

THE CHRONICLE

FIRST PLATES™

100



RESTAURANTS
DEFINING AUSTIN
DINING NOW

"The World on a Plate"

2019



Home Slice North Loop

JOHN ANDERSON

Some weekday a few months ago I was brainstorming themes for this issue, and an advance copy of *Anthony Bourdain Remembered*, a collection of anecdotes and fond memories of the man who brought us food and adventure from all over the world, showed up on my desk. Flipping through the pages, it dawned on me that if there's one thing Bourdain wants us to remember, it's that food is a tool for uniting humanity. And there it was, this year's First Plates theme: The World on a Plate.

Not only does June 2019 mark one year since beloved Bourdain moved on to his next adventure, just a few weeks before his 62nd birthday, but it's Immigrant Heritage Month. Bourdain wrote, "The Italians and Spanish, the Chinese and Vietnamese see food as part of a larger, more essential and pleasurable part of daily life. Not as an experience to be collected or bragged about – or as a ritual like filling up a car – but as something else that gives pleasure, like sex or music, or a good nap in the afternoon."

The restaurant scene around town has shown some interesting trends over the last year, which we believe are reflected in this list. Things are trending more casual, little-sister restaurants are popping up, time-honored eateries are revamping their

style, and health-meets-flavor concepts are running menus all over town. Perhaps most interestingly, Austin has taken its global cuisine roster to a whole new level. Consequently, to "define Austin dining now" is a massive undertaking. After several months of heart palpitations and anxiety

JESSI CAPE'S TOP 10

- 1) Home Slice North Loop
- 2) Suerte
- 3) Eldorado Cafe
- 4) L'oca d'oro
- 5) Il Brutto
- 6) Habesha Restaurant and Bar
- 7) Carpenters Hall
- 8) Easy Tiger at the Linc
- 9) Himalaya Kosheli
- 10) Garbo's Fresh Maine Lobster

dreams, I am thrilled with the way this roster of local food scene excellence turned out.

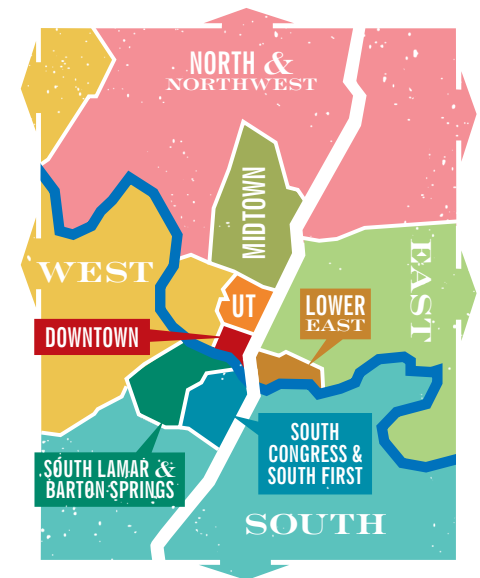
This issue takes a *Chron* army to produce, and I am grateful to work with this very special group of individuals. Special shout-outs to our web and production teams, and thank

you to our editorial crew and sales, IT, and admin teams for keeping this machine running while my brain was in the trenches. I'm very proud of this year's contributing writer team – Eric Puga, Alisha McDarris, Melanie Haupt, Jessi Devenyns, Danny Palumbo, Emily Beyda, Alexandra Detmar, Tom Thornton, Rod Machen, Sydney Greene, and Lieutenant Wayne Alan Brenner. Our proofing team – Kat McNevens, Jasmine Lane, James Scott, and Greg Stitt – is the best in the business; our marketing gurus make us look cool. Thanks to Hank the *Chron* Dog for lying at my feet, and to Creative Director Jason Stout for the tremendous artistic vision. And to my Editor-in-Chief Kimberley Jones: Thank you for your help with the tedium and all of your patience.

I think Bourdain's punkass would probably hate all of the sappy tributes, but in honor of that rascal, not just on #BourdainDay (June 25), but always: Let's eat at tiny family-owned restaurants. Let's ask simple questions and really listen to the answers. Let's be empathetic. Let's open our homes. Let's tell the real stories. Let's share meals. "We are, after all, citizens of the world – a world filled with bacteria, some friendly, some not so friendly."

– Jessi Cape

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Virginia B. Wood Hall of Fame

In honor of our very own former Food editor and forever friend to the local food community, the late, great Virginia B. Wood, we celebrate the excellence these veterans of the scene bring to our fair city. The intention here is to make abundantly clear in the annals of history that this growing group is the *crème de la crème* of Austin restaurants. Some have been stalwart favorites for decades; some have seen stratospheric success in a remarkably short time, redefining preferences and even earning mononymic recognition. These restaurants have proven themselves influential beyond the scope of everyday dining, and they're unwavering in their dedication to quality, flavor, creativity, and service. With a food scene as robust and dynamic as Austin's, sheer numbers indicate we must make room for newcomers while honoring institutional standbys, regardless of their official time in the biz. It's as much an ode to the food as it is to the herculean efforts behind the scenes.

— Jessi Cape

ARLO'S

Various locations, www.arlostruck.com

If you ask an Austinite where to eat vegan food, 99.9% of the time, the immediate response is, "Arlo's!" Plant-based but designed with carnivores in mind, the menu caters to late-night cravings, and they've absolutely mastered the art of meatless cheeseburgers with their famous Bac'n Cheezeburger. That Frito pie ain't nothing to sneeze at either, friends. To really let you in on how special their trio of curbside eateries is, consider this: Arlo's is the very first food trailer *and* only the second plant-based kitchen inducted into our First Plates Hall of Fame. Austin's plant-based comfort food baby is all grown up now.

GÜERO'S TACO BAR

1412 S. Congress, www.gueros.com

If, in the hallowed halls of your restaurant, Bill Clinton grabs a classic taco special and Quentin Tarantino shoots part of his Austin-based *Death Proof* (but not really), it's fair to say you're recognized as an Austin institution. But the venerable Güero's Taco Bar needs not that shimmer of celebrity to shine. For over 30 years, the Lippincott family has been perfecting a menu rooted in Mexican street food with Texan flair — we see you, tacos al pastor — and the Austin party vibe could not be more apparent. Unless, of course, your afternoon involves downing one of Güero's 20 specialty margaritas, witnessing the ghost of Stevie Ray Vaughan haunting Lucy in Disguise, whizzing over Congress bridge on an e-scooter, and searching for "vintage" pearl snap shirts (a screenplay that is being optioned, so hands off, QT).

HOOVER'S COOKING

2002 Manor Rd., www.hooverscooking.com

It's the chicken-fried chicken, y'all. Many of the Southern comfort food pleasures on the menu at Hoover's Cooking, a two-decades-and-counting Manor Road eatery, have made it an icon: their enormous and delicious pepper-fire soaked and smoked chicken wings, sweet potato coffee, banana pudding, and a side of broccoli that looks like one of the tree people from *Lord of the Rings* (yeah, we know, they're called Ents). While the Smokehouse options (Jamaican jerk ribs!) compete with the best of 'em, it's that chicken-fried chicken, paired with mashed potatoes and a side of jalapeño creamed spinach, that offers something equivalent to the culinary version of a long hug from an old friend.

HOPDODDY BURGER BAR

Various locations, www.hopdoddy.com

The great philosopher Jimmy Buffett was likely prophesying Hopdoddy with "Cheeseburger in Paradise," and fellow wordsmith Jean-Paul Sartre boldly proclaimed that "hamburgers are other people." No, wait, that might have been Charlton Heston in that *Soylent Green* film. Regardless, no other local burger joint has struck such a chord as this purveyor of all things ensconced in a bun. Be it beef, lamb, chicken, or veggie, Hopdoddy has cast a spell on this town. The fries with green chile queso is a solid combo, particularly paired with the elegantly dangerous Doble Fina margaritas, but the real MVP is that Caesar salad. Two goods: fried chickpeas. Add a turkey burger patty and you might just believe there is hope in this world. Now with more locations than we can count — and a sister restaurant, Lil'doddy — it's safe to say this is officially an empire. Perhaps, at the end of the day, we are all cheeseburgers.



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

KERBEY LANE CAFE

Various locations, www.kerbeylanecafe.com

We suppose there's a sentiment around 24-hour diners like Kerbey Lane that inevitably boils down to "it's open," but there are spoons that rise above the greasiness. Most of the locations maintain those endless hours (keep them in your thoughts), and Kerbey Lane has been doing this town a public service for going on 40 years, feeding their wonderfully absorbent and delicious array of pancakes to patrons needing a particular brand of restorative. We recommend starting with the Cowboy Queso before moving on to the California Omelet. In a town that constantly reckons with its identity, Kerbey's recent expansion into the Mueller community solidifies and expands on its role as a particular and much-needed cultural and culinary mainstay.

RAMEN TATSU-YA

Various locations, www.ramen-tatsuya.com

Many of us became obsessed with noodles thanks to an affection for Eighties and Nineties Asian crime dramas: In almost every film, there is a scene of a meal shared between cohorts, cops, or often just regular people. And they slurp those noodles, and they spoon that broth, and we're like, "That looks like the most amazing combination of ingredients in the universe!" Restaurants like Ramen Tatsu-ya effortlessly expand all of our palates, and we are lucky they chose Austin to become a ramen mecca, now with a family of offshoots like Domo Alley-Gato Tatsu-ya, Kemuri Tatsu-ya, DipDipDip Tatsu-ya, and Tiki Tatsu-ya. Despite (and because of) the pedigree of minds — like chef Tatsu Aikawa — behind these delightful bowls of wonder, it all comes down to the noodles. Slurping them here is a singular experience.

