without pretentiousness, which is what makes it one of our favorites.

### Luke’s Inside Out

1109 S. Lamar, 512/589-8883  
www.lukesinsideout.com

The stretch of South Lamar where chef Luke Bibby has set up camp has changed a lot in the past few years, but his trailer still feels like old Austin. Serving sandwiches and daily specials brimming with international ingredients, Luke’s is a testament to what our town has always been about: friendliness, creativity, and fierce individuality.

### Ramen Tatsu-ya

1234 S. Lamar, 512/893-5561  
www.ramen-tatsuya.com

Rich broth, melt-in-your-mouth chashu, and toppings for days, Tatsu Aikawa and Takuya “Tako” Matsumoto’s bowls of deliciousness will get you through the toughest Tinder dates. But we like it even better on the good ones where we can slurp the noodles – *Lady and the Tramp* style – all the way to a first kiss.



# Barlata

## TAPAS BAR



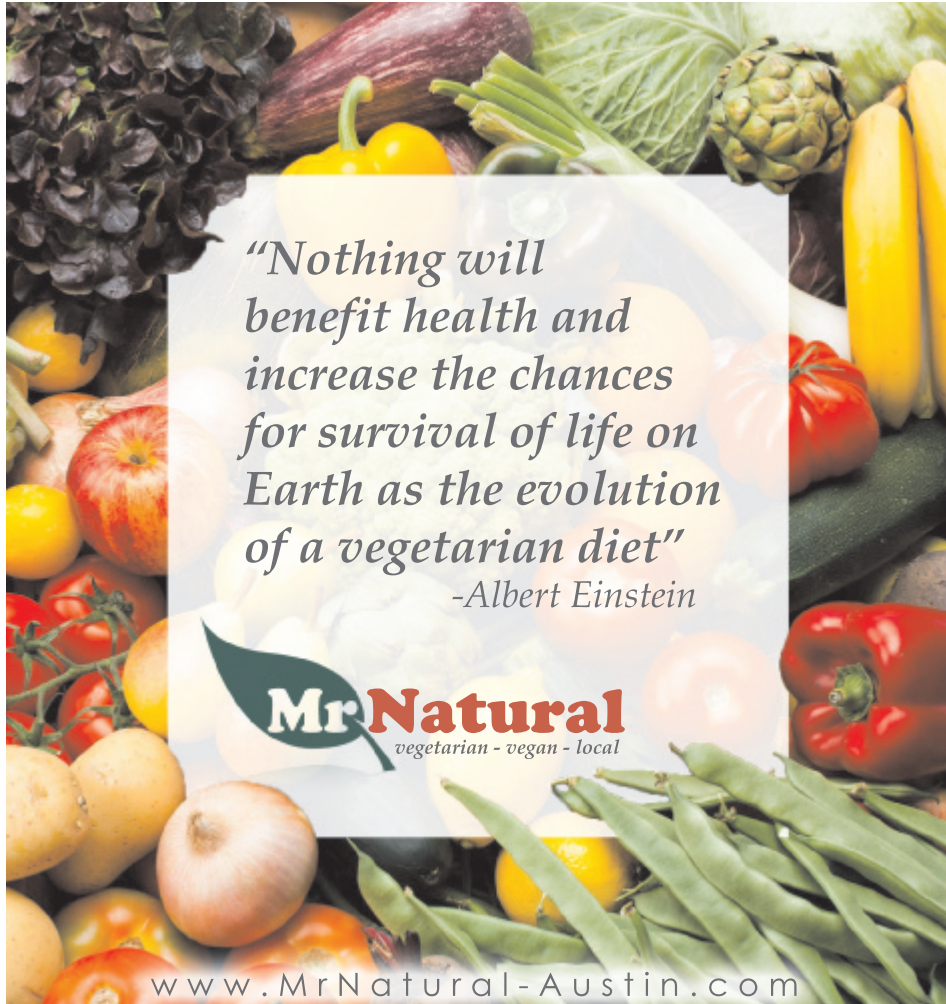
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Apis Restaurant & Apiary

*Apis Restaurant & Apiary*

23526 Hwy. 71 W., Spicewood,  
512/436-8918  
[www.apisrestaurant.com](http://www.apisrestaurant.com)

There's an intensity about Apis that sets them apart from other destination restaurants. For one, they are working to have complete control over their ingredients, from the vegetables they harvest to the proteins they raise. But don't think for all that exactitude they can't have a good time. Witness the liquid nitrogen shots that often cap off their feasts.