TITAYA'S THAI CUISINE

5501 N. Lamar Ste. C-101,
www.titayasthaicuisine.com

We've sampled so many delicious selections from this incredibly popular Thai restaurant, from yum nuer (a wonderfully spicy variant on steak salad) to endless combinations of fried rice and a selection of curry that has no equal. But there are two dishes (both staff favorites) that we return to time and time again: the pork garlic mixed peppercorn, with its wonderfully seasoned meat and vibrant spinach salad, and the Ta-lay Dancing, a three-chile-hot seafood, mushroom, tomato, and onion medley in tom yum sauce. Add to that the skillful and eternally effusive waitstaff who cover the comfortably cozy space with an ease that mimics a flawless dance routine, and you have all the makings of a perfect dining experience.

VIA 313

Various locations, www.via313.com

The Detroit Tigers may be in a rebuilding phase this season (fingers crossed!), but this Detroit-style pizza has enraptured Austin since the Hunt brothers' first trailer opened in 2011. The cheesy, crunchy, thick signature squares topped with just the right amount of marinara are to credit for their now legendary winning streak, but the thinner bar-style pies will also have you happy-heckling the kitchen. Don't skip their bonkers pizza collaborations featuring special toppings like Garbo's lobster, la Barbecue's cold-smoked ham, and Michi's ramen. And if you don't end up with meatballs on your pizza (do it), grab the appetizer version before you succumb to all the cheese. Bonus points for a seriously solid gluten-free crust.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2016

Asti, 408-C E. 43rd
Chinatown, 2712 Bee Caves Rd.
Fonda San Miguel,
2330 W. North Loop
Threadgill's North,
6416 N. Lamar
Vespaio, 1610 S. Congress

2017

Chez Nous, 510 Neches
Eastside Cafe (closed)
Home Slice Pizza, 1415 S. Congress
Quality Seafood Market,
5621 Airport
Uchi, 801 S. Lamar
wink, 1014 N. Lamar

2018

Blue Dahlia Bistro, 1115 E. 11th
Bouldin Creek Cafe,
1900 S. First
The Clay Pit, 1601 Guadalupe
Din Ho Chinese BBQ,
8557 Research #116
Fabi + Rosi, 509 Hearn
Franklin Barbecue, 900 E. 11th
Jeffrey's, 1204 W. Lynn
Joe's Bakery, 2305 E. Seventh

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DOWNTOWN**Ciclo**

PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON

40 North**900 W. 10th, www.40northpizza.com**

The Austin pizza space is pretty tight these days, but we are blessed with a Neapolitan-style restaurant that specializes in pies both classic (margherita, pepperoni) and quirky (dandelion, boar) while also showcasing the versatility and deliciousness of vegetables.

ATL Cocina**110 San Antonio St., www.atxcocina.com**

Corn and family take center stage in this cocina. Much like what the restaurant's menu does for the humble maize plant, the kitchen takes Mexican street food and elevates it to family-style dishes that feature grilled, smoked, and charred meat and peppers in combinations that will make you want más.

Ciclo**98 San Jacinto, www.cicloatx.com**

The cycle of Mexican and Texan cuisine influencing each other is almost never-ending in Austin. However, that cycle may stop and start at Ciclo, where a barbecued octopus can elicit as much excitement as locally sourced cabrito on gnocchi.

Comedor**501 Colorado, www.comedortx.com**

On the heels of the surprise closure of his North Burnet French joint Bonhomie, Philip Speer tackles modern Mexican Downtown with his partners Gabe Erales and Alan Delgado. Here, au courant techniques mingle with ancient dishes, resulting in soul-satisfying moles and the kind of daring, out-of-the-box desserts upon which Speer built his reputation.

Cookbook Bar & Cafe**710 W. Cesar Chavez, www.cookbookatx.com**

This cafe allows diners to check out the world's different cuisines all in one place. Inspired by cookbooks that are part of the library's catalog (including our very own Virginia B. Wood's memorial library), there is a certain cohesion to the family-photo-album approach in the kitchen. That's what allows tamarind-peanut chili sauce to happily stand side by side with Burmese curry.

Dean's One Trick Dony**111 E. Cesar Chavez, www.thelinehotel.com/austin/food-drink**

If Arlo Grey (by celebrity chef Kristen Kish) at the LINE Downtown is a little too chichi for your tastes, perhaps the hotel's more casual Dean's is more your speed. That is, if your speed is Don Draper's backyard cookout: burgers, hot dogs, hot chicken, and a wedge salad, for God's sake. Don't forget the Ray-Bans when you go.

El Naranjo**85 Rainey, www.elnaranjorestaurant.com**

Chef Iliana de la Vega has been focused on tradition for much longer than her Oaxaca-City-come-Rainey restaurant has been offering a taste of interior Mexico (since 2012, ftr). She's a veteran of the local masa-making, comal-toasting, mole-crafting scene, so brave the hordes to taste her mole negro (featuring chilhuacle negro, guajillo, mulato, ancho, and more) and that guisada-ceviche power duo for brunch.

Emmer & Rye**51 Rainey #110, www.emmerandrye.com**

Heirloom grains meet dim sum-style small plates at one of Austin's most innovative restaurants. A global perspective translated via hyperlocal seasonal ingredients manifests as pork loin with barbecued loquats, roasted carrots with wild pecan mole, and a variety of pastas made with thoughtfully chosen grains.

Fareground: Dai Due/TLV**111 Congress, www.faregroundaustin.com/vendors**

Fareground food court 86'ed Easy Tiger and Antonelli's stalls earlier this year, adding TLV and an offshoot of rustic Italian restaurant Italic to existing Ni-Komé (Komé Sushi/Daruma Ramen mash-up), Contigo (satellite location with rotisserie chicken), Henbit (Emmer & Rye's little sister), and Dai Due Taqueria. At the bite-worthy distillation of chef-author-hunter Jesse Griffith's cooking-as-ecological-responsibility ethos, guests enjoy traditional al pastor, guisada, and tinga while supporting lesser-known Texan producers. Yes, the boar is from Austin's backyard, deliberately elevated to suit the people's taco needs. TLV showcases Chef Berty's iteration of Israeli street food – something this town needs more of – with hummus in a lead role, supported by a cast of pillowy pita, Balkan pastries, filled Israeli donuts, and Turkish breakfast. No matter the time of day, you need that tahini milkshake in your life.

Holy Roller**509 Rio Grande, www.holyrolleraustin.com**

Callie Speer's Downtown diner has been outspokenly gluttonous and fun from the get-go, and Austinites have embraced the layering of comfort food, stoner snacks, and brunch, eschewing the suggestion that the punk rock angle might have been gimmicky. Holy Roller gives us permission to play with our food again.

La Volpe**201-B Brazos, www.lavolpeaustin.com**

New on the crowded Italian scene, "The Fox" offers one of the best cheese/charcuterie boards in town. Add to that a two-story ceiling, blue velvet, and candlelit chic plus a seasonal menu of grilled proteins, handmade pastas, delicate seafood, and a dark chocolate tart that will have even the most savory of your crew sneaking another bite. It's a lovely balance of Southern meets Italian, with a sexy, sophisticated vibe.

Le Politique**110 San Antonio St., www.lepolitiqueaustin.com**

This Downtown French brasserie boasts a menu that will take diners from Brittany to Paris and all the way down to the French Riviera. The words sprinkled with accents make the dishes sound haute gamme (aka fancy), but the important thing to know is that because butter and bread are used in abundance (tiny puffed pastries atop escargot!), everything is delicious.

**TLV**

Polvos

360 Nueces #10, www.polvosAustin.com

Named Best Place to Start Off the Weekend by the *Chronicle* way back in 1999, Polvos has remained a mainstay. Offering a variety of interior Mexican dishes in a very casual setting, Polvos keeps you chill with its affordable brain-buster margs. This South First institution recently brought its something-for-everyone watering hole menus to Downtown in a sleek new location overlooking Shoal Creek, complete with dog-friendly patio.

Wu Chow

**500 W. Fifth #168,
www.wuchowAustin.com**

Chef Ji Peng Chen offers Downtown a thorough sampling of regional Chinese food. His menu features specialty dumplings, a shrimp-centric dim sum menu, and not-your-mama's tiki cocktails in addition to an expansive menu with a decidedly true-to-farm emphasis, especially when it comes to proteins. Order the striped bass or Beijing whole duck 24-48 hours in advance. We appreciate the intentionality.

BURGER GAME STRONG



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EAST

Hank's

*Hank's***5811 Berkman, www.hanksaustin.com**

You: It's too early to start drinking.

Friends: Yeah, but think of the SAVINGS.

That's essentially what happy hour is, and Hank's has a good one – solid bar banter, draft frosé and palomas, and if you sit there long enough, reverse happy hour. Washing down a couple of drinks with baked ricotta, braised meatballs, and PEI mussels with fresh sourdough bread is always a good idea.

*Kyōten Sushiko***4600 Mueller, www.kyotensushiko.com**

Renowned chef Otto Phan opened a widely acclaimed Chicago restaurant, but reopened his beloved Mueller omakase spot under the helm of chef Sarah Cook. As with any omakase experience, you are asked to put your complete trust in the chef, who will guide you through roughly 20 different dishes centered around sublimely fresh fish. Kyōten is a ride, and the message of the experience is clear: Be in the moment. Kyōten Sushiko is in a class all its own.

*Loca d'oro***1900 Simond, www.locadoroatx.com**

Chef Fiore Tedesco – half rock & roll, half rigatoni ragù – wants to cook you up some unpretentious but downright luxurious Italian cuisine based on local and sustainable produce and meats. He wants to serve it to you with wine, in his elegant Mueller-based dining rooms, all the while making admirable waves in progressive hospitality. Suggestion: Let him.

PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON

*Bird Bird Biscuit***2701 Manor Rd., www.birdbirdbiscuit.com**

That's what you call it when a Thunderbird – the coffeshop run by Brian Batch and Ryan McElroy – gives birth to a concept that's made biscuit believers out of bagel heathens and taco turncoats: golden brown and buttery goodness stuffed with chicken, with eggs, with gravy, with jammy perfection all day long.

*Cherrywood Coffeehouse***1400 E. 38th½, www.cherrywoodcoffeehouse.com**

Dynamic offerings have defined this homey, eclectic, and spacious neighborhood favorite since 2009. Known for their filling brunch (great value on more-hippie-than-not breakfast tacos), quality baked goods (pie options!), and specialty coffees – not to mention a build-your-own smoothie menu – Cherrywood also features diverse daily programming, from morning yoga classes to open mic comedy to kid-friendly shows.

*Country Boyz Fixins***4140 E. 12th, www.countryboysfixins.com**

No, Country Boyz Fixins isn't a rap/country crossover group that won *America's Got Talent* – it's a soul food restaurant in East Austin. Come here for oxtails, smothered pork chops, and peach cobbler. Eating at Country Boyz is just proper self-care.

*Habesha Restaurant and Bar***6019 N. I-35, www.habeshaaustin.com**

Ethiopian fare is a great excuse to get hands-on with your food – scoop up an array of flavorful wots with torn-off hunks of the slightly sour, delightfully spongy injera. The aromatic spices alone will be enough to tempt a reach across the table. (Good thing it's family-style.) Definitely order the lentil sambusas and doro tibs.



Mum Foods



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

Mum Foods

2113 Manor Rd., www.mumfoods.tx

Pastrami sandwiches just got a colorful upgrade with bright slaws and pickled vegetables layered atop pastrami so good that it'll make you question why putting this quintessential deli meat in the hands of Texans who love to smoke low and slow wasn't done long before.

Old Thousand

1000 E. 11th, www.oldthousandatx.com

Perhaps the name says it all: Referencing Chinese slang for "clever/wily," this modern Chinese brasserie could be disguising itself as a standard take-out spot. But there's nothing run-of-the-mill about it, what with the dim sum cart (and brunch!), hip-hop always on blast, and brisket fried rice. An eatery serving #dopechinese is what the next generation of American Chinese food looks (and tastes) like.

Sour Duck Market

1814 E. MLK, www.sourduckmarket.com

When Odd Duck and Barley Swine are just too heavy a lift, now Bryce Gilmore offers up super casual snacky American cuisine with a bake shop and bar, and a bonus outdoor seating area perfect for family outings.

Uroko

1023 Springdale, www.urokoatx.com

Uroko works as three different concepts – a counter service temaki (hand roll) bar, a sushi class space, and, on the weekends, a 45-minute sushi omakase. Omakase has made serious gains in popularity, and it's paying off. Trust your chef.

Yuyo

1900 Manor Rd., www.yuyoatx.com

Peruvian cuisine (itself quite multicultural) as seen through the eyes of a Bolivian American chef? Not the most obvious concept, to be sure, but Maribel Rivero's vision has already led to a James Beard semifinalist nomination. From cebiches to lomo saltado, the kitchen's work is always good and often great, giving locals an ongoing education on one of the world's most exciting culinary styles.



JOHN ANDERSON

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LOWER EAST

Bento Picnic

2600 E. Cesar Chavez,
www.bentopicnic.com

What's in a name? A picnic with any other spelling might only match the bright array of tastes and freshness of Leanne Valenti's Japan-inspired joint, an Eastside delight with indoor and outdoor seating and plenty of grab-and-go meals at the ready.

The Brewer's Table

4715 E. Fifth, www.thebrewerstable.com

The most magnificent element of TBT is its commitment to being an ever-evolving workshop of thoughtfully creative dishes that pair with complex, robust beers. Sure, we support drinking beer and eating indulgent food in all forms, but TBT has provided a master class in how to treat beer as a reciprocal tribute to food. And while the dinner menu is too weighty to extrapolate in magnificent detail inside one blurb, TBT's aged pork ribs should be recognized as a true knockout. Also, TBT's Lager Garden happy hour specials are criminally underhyped.

Bufalina

1519 E. Cesar Chavez,
www.bufalinapizza.com

Sometimes you want NY-style pizza. Sometimes Chicago-style. Sometimes one of those Detroit-inflected pies. And sometimes you want 'za like it came directly from Naples, but with local ingredients (house-made mozzarella!), and on perfectly crisped dough via a wood-fired oven. And *that's* when you come here.

Casa Colombia

2409 E. Seventh, www.casa-colombia.com

Casa Colombia is Austin's best reminder that not everything from below the border comes from Mexico. This South American staple features some of the world's best comfort food with dishes that have universal appeal and regional roots.

Eden East

755 Springdale, www.edeneastaustin.com

Even if Eden is a faraway place with irresistible produce, Austin has the next best thing: Eden East. Bountiful Texas fruit and vegetables are plucked, prepared, and then presented on a rotating weekly menu that focuses on highlighting nature's production in vibrant ways.



Bento Picnic

Il Brutto

1601 E. Sixth, www.ilbruttoaustin.com

In a town full of trendy restaurant concepts, this sleek East Austin spot succeeds by keeping it simple and nailing the basics. Order a cacio e pepe (all the pasta is hand-made), margherita pizza, and Negronis for a perfect date. Or treat yourself to Monday's limoncello and lasagna night. Little-brother restaurant La Matta, also blessed with native Italian chef Erind Halilaj, takes the same approach for a casual Italian lunch of paninis and *insalate* with a Peroni or an espresso. There's nothing "ugly" about it.

Intero

2612 E. Cesar Chavez,
www.interorestaurant.com

What do you get when a chocolatier (Krystal Craig) and her chef husband (Ian Thurwachter) launch an Italian restaurant focused on using the whole animal and locally sourced produce? An ultramodern sustainable restaurant that's just as kind to the palate as it is to the planet.

Juniper

2400 E. Cesar Chavez #304,
www.juniperaustin.com

Since originally opening, Nic Yanes and the Juniper team have kept their vision intact, while moving from a more delicate approach to one based around adept interpretations of the classics. The self-described "Northern Italian meets Central Texas" menu interprets local ingredients through an Italian lens, and not an element is out of place.

Justine's Brasserie

4710 E. Fifth, www.justines1937.com

Pierre Pelegrin and Justine Gilcrease have been dazzling us for close to a decade now, having cultivated an enduring energy that keeps devoted locals coming back, and a legacy that pulls tourists and celebrities from all corners of the globe. In a city of too many choices, the small but memorable French menu and well-executed cocktails aren't what keep folks obsessed, but rather the sultry, immersive vibe and annual designer Winter Tent, transporting us to what feels like another time, or even another dimension.

Kemuri Tatsu-ya

2713 E. Second,
www.kemuri-tatsuya.com

First they brought Japanese soul food to Austin, and now they're adding Austin soul to Japanese food. The chefs behind Ramen Tatsu-ya have blended their roots with the influence of this barbecue-proud state to create brisket ramen, meat skewers smoked over mesquite, and banana pudding made with miso caramel.

la Barbecue

2027 E. Cesar Chavez,
www.labarbecue.com

LeAnn Mueller carries on the family name with her East Austin BBQ joint, specializing in locally sourced, grass-fed meats smoked low and slow, served alongside classic sides and house-made pickles or in crazy sandwich combos.

Launderette

2115 Holly, www.launderetteaustin.com

Leave it to Austin's beloved Rene Ortiz and Laura Sawicki to create an East Austin institution out of the "global comfort food" concept, often trotted out by hotels and restaurant consultants to middling effect. Ortiz's time in New York, Australia, and beyond coupled with Sawicki's continued pastry mastery (and whimsy) make this mélange of influence an anytime favorite filled with regulars.

Licha's Cantina

1306 E. Sixth, www.lichascantina.com

"A comfortable cantina serving Mexico City-style botanas," we wrote in our original review in 2014, and that remains true and tasty. So much tequila and mezcal is available at this Eastside eatery, you could forget your own name – but even then, you'll remember the meal's savory depths.

Ditchfork Pretty

2708 E. Cesar Chavez, www.pitchforkpretty.com

With ingredients harvested straight from a garden just one mile away from the restaurant, Pitchfork Pretty serves up the soul of the South through family-style creations. Pitchfork Pretty also offers vegan, veggie-forward, and gluten-free options fitting for a variety of diners. But fear not, meat lovers – you can feast on their popular beef ribs with pickles, onions, and sauce.

Salt & Time Butcher Shop & Salumeria

1912 E. Seventh, www.saltandtime.com

Come for the hand-butchered steaks and bespoke salumi, stay to dine on house-made pasta, burgers, steaks, and brunch. The iconic Eastside butchery-cum-restaurant will soon open a cafe at the recently renovated Republic Square in Downtown.

Suerte

1800 E. Sixth, www.suerteatx.com

Suerte's popularity has soared in the past year since its opening, including nabbing the No. 2 spot in *Food & Wine's* annual Best New Restaurants in the country list. But, y'all, we knew all that praise was well-deserved long before the rest. Executive chef Fermín Nuñez is serving up captivating Oaxacan-Austin food in a uniquely curated space. Suerte's house-made tortillas and goat barbaoca tacos are out of this world, but their heirloom corn has moves you've never seen.