*Fabi + Rosi*

509 Hearn, 512/236-0642  
[www.fabiandrosi.com](http://www.fabiandrosi.com)

Laverne and Shirley, Mulder and Scully, Wolfgang and Cassie, Fabi and Rosi: Well-paired duos (even if only fictional nomenclature) do great things. This West Austin Eurocentric fine-dining hot spot celebrates scratch cooking, sourced from the best parts of Texas. From bone marrow dumplings to Black Forest mushroom ravioli, every bite is delectable.

*Clark's Oyster Bar*

1200 W. Sixth, 512/297-2525  
[www.clarksoysterbar.com](http://www.clarksoysterbar.com)

Everything from the luxurious crudo plate to the legendary cheeseburger sets this landlocked seafood wonder apart. The oysters are, of course, truly excellent, like PEI Malpeques and Umamis from Rhode Island. They also have \$5 happy hour martinis, for when you want to pretend to be Dorothy Parker on the cheap.

*Josephine House*

1601 Waterston, 512/477-5584  
[www.josephineofaustin.com](http://www.josephineofaustin.com)

Think of Josephine as the Madewell to Jeffrey's preppier J. Crew. Everything feels breezy and casual, from the cottage setting to the Monday steak frites nights. It all adds up to an effortless neighborhood experience, as easy as an espadrille dangling off a toe.

*Pizzeria Sorellina*

23526 Hwy. 71 W., Spicewood  
737/222-6061  
[www.pizzeriasorellina.com](http://www.pizzeriasorellina.com)

You'll feel like Diane Lane looking out from your fantasy Tuscan villa when you dine al fresco at this Neapolitan pizza purveyor's spot on the Pedernales. Robust sauce and interesting ingredients make this pizza worth the drive, and their wild boar salumi is a must.

*Nightcap*

1401 W. Sixth, 512/628-0144; [www.nightcapaustin.com](http://www.nightcapaustin.com)

Although the little purple house on West Sixth bills itself as a dessert bar, the dinner menu is equally boastworthy, with dishes like seared sea scallops with sunchoke pudding and charred broccoli with burnt lemon. The cocktail menu is a stunner too, with adventurous drinks using lime foam and pipe smoke. We couldn't think of a more appropriate name for one of our favorite places to grab one last drink before calling it a night.

Buenos Aires Cafe



*Buenos Aires Cafe*

13500 Galleria Cir., Bee Cave,  
512/441-9000  
[www.buenosairescafe.com](http://www.buenosairescafe.com)

Buenos Aires Cafe is run by two generations of women, chef Reina Morris and Paola MG Smith. Together, they are our favorite mother-daughter pair since Debbie Reynolds and Carrie Fisher, serving tender, flaky empanadas, beautiful meats de la parrilla, and delectable pisco sours.



Nightcap

(512) 327-9889  
www.laspalomasrestaurant.com



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# First Plates Parties

We're celebrating our First Plates issue with some of our favorite comfort foods. **JOIN US!**



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**SUNDAY, MAY 7**  
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KICK UP YOUR HEELS TO TUNES BY *Country Fool's Gold*  
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**MONDAY, MAY 8**  
7:30-10PM

**HAPPY FOOD** Chef Dinner at **Alcomar**  
FEATURING EXCLUSIVE COMFORT FOOD MENU ITEMS FROM  
Chef Alma Alcocer-Thomas and Chef Jeff Martinez  
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT **AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM**



**TUESDAY, MAY 9**  
6-8PM

**OVER-THE-TOP DRINKS** plus **Cocktail Hour** at  
MUSIC BY GIRLFRIEND ATX  
COMPLIMENTARY COMFORT BITES FROM PEACHED TORTILLA!  
GET YOUR CAMERA READY. **RSVP ONLINE.**