Sweet Chive

2515 E. Cesar Chavez, www.sweet-chive.com

Owned and operated by Austin restaurant veteran Phoenix Pai, Sweet Chive centers on Taiwanese cuisine, including a panoply of dumplings, noodle dishes, and daily cold samplers devoted to seasonal produce. Get fired up with some beef noodle soup, then cool things down with a bubble tea.



Sweet Chive

JOHN ANDERSON



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MIDTOWN

Foreign & Domestic

*Epicerie***2307 Hancock, www.epicerieaustin.com**

Sarah McIntosh's Rosedale French-meets-Cajun mainstay succeeds by consistently delivering the craveable favorites diners love to return to. Fried oysters? Beef tartare? French onion soup? All present and accounted for. A comfortable brunch – try the egg Roxanne with dirty rice, coddled egg, house hot sauce, green onion, and a honey butter biscuit – and hearty bistro dinner fare add more reasons to visit.

*Fluff Meringues & More***4800 Burnet Rd. #450, www.fluff-meringues.com**

Who'd'a thunk that someone could turn an airy concoction of egg whites and sugar into dang ol' art? Yet that's exactly what owner Kristin Collins has accomplished at her cosmopolitan meringue-centric cafe on Burnet Road, along with patisserie and a deep tea list. For the savory babes, Fluff has you covered with Antonelli's cheese and Two Hives honey, plus a rotating menu of scones and stuffed peppery delights.

*Foreign & Domestic***306 E. 53rd, www.fndaustin.com**

Sarah Heard and Nathan Lemley's F&D 2.0 has been a seamless transition: the local sourcing, unconventional proteins (venison tartare, fried pig ear!), and neighborhood vibe remain. The duo's skill with pasta (eggplant fettuccine!) and vegetable dishes (charred turnip!) shines in added menu breadth; there's now something for every reasonably adventurous diner. Be brave, and experience a whole new world.

*Kome***5301 Airport, www.kome-austin.com**

The expanded digs just a few blocks down from the original Airport Boulevard location have made this casual spot for delicious Japanese meals and sushi even more welcoming – *irasshaimase*, indeed – especially with those wallet-friendly lunch specials and happy hours.

*Le Bleu***9070 Research, www.lebleuatx.com**

That irresistible combination of bright lemongrass and cilantro on top of marinated meat sandwiched between an airy French baguette is served up in a multitude of combinations at Le Bleu. Not feeling a bánh mì? There's also pho, bún, and Bò Lúe Lác to tantalize taste buds with the fresh tang and deeply rich flavors emblematic of Vietnamese cuisine. Sister trailer Saigon le Vendeur is also not to be missed.

*101 by Teahaus***6929 Airport #132, www.fb.com/101byteahausatx**

Sample a variety of Asian cuisines at 101, including Korean bulgogi tots and basil fried chicken, Taiwanese noodles, and Japanese curries. This Airport Boulevard offshoot is globalism (with a teensy nod to colonialism via the London Fog panna cotta dessert) at its finest.

*Barley Swine***6555 Burnet Rd., www.barleyswine.com**

Recognizing the potential to highlight specific places at certain times in Central Texas, James Beard darling Bryce Gilmore and his team focus on supporting farmers and ranchers and their seasonal offerings. The team in the kitchen turns that challenge into an opportunity for greater creativity, reaping delicious rewards.

*Be More Pacific***7858 Shoal Creek Blvd., www.bemorepacifickitchenandbar.com**

There's almost no way to be more specifically unspecific when defining what exactly Filipino food is. It's a little bit Malaysian with a dash of Chinese and a hint of Spanish influence, resulting in a whole lot of character perfectly captured in this standard-bearing restaurant.

*Brama***3301 Steck, www.bramarestaurant.com**

You could probably replace therapy with Eastern European cuisine – let the pierogi, halusky, and stroganoff at Brama seamlessly work out your issues. There's something wonderfully out of place about hearty Russian and Polish cuisine in the heart of Texas, but the flavors don't miss a beat. Brama is a must if you crave comfort.

*Easy Tiger***The Linc, 6406 N. I-35 #1100, www.easytigerusa.com**

Already a bastion of superlative baked goods, cured meats, and brewskis, the Tiger roared into greater might with their expansive, sun-dappled, music-friendly, and smartly-designed Linc venue that's like a home away from home, complete with Austin's best brews and a set of pingpong tables. Don't sleep on that almond croissant.

*Eldorado Cafe***3300 W. Anderson, www.eldoradocafeatx.com**

Walk into this bustling restaurant at literally any time between open and close and you're immediately hit with a cacophony of conversation, sizzling plates, and clanking paloma cocktails. All of these converge into a wonderful mélange, from the acutely attentive and tireless staff to that short rib salpicon with the cheesy rice. The vibe here is one of community, and while Joanna and Joel Fried's Mexican-inspired cafe references the "Lost City of Gold," perhaps an even better descriptor for this oasis of consistently delicious food is "the Golden One."

MezzeMe Mediterranean Kitchen

4700 W. Guadalupe #9,
www.mezzeme.com

You'll find more than falafel in this Turkish kitchen. Think kofte meatballs (traditional beef and lamb patties), roasted local veggies, and chicken shish kabob piled onto grains, pita, or spring mix and topped with tasty add-ons like hummus and roasted eggplant, collectively called *mezzes* (get the name now?). Don't forget the baklava!

Picnik

4801 Burnet Rd.,
www.picnikaustin.com

Not just for the paleo set – though if that's you, and you haven't imbibed Picnik's butter coffee, shame on you – this multiple-location biz has a little something for everyone, and it's all gluten-, corn-, peanut-, and soy-free. Find trendy avocado toast, citrus fennel salad, or bone broth for sippin'.

T22 Chicken Joint

7211 Burnet Rd.,
www.tumble22.com

Nashville-style fried chicken, yummy sides, fresh pies, and local beers and cocktails are the hallmarks of this NoBo family restaurant. Dip your fries in comeback sauce for some Deep South flair.



PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON

Tio Pepe Chicken

6406 N. I-35, www.tiopepechicken.com

Pepe Garcia's cozy-yet-casual counter service spot brought Portuguese flame-grilled chicken to the Linc last year, showcasing the spicy, vinegary Peri-Peri marinade. As if tender birds basted in a sauce of your choice and grilled to order weren't enough, the variety of dipping sauces, unique appetizers and sides, and diner-esque desserts will send you over the edge.

Uchiko

4200 N. Lamar, www.uchikoaustin.com

Tyson Cole is a man of restraint: Despite the perennial praise and packed houses, he mostly expanded his empire over time by refining his interpretation of Japanese food and letting his talented team riff on it in other locations (or, now, cities). Uchiko is remarkably consistent, precisely because it funnels creativity through a precise editor's eye. It simply never disappoints.

Uncle Nicky's

4222 Duval St., www.unclenickys.com

Inviting like Grandma's Northern Italian kitchen, Uncle Nicky's casual cafe is Hyde Park's newest meeting ground, thanks to the folks behind Juniper, Via 313, and Nickel City. The menu accommodates a full range of social encounters: bambinos seeking afterschool gelato, business types strategizing over prosciutto sandwiches, and happy hour groups washing down Aperol spritzes.

Vamonos

4807 Airport,
www.vamonos-texmex.com

Aiming at approachable but slightly elevated Tex-Mex, Shawn Cirkiel opened this Airport Boulevard eatery in the space formerly known as Bullfight. Chef Chris Martinez relies heavily on open fire (think rib eye and redfish grilled on Texas oak), but the school-style taco salad wins over our hearts.



Vamonos

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NORTH & NORTHWEST

Fat Dragon

*Fat Dragon***8650 Spicewood Springs Rd. #109,
www.fatdragonatx.com**

Honestly, maybe a fat dragon would have saved that last season of *Game of Thrones*. Here, you'll find a family joint specializing in a rotating menu of excellent dumplings. Forget Los Angeles – you don't need to travel west to find tasty Asian fusion inside of a strip mall.

*Garbo's Fresh Maine Lobster***11920 Domain Dr.,
www.garboslobsteratx.com**

Central Texans can thank Heidi Garbo for bringing New England's legendary fish dishes down South while leaving the weather up North. Now, in addition to the classic lobster rolls, a new location inside Whole Foods Domain boasts specials like lobster Cobb salad and grilled East Coast oysters. The grilled brisket and sirloin burger doesn't mess around, either – and yes, you can add lobster.

*Haru Sushi***9503 Research #500,
www.harutx.com/sushi-menu.html**

They used to be called Hanabi, but like old Shakespeare said, "Sushi by any other name will knock your Harajuku socks off when it's done this well." (It's rumored that Shakespeare was actually four *other* fellows – and they'd all be glad to dine at this omakase-forward venue.)

*Veracruz All Natural***9003 Waterford Centre Blvd. #180, www.veracruzallnatural.com**

Winner of endless "Best of Austin" awards, Veracruz All Natural is all about authentic Mexican cuisine. And with four locations in Austin, you're never far from taco nirvana. Fill up on migas tacos, tortas al pastor, or chicken tostadas and wash it all down with a fresh juice or agua fresca.

*Himalaya Kosheli***8650 Spicewood Springs Rd. #148,
www.koshelihimalaya.com**

Chicken chili momos and hearty, delicious curries serve as a great reminder that comfort food is at its best when it has spice and style. With a (slowly) expanding list of Nepalese restaurants popping up around Austin, we welcome this newcomer with open arms.

*Honest Mary's***9828 Great Hills Trl. #300,
www.honestmarys.com**

With a second location opening this year in Rosedale Village, the family-owned grain bowl mecca raised the bar for locally sourced nourishment without a fine-dining-type time and money commitment. With both a set menu and an option to build your own, this one-stop shop works for any diet, preference, or hankering. All of the grains, guilt-free proteins, and the power to choose.

*Dip Saam Thai***6301 W. Parmer, www.sipsaamthai.com**

You've got "13" problems, but finding a good Thai restaurant in North Austin ain't one, not when this welcoming eatery keeps five separate curries among its taste-forward offerings – and plenty of cold beer and wine to cool you off.

*Biderman's Deli***3742 Far West Blvd. #101,
www.bidermansdeli.com**

Please stop crying about Katz's, FFS, Austinites. Biderman's Jewish-inspired joint has your deli-jones well covered, featuring classic sammiches with everything from lox to pastrami to chicken salad, a plethora of bagels, and more. What are they – chopped liver? No, but it's on the menu!

*Charm Korean BBQ***1200 W. Howard,
www.charmkoreanbbq.com**

Charm boasts traditional Korean barbecue, but that doesn't make it commonplace. This far-north outpost brings to Austin something it doesn't have enough of: a cuisine that's both exotic in flavor and comforting in delivery. Don't skip the mandoo dumplings, but make them steamed for a homemade dose of love.



Himalaya Kosheli

PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON

CAMPUS AREA



Texas French Bread

JOHN ANDERSON

Hopfields

3110 Guadalupe,
www.hopfieldsaustin.com

This Guadalupe mainstay has been serving French-inspired pub fare and just about any craft brew (kombucha included) your heart desires since 2011. Seamlessly flowing from wooden communal benches near the bar to romantic nooks tucked behind black fringe and velour to a high-ceilinged screenwriting class meeting ground, the space is as accommodating as the menu and service. Order a sour beer and moules-frites.

Olamaie

1610 San Antonio St., www.olamaieaustin.com

When talking about foods that define the Southern culinary experience, you'll likely receive a variety of opinions. But there's nothing more Southern than a good biscuit – and Olamaie nails it. In fact, they're so good there's a whole tab on their website dedicated to biscuits. Once you get past the fluffy buttery perfection, the local-forward menu offers an upscale take on classics, including hush puppies, tomato pie, and sorghum-brined pork chops.

Texas French Bread

2900 Rio Grande, www.texasfrenchbread.com

Since 1981, Texas French Bread has been linking Austinites with European bistro culture. With fresh takes on recipes that savor of Mediterranean fare, there is sure to be a fresh-baked baguette alongside every dish for a bite of authenticity.

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1305 W. Oltorf, www.theabgb.com

Good news! The ABGB is the perfect joint to please both the beer snobs and the pizza snobs in your life, so you're not going to regret visiting the reigning national "Large Brewpub of the Year" three years running. And while you'll never wanna sleep on any of ABGB's pie specials (hat tip to the prosciutto & truffle rosemary butter cream), their excellent selection of seasonal salads (butter lettuce nicoise) and sandwiches (do the muffuletta) make visiting on a two-beer lunch break worth hanging with Daryl from Accounts Payable for an hour.

Joann's Fine Foods

1224 S. Congress, www.joannausaustin.com

Elevated diner and Tex-Mex food check into a swanky midcentury setting at the Austin Motel. Dine on classic enchiladas, patty melts, and chicken-fried steaks, then enjoy iconic and modern cocktails poolside. Note that the "sides" menu includes a "pack of smokes," for the complete hairnet-turned-chic vibe.

Lenoir

1807 S. First, www.lenoirrestaurant.com

A romantic treasure curated by husband-and-wife chef team Todd Duplechan and Jess Maher since 2012, Lenoir recently switched from prix fixe to an à la carte menu – more flexibility for the snack-minded diner! The warm-weather food – inspired by Indian, Thai, Italian, and Mexican cuisine – is perfect for sitting pretty in the wine garden, where you can snag bottles for half price during happy hour.

Mattie's

811 W. Live Oak, www.mattiesaustin.com

Mattie's manicured mansion lawns, creaky floors, and preening peacocks make a dinner here feel special; thankfully, the food matches the setting. While the Southern accents speak strongest here, the flavors are balanced and reach for nontraditional ingredients to pique the diner's interest. One of Austin's finest wine lists completes the package – this is date night done right. Start with the fried green tomatoes and grilled Spanish octopus.

Otoko

1603 S. Congress, www.otokoastin.com

There are only 12 coveted seats in this SoCo haven of omakase delights, with chef Yoshi Okai and his team fusing locally sourced goodness together with the best fish jetted in from Japan. Close your eyes, or focus on the stark black-and-white interior, while you celebrate a multicourse combination of sushi and kaiseki that's earthbound yet outta-this-world impressive. Make your reservations now.

Sway

1417 S. First, www.swayaustin.com

This is not your typical Thai joint. At Sway, lights are dimmed, seating is intimate, portions are shareable, and dishes pack some heat, enhancing the entire sensory experience. Blue prawns and toasted cashews elevate classic dishes like pad thai, and fresh tropical drinks incorporate authentic ingredients like galangal to complement the spiced-to-kill food.

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*Carpenters Hall***400 Josephine St., www.carpenterhotel.com**

Your taste buds will road trip across our great state to explore a variety of influences, from chicken schnitzel for two to Gulf Coast seafood. Echoing the chic, updated-vintage elegance of its surrounding hotel, dishes nod to keeping it real, like hackleback caviar served with a bag o' chips. End your flavor journey with a strawberry hand pie.

*High Note***300-A S. Lamar, www.highnoteatx.com**

They call themselves "a healthy, boozy place to eat, drink, and live well," and we'll be damned if that's not exactly what they are. Well, yes – because the tasty menu is totes different, but this just-south-of-the-river venture is from the same team that brought us Kerbey Lane Cafe.

*It's Italian Cucina***1500 S. Lamar, www.itsitaliancucina.com**

In typical Italian fashion, culture, cuisine, and camaraderie come together under one roof. Under this particular roof, owner and chef Al Fini literally brings back edible inspiration from his frequent trips to Northern Italy that he uses to fuse the Old World with the new one he's created in his restaurant.

*Juliet Italian Kitchen***1500 Barton Springs Rd., www.juliet-austin.com**

Sure, Juliet's menu of scratch-made classic Italian-American fare includes treasures like cioppino, spaghetti Bolognese, and grilled octopus, but they also boast a solid \$16 prix fixe power lunch with crowd-favorite chicken piccata. And yes, they've still got rosé all day for brunch – perfect for sippin' on their poppin' patio.



PHOTO BY ALISON MARRO

Established in 1950, Cisco's is an Austin institution and the oldest Tex-Mex restaurant in town.

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*Loro***2115 S. Lamar, www.loroaustin.com**

If Aaron Franklin's chocolate and Tyson Cole's peanut butter joined forces, Loro is the decadent peanut butter cup, combining the best of both local and international cuisines. From char siew pork belly to a brisket sandwich with papaya salad, the menu is a celebration of East meets Central Texas.

*Odd Duck***1201 S. Lamar, www.oddduckaustin.com**

Although it started out as a trailer, Odd Duck has grown up to play a starring role in putting Austin on the U.S. foodie map. Ten years after it debuted, the restaurant continues to serve up vivid, inventive dishes that keep its reputation for a colorful palette intact.

*Pinthouse Pizza***4236 S. Lamar, www.pinthousepizza.com**

Pinthouse's pizza empire grew to three stores this year (welcome, Round Rock!) and, as is typical with anything these hop-prophets do, the masses went north along with it. Let's face it, PHP could serve cold Domino's on fancy Chinnet and people would still flock there like migratory animals because their beer program is so ridiculously good. But bonus! Pinthouse's pizza is, in fact, a downright excellent complement to any of the joint's biting IPAs: fatty and cheesy with a generous portion of those little curled pepperonis filled with piping hot grease. Mmm, IPAs and cheese.

SOUTH



Jaipur Palace

888 Dan Asian Cuisine

2400 E. Oltorf Ste. 1-A, 888panasian.business.site

True to its moniker, this restaurant serves up Asian delights of all kinds, from pad thai to tom kha gai, plus a whopping 15 varieties of pho. As per usual in Asian eateries, the menu is extensive, but if you can't pick just one entrée, there's always the buffet.

District Kitchen & Cocktails

5900 W. Slaughter Ste. D-500, www.districtaustin.com

While there's plenty of U.S.A. on the menu of this New American mainstay in Circle C (a second location recently opened on Anderson Lane), an international flair is also present in dishes like falafel fritters and Moroccan lamb kebabs that join the Texas Wagyu steak and a bison burger.

Jaipur Palace

9900 S. I-35 Ste. P-900, www.jaipurpalaceatx.com

If you're going to eat vegetarian, we implore you to skip the MorningStar burgers and non-synthetic veggie dogz. Indian food is a champion of vegetarian cuisine, and Jaipur doesn't disappoint with its wide selection of paneer and lentils weaved through delicious kormas and curries. Fear not, carnivores: There are still plenty of stewed meats like butter chicken and lamb vindaloo to satiate your bloodlust.

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WEST



Pool Burger

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Bar Deached**1315 W. Sixth, www.barpeached.com**

The Peached Tortilla's latest restaurant is bar-focused, offering fusion drinks like margaritas with Thai basil tequila alongside Tex-Asian comfort food. A big, tree-lined patio full of color and charm offers a staycation-worthy setting to keep patio sippers and shareable plates coming all day and night. Tropical shirts are optional; having a peachy time is not.

The Beer Plant**3110 Windsor, www.thebeerplant.com**

Since most beer is vegan – and most cocktails are, too – why not pair the best crafted adult drinkables with a 100% plant-based menu? That's what happens at this Westside venue, a popular gastropub where a sandwich called Banh Fire, especially, will please your spice-craving palate.

Better Half Coffee & Cocktails**406 Walsh, www.betterhalfbar.com**

This smallish West Fifth joint from the Wright brothers (of Wright Bros. Brew & Brew) and partner Matthew Bolick is a stealthily impressive Southern-influenced restaurant with biscuit sandwiches in the morning and steak & eggs and hot chicken sandwiches in the evening. In between, they offer coffee and cocktails, rendering all your excuses not to stay awhile completely moot.

Cafe Josie**1200-B W. Sixth, www.cafejosie.com**

Surviving and thriving on the West Sixth corridor since 1997 is award-worthy enough, but factor in Austin's first and only fine dining all-you-can-eat prix fixe for a mere \$45 and now you've got a restaurant set on stratospheric success. "The Experience" includes a smorgasbord of elevated choices like blackened pork belly with confit cauliflower, frisée salad with smoked Texas peaches, and fried Gulf oysters with cheddar creamed greens. Don't choose; order one of everything.

Jack Allen's Kitchen**7720 Hwy. 71 W., www.jackallenskitchen.com**

At the intersection of Southern classics and Southwestern flavor, you'll find Jack Allen's Kitchen. After you shovel down that house pimento cheese, try slow-braised beef barbacoa enchiladas or chicken-fried meatloaf smothered in green chile gravy. Not only is this a safe space to dine out with the in-laws (don't forget their small barrel whiskey program), but JAK and sister restaurant Salt Traders Coastal Cooking also give back to local farmers, brewers, ranchers, and other community workers who help make Texas food so damn good.

Lin Asian Bar + Dim Sum**1203 W. Sixth, www.linasianbar.com**

Lin's cozy and charming atmosphere is reason enough to visit, but the consistent quality of the dim sum (especially the soup dumplings) and seafood mains like the Volcano Crispy Shrimp make return visits inevitable. Weekend dim sum brunches – complete with both pineapple and curry beef puffs – are bustling; a workday lunch with green tea salad is a lighter, more leisurely option.

Otherside Deli**1104 W. 34th, www.othersidedeliatx.com**

Otherside Deli isn't messing around. Mounds of fatty, spiced pastrami and corned beef dominate a menu that sits right on the seesaw's fulcrum, with unabashed use of American cheese on one side and condiments made via in-house fermentation on the other. If you've got an obsession with patty melts, the Roddy might just be the best one in the city. Also, hold up – it's space-themed? This place rules.

The Pickle House**9521 Hwy. 290 W. #100, www.thepicklehouseaustin.com**

Sam Addison, local Pogue Mahone pickle master, opened a Southern fare restaurant with a focus on, you guessed it, pickles. In addition to the 12-varieties-deep pickle bar with crisp dill & garlic, atomic-smoked, and serrano-lime fermented cukes, the menu features classics like a Reuben sandwich, meatloaf, house-made tuna and chicken salads, and, of course, a fried pickle basket and pickled queso. Sample all the flavors and buy some for the house.

Pieous**166 Hargraves Bldg. H, www.fb.com/pieous**

Can one live off pastrami and pizza alone? Guests are tempted to find out at Pieous. A move toward Dripping Springs last year added a larger kitchen and a modern dining room, but the core menu remains intact and as good as ever. Pieous also has a gift for dessert – try the pies or brownies if you have room.

Pool Burger**2315 Lake Austin Blvd., www.poolburger.com**

So, you're by a pool ... and you want a burger? If you're near Deep Eddy, you're in luck: This part-permanently-parked-Airstream/part-cinderblock-and-jukebox hang zone sits between the popular spring-fed pond and Deep Eddy Cabaret. It's best you add crinkle-cut fries to your choice of tasty buns and Wagyu beef patties, along with tiki drinks, craft beer, and more. So. Very. Austin.

The Switch**166 Hargraves Ste. G-100, www.theswitchdripping.com**

When Stiles Switch enlisted both Todd Duplechan and an all-star team of pitmasters for second restaurant the Switch, Austin barbecue fans rejoiced. The resulting restaurant is fancier than most barbecue joints, with cocktails, welcoming booths, and framed photography – but the food is exactly what you hoped for. It's a great road trip for out-of-town guests or a perfect stop after visiting a Dripping Springs distillery or brewery.



Lin Asian Bar + Dim Sum

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A Beginner's Guide to Japanese Food

WHERE TO FIND TRADITIONAL DISHES BEYOND SUSHI AND RAMEN by Jessika Roth

When I landed in Tokyo last year equipped with limited knowledge of Japan, I assumed I'd alternate between eating sushi and ramen each day, sleep in MUJI-styled spaces, and frolic between the leafy rows of tea farms. Only the latter came true. In fact, in three weeks traveling across Japan, I ate sushi and ramen one time each. My meal times were instead spent discovering a whole world of food: noodles – served cold or hot, with or without broth; meats – grilled, fried, or DIY-cooked tableside; colorful seafood and pickled or seared vegetables; countless rice-based snacks; and most surprising, a bowl of warm, rich Japanese curry.

Back in Austin, I've been clinging to what I can grasp of Japanese culture by binge-watching episodes of *Terrace House*, a Japanese reality TV show, and reading books like *Wabi Sabi* to gain further exposure to a culture I can't get enough of. Most importantly, I've eaten my way across Austin seeking the best options to taste my way back to Japan. Beyond sushi bars, there are a number of traditional restaurants and izakayas (casual pubs) to choose from, so I've gathered some of the best classic Japanese dishes and where to find them.

One more thing: While strolling through the morning market of a small mountain town called Takayama, I spotted a Fudgsicle-looking treat called gohei mochi – cooked white rice shaped onto a Popsicle stick, covered with a sweet miso sauce, and baked. It was both savory and sweet, and perfect as a snack (or in my case, breakfast). If anyone hears of this treat landing in Austin, send word, because it's *oishii* – delicious.

APPETIZERS

Karaage: Komé perfectly prepares bite-sized fried morsels of moist chicken, accompanied by a lemon wedge, Japanese-style mayo, and Thai chili sauce for varied finishing touches.

Tempura: It's baffling how the interior ingredients stay freshly intact and perfectly cooked without being weighed down by the delicately fried exterior. Both Komé and Fukumoto nail traditional plates, including vibrant tempura pumpkin, squash, Brussels sprouts, and okra.

Edamame: Kemuri Tatsu-ya has set a new standard for what was once a mindless order. The Texas-infused izakaya cold-smokes black edamame over cherrywood and finishes them off with a special seasoning made up of togarashi (a popular Japanese spice blend), giving it a mouthful of heat and smoke.

Gyoza: Dumplings! Ichiban may be the oldest Japanese restaurant in Austin and has the unique characteristics to match – an outdoor koi fish pond and indoor seating at zashiki, traditional-style tables set low to the ground. The gyoza are fried to perfection and stuffed with a moist beef filling, easily washed down with sake and the rest of their happy hour menu.

Seaweed Salad: A popular offering on Japanese menus across the U.S., though typically made with green seaweed. Fukumoto's purple seaweed salad gives enough reason to order simply with its vivid appearance, and it's also delightfully bright in flavor.

Yakitori: You'll find a long list of yakitori – petite skewers with grilled meats or vegetables – including miso-glazed pork belly, chicken thighs, and shishito peppers gracing the happy hour menu at Fukumoto.

ENTRÉES

Toast: Sa-Tén, which is Komé's casual coffee shop, offers authentic Japanese toast on their menu, along with many other traditional breakfast and lunch options. Toppings range from sweet to savory, as simple as honey butter and as sophisticated as smoked salmon with sriracha mayo and dried seaweed.

Okonomiyaki: A savory pancake made with eggs, shredded cabbage, and any sort of chopped veggies or meat the maker chooses, topped with a heavy drizzle of mayo-based sauce. While finding okonomiyaki in Japan is as common as finding omelets here, the dish is few and far between in Austin. Lucky Robot Japanese Kitchen makes it loaded with pork belly, and Komé offers a seafood version.

Curry: A creamy, savory comfort meal. While a few restaurants in town make curry, Domo Alley-Gato is the hands-down go-to, as Japanese curry is the main dish on their menu. Depending on whether you order meaty or vegan, it's made from beef or veggie stock and topped with shredded beef, fried pork cutlet, or fried eggplant.



Temaki at Uroko

Katsu: Breaded and fried chicken or pork cutlet, ordered on its own or as an add-on. Musashino serves quite a few traditional plates alongside their vast sushi menu, including chicken katsu. They expertly fry katsu that's moist on the inside and crisp on the outside, which adds a nice bite of texture atop curry and rice.

Bento: A treasure box full of delicious foods organized into compartments. The shokado bento at Musashino easily feeds two people. The presentation was beautiful, the contents overflowing with vegetable and shrimp tempura, salmon teriyaki, miso-grilled chicken, fried rice, miso soup, and salad, in addition to a colorful selection of sushi.

Soba: Buckwheat noodles, made with or without wheat flour, are often gluten-free. Soba is a go-to meal in Japan. They're served warm inside of broth, like ramen, or cold with broth on the side for dipping each bite. Haru Sushi serves their soba cold – a perfect summer dish.

Temaki: Newest to Austin's Japanese food scene is Uroko, a snug cafe tucked into Springdale General and crafting temaki, or hand rolls. Temaki has the same ingredients you'd find when ordering sushi rolls, but wrapped in a cone-shaped sheet of seaweed rather than sliced into rounds – way easier to devour by hand.

LOCATIONS

Asahi Imports, 6105 Burnet Rd.,
www.asahiimports.com

Domo Alley-Gato, 1600-B E. Sixth,
www.domo-tatsuya.com

Fukumoto: Sushi & Yakitori Izakaya, 514 Medina,
www.fukumotoaustin.com

Haru Sushi, 9503 Research #500,
www.harutx.com

Ichiban, 7310 Burnet Rd.,
www.austinichiban.com

Kemuri Tatsu-ya, 2713 E. Second,
www.kemuri-tatsuya.com

Komé, 5301 Airport #100,
www.kome-austin.com

Lucky Robot Japanese Kitchen,
1303 S. Congress,
www.luckyrobotatx.com

Musashino Sushi Dokoro,
2905 San Gabriel #200,
www.musashinoatx.com

Sa-Tén, 4917 Airport;
916 Springdale, Bldg. 3, #101,
www.sa-ten.com

Uroko, 1023 Springdale, Bldg. 1,
Ste. C, www.urokoatx.com

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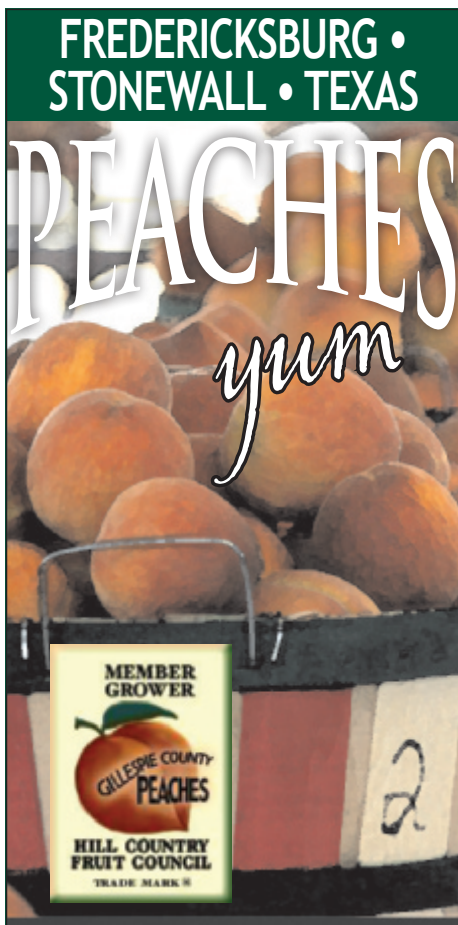
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GETTY IMAGES

Global Utensils Are the Spice of Life

SCALE UP FROM THAT UPCYCLED WINE BOTTLE ROLLING PIN by Emily Beyda

Most food writers worth their Maldon sea salt will say you really only need three tools in your kitchen: a chef's knife, a skillet, and something to boil water in. Well, sure, that's what you *need*. But variety being the spice of life and all, we think it's worth dressing up your basic kitchen with as much international verve as you can, both in the spice rack and with our favorite utensils from kitchens around the world.

BAMBOO SKIMMER

More commodious than a slotted spoon, less cumbersome than a colander, the bamboo skimmer is the unsung hero of the spoon jar. Scoop a few beans or a piece of pasta from that bubbling pot to test for doneness. Skim the skin off a boiling pot of soup. Fish the floating gnocchi off the top of the water while you wait for the rest to rise. Whatever needs sampling, separating, or dipping in, the skimmer has you covered.

FRENCH TAPERED ROLLING PIN

You probably already have a rolling pin. But a tapered rolling pin does more than most: It gives you a light touch for thin doughs, has superior maneuverability and grace, and really puts you in touch, you know, with the sensual aspects of cookie baking – the Ferrari to your conventional American rolling pin's Ford.

PASTA MACHINE

On its face, there are few things more useless to the home cook than a pasta machine. After all, how many times a year can a person possibly make fresh pasta? As it turns out, quite a few! And it's not just for Italian food either; pasta machines happen to be the best tools for rolling out super-thin dumpling wrappers, pierogi dough, and even Chinese noodles. It's like the grown-up equivalent of one of those Play-Doh kitchens: a little messy, sure, but a whole lot of fun.

CLAY BAKER

Vietnamese caramel-braised fish, super crispy crusted breads, roasted veggies, crusty-bottomed Persian rice, and the best damn roast chicken you'll ever have – the clay baker can do it all. Soak it in water beforehand for a little sneaky steam-roasting action, the closest you can get to a convection oven without shelling out for a brand-new range.

MORTAR AND PESTLE

Imagine making the smoothest garlic paste of all time, ginger so pureed you can throw a whole root into your curry without getting stuck picking strings from your teeth, and the freshest spice blends pounded up in the privacy of your own home. Plus, there's the pure satisfaction of coming home from a long day at the office and bashing the heck out of something tasty, pretending it's the pile of emails you'll have to go back to tomorrow.

KITCHEN SCALE

The humble kitchen scale probably doesn't rank high in your estimation, but as any avid baker knows, the British don't cook without it! The reasons for this are tangled up somewhere in the complicated history of the metric system, but the results can't be argued with: precise, fuss-free baking with deliciously consistent results, and the fun of feeling fancily high-tech when you press all those buttons.

CHINOIS STRAINER

The smoothest sauces. The creamiest custards. The lightest dusting of sugar over the top of your latest baked creation. The chinois is an instrument of refinement, the tool you bust out when you're aiming to impress your dinner guests with some next-level culinary jiu-jitsu, creating classical French-style sauces that'll elevate the most basic weeknight protein into something special.

MEZZALUNA

The smooth feel of the wood handles, the meditative back and forth motion of the blade, the mezzaluna is the tool to reach for when you want a little Zen in the kitchen. Paired with a sturdy wooden bowl, your mezzaluna will chop basil to the perfect pesto consistency, smash aromatics for curry paste, and chop nuts for your grandma's famous pecan praline.

WOK

Woks have an undeserved reputation for being the albatross of the kitchen cabinet, a bulky space waster that people ambitiously request as wedding gifts and never use once. But give this neglected workhorse a chance; its thin metal and high sides make it the perfect tool for everything from scrambling eggs to frying rice.

TIFFIN-STYLE LUNCH BOX

With everyone avoiding plastic like the plague these days, we're long overdue for a lunch box reckoning. Tupperware is a no-go, glass is too bulky, and most conventional lunch boxes look like something out of fourth grade. The solution? A tiffin-style lunch box: Stackable, adaptable, and surprisingly sleek, it's the perfect container for all the leftovers you'll be cooking up.

Inspired to try some of these tools? For some tips from Open Invite's owner on how to host an internationally influenced dinner party, check this story out online at austinchronicle.com/first-plates.

Eliana Bernard



Elevate Everyday Dining

ELIANA BERNARD: THE NEW WAVE OF AUSTIN'S ELEGANT DINNERWARE

by Alexandra Detmar

Since launching her own line of ceramic serving wares in 2017, Eliana Bernard has been building her brand out of a Springdale neighborhood studio, gracing one coffee table at a time. Profiled by *Texas Monthly* when she started her own business, and now with a formidable Instagram following, Bernard has expanded her offerings from coffee mugs and dinnerware to home decor and jewelry. Gracefully highlighted online are stately succulent planters with golden rims, delicate trinket dishes and vases, and even in-the-moment geometric earrings with a “less is more” vibe, but still adorned in her signature, understated marbling – created by dipping her pieces in colored slip.

An Amarillo native, Bernard found herself in somewhat of a quandary when she was passed over for an accounting degree in the McCombs School of Business at UT-Austin. “At that moment I decided to look at other interests of mine to see if there was something else that I could major in, and it came down to art,” said Bernard. “It was a hobby of mine growing up, but I never considered it a career path. Once I was in the College of Fine Arts, I became focused on finding the medium that I would pursue as an artist and figuring out what that would look like after graduating.”

After finishing her degree and completing a number of internships that rounded out her technical experience, Bernard found guidance and growth under Austin ceramicist-to-the-stars Keith Kreeger (well, culinary stars such as chefs Kevin Fink, Michael Fojtasek, among many others nationwide), apprenticing in his studio for four years. “[It] taught me a lot about the business side of ceramics – from how to actually start a business, to things like establishing wholesale accounts, packing and shipping, how to work with retailers, what you need to maintain a studio, and so many other lessons,” said Bernard. “I am forever grateful for my experience there – it played a big part in my journey as a maker and business owner.”

In addition to various artist pop-ups and her online storefront, Bernard offers Austinites the chance to use some of her larger wares for special events through Loot Rentals: “I love designing and making items that can elevate a dining experience or become part of your everyday rituals. I believe that the items we bring to the table and home are important, and I love when clients choose items from my collection of wares to be a part of their experiences,” said Bernard.

From an olive oil bottle in matte pink to a black-and-white marbled serving platter, Bernard’s collection offers ceramic pieces sure to make mealtimes more special. ■



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85°C BAKERY

11301 Lakeline Blvd.; 6929 Airport,
www.85cbakerycafe.com

Named after what founder Wu Cheng-Hsueh believes is the ideal temperature for coffee, this wildly popular Taiwanese bakery chain has opened two locations in Austin since last year, adding to their roster of over 1,000 locations all around the world. And with something-for-everyone offerings ranging from cheesy hot dog bread to chocolate-stuffed buns, it's easy to understand why they've been called the Starbucks of Taiwan.

JULIE MYRTILLE

1023 Springdale, Bldg. 1-D,
www.juliemyrtille.com

Is there anything better than a perfect French bakery? Julie Myrtille makes a pretty compelling case for the genre. Myrtille has continued to serve up characteristically precise takes on patisserie classics: the loveliest gemlike fruit tarts, delicate macarons, and croissants that will transport you to a cafe on the Ile Saint-Louis. Paris, Texas indeed. Find her at the Texas Farmer's Market stand, the blogosphere, and soon at a brick-and-mortar at Springdale General.

TINY'S MILK & COOKIES

1515 W. 35th, Bldg. C, www.tinyboxwoods.com

If you give a mouse a cookie from Tiny's, he'll probably ask for a glass of milk. It's in the name, after all – who could blame him? But give him a second to peruse their menu of American home cooking classics like fluffy cinnamon buns, gorgeously glazed donuts, and an iconic take on the perfect chocolate chip, and you'll have one happy mouse on your hands.

PAPER ROUTE BAKERY

1010-D E. Cesar Chavez,
paper-route-bakery.business.site

Small batch, organic, and totally stunning, the Brazilian-influenced delights at this bright East Austin pocket-sized bake shop are worth going out of the way for. The milkshake cookie is a can't-miss, but don't snooze on their gluten-free pao de queijo, an incredibly airy cheesy bread nugget available plain or stuffed with jalapeño or rosemary prosciutto filling.

THOROUGHREAD

1709 Bluebonnet Ln.,
www.thoroughbreadtx.com

With roots stretching back to ancient Egypt, naturally leavened sourdough is pretty much the oldest-school baked good out there, and the folks at ThoroughBread are true to their roots, using unbleached, organic flours and homegrown starter. That doesn't mean there's no room for innovation, though; consider their house special Burridoughs (get it?), a unique blend of traditional burrito and kolache-style filled pastry as distinctive as it is delicious.



Confituras Little Kitchen

BAGUETTE ET CHOCOLAT

12101 FM 2244, Bee Cave,
www.baguetteeetchocolat.com

Everything you need to know is in the name. They serve baguettes: artisan loaves that take a full day to produce using traditional French methods. And there's a ton of chocolate flying around: used in a ganache atop religieuses, piped into the center of delicate macarons, and shaped into confectionary adornments for cakes and tarts. What more could you ask for, really?

BRENTWOOD SOCIAL HOUSE

1601 W. Koenig, www.brentwoodsocial.com

In most parts of the U.S., afternoon tea is a lost art. Not so at the Brentwood Social House, where their afternoon tea ritual includes a three-tiered stack of sweet and savory British specialties like tea sandwiches, scones, and diminutive sweet treats, served on mismatched vintage china, which is a cozy touch that makes you wonder why you don't take the time to do this for yourself every afternoon.

CONFITURAS LITTLE KITCHEN

2129 Goodrich, www.confituras.net

This pocket bakeshop and jam emporium (try to imagine a cuter combo, we dare you) has been slinging seasonal preserves for years, based on local Texas produce like tomatoes (for the tomato confit) and peaches (for the even-tastier-than-it-sounds bourbon brown sugar peach preserves), and now they've got a storefront of their own. Biscuits, coffee, and a jar of jam to go: We can't think of a better combo deal than that.

LA MEXICANA BAKERY

1924 S. First, www.lamexicanabakery.com

For almost 30 years, this South First eatery has been specializing in Mexican baked goods. It's icing on el pastel that they are open 24/7, which yes, means any time, day or night, you can get your fix of pan dulce, churros, pastel de tres leches, flan, empanadas, and just about any other baked treat your sweet tooth desires.

ZUCCHINI KILL

701 E. 53rd, www.zucchinikill.com

OK, so maybe the fan club formed by baby riot gals and guys whose formative experiences occurred alongside the sultry tones of Kathleen Hanna doesn't technically count as an independent nation, but we should! And if the nation whose anthem was "Reject All American" had another theme song, it would definitely be vegan, soy, and gluten-free cupcakes, served up at a punk rock bakery with a sideline in making on-the-road cookie cakes for touring bands.

A World of Bakeries Right Here in Austin

FROM MACARONS TO KOLACHES TO MILKSHAKE COOKIES, WE GOT YOU COVERED

by Emily Beyda

If you're ready to dip your toes into the wonderful world of Austin's global food scene, internationally inspired bakeries are a fabulous way to start. Not only are their offerings highly portable (and just in time for the picnic season!), their pocket-sized nature also means you can taste your way across the spectrum of flavor offerings with a caffeinated beverage on the side. What are you waiting for? Jump in with a visit to one of our favorite international bakeries to find inspiration for your next snacking trip.

Find more online at austinchronicle.com/first-plates.

BATCH CRAFT BEER + KOLACHES

3220 Manor Rd., www.batchatx.com

It really doesn't get more global than Czech-style kolaches stuffed with Austin's finest slow-cooked sausages from the Micklethwait smoker trailer and served alongside a tightly curated list of house-made small-batch beers at a venue whose weekly lineup includes jazz nights, international beer tastings, and multiple evenings of modular synth. Batch is Austin global at its best, with all the aesthetic and culinary mix-matching that title implies.

PLAZA COLOMBIAN COFFEE

3842 S. Congress, www.plazacolombiancoffee.com

Snagging a seat in the light-filled space of Plaza Colombian's modernist dining room is cheaper than buying a ticket to perch in a cafe in Cartagena, and if you close your eyes, you might be fooled into thinking it's the real deal. There's the all-Colombian-sourced coffee, the cold glasses of guanabana juice, and, of course, a full menu of classic Colombian desserts, from the guava paste-stuffed roscon to arepas with pulled chicken, queso fresco, and avocado puree.

PEACE BAKERY AND DELI

11220 N. Lamar, www.peacebakerydeli.com

Dedicated to showcasing the culinary traditions of a wide variety of Middle Eastern cultures, Peace Bakery is far more than just a simple bakeshop. There's the restaurant, where you can get slow-braised lamb shank and any kind of kebab, and the deli case, where you can pick up prepared salads and dips so you can take a little moment of Peace home. In short, everything you need to taste your way across one of the most delicious regions of the world.

CAFE NENA'

1700-A Montopolis Dr., www.cafenena.com

This sleek little mother/daughter-run neighborhood spot was inspired by Paraguayan and Argentine cuisine, but quickly expanded to include tastes from Cuba, Venezuela, and many other South American culinary traditions. Try the chipa, a Paraguayan cheese bread, with an empanada or two and an order of Argentine-style cheese and guava-stuffed croissants for dessert.

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Kinda Tropical

PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON

One-Stop Shops: Bars With Great Food

THESE BARS ARE KNOWN FOR MORE THAN JUST GOOD DRINKS by Emily Beyda

The recent Uber strike has got us thinking about the wisdom of one-location hangs. Not only do you avoid the bedevilment of surge pricing, but there's also less of a chance part of the crew will drop out in the critical moment of shifting from dinner to drinks or vice versa, only to head home for some quality time with their Netflix account. In that spirit, here are some of our favorite Austin food-centric bars, restaurants that serve great drinks, and everything in between!

Find more online at austinchronicle.com/first-plates.

ANTHEM

91 Rainey #120, www.eatdrinkanthem.com

The mix of Asian and Southern flavors is nothing new on the Austin food scene, but Anthem takes it to the next level with brain-meltingly decadent flavor combos that embrace the most indulgent aspects of both food traditions and kick them up 10 notches. Try the brisket ragoon (yes, please), shishito pepper queso, or the Miso Mac Daddy. Max out with a shared pupu platter for the ultimate social experience.

BUZZ MILL

1505 Town Creek, www.buzzmillcoffee.com

There's a reason Buzz Mill is such an Austin standby. They have everything: BYO record nights, open mic comedy, afternoon salve-making classes, flea markets, book releases, and now, brunch. Buzz Mill is a true community hub, so naturally there's a menu to match. Three food trucks offer cheesesteaks, pizzas, and veggie burgers, and BM's drinks include craft beers of all kinds, a huge variety of house-made elixirs (pickle-infused vodka!), and a delightful variety of flavored coffees and teas.

THE CAVALIER

2400-A Webberville Rd., www.thecavalieratx.com

This unpretentious neighborhood watering hole is anything but cavalier (get it?) about the business of constructing a good time. Their drink menu has its tongue firmly in cheek with entries like the Dad Bod Special (a Lone Star tallboy and a shot of Old Forester), and the food menu is heavy on sandwiches and snackworthy, Southern-inflected shareables like bacon-topped pimento cheese and fried pickled okra, so you can get that dad bod the easy way.

DECKHAND OYSTER BAR

4211 S. Lamar Ste. C-1; 500 Parker Dr., Round Rock; www.deckhandoysterbar.com

The oyster bar so nice they opened it twice, with locations in Austin and Round Rock. Deckhand is the kind of relaxed, family-friendly seafood shack you can imagine kicking back at on a weekend trip to the Gulf. With a drinks menu that's heavy on the brewskis and an ambitious list of seafood preparations that covers everything from popcorn shrimp fried in a cornmeal coating to Thai papaya salad with fermented shrimp and crab, it's the perfect place to pretend you're on vacation. Use that green sauce!

DOMO ALLEY-GATO

1600 E. Sixth, www.domo-tatsuya.com

The latest concept from the Ramen Tatsuya family is a playful, cat-themed space with a freewheeling feel that makes it ideal for a late-night hang. Wash down your Ban Ban Dog (an absurdly baroque concoction of crispy panko brioche, silky hot Japanese curry chili, teriyaki sauce, honey aioli, and cabbage) with a palate-cleansing glass of Melon Ball Z, a sweet blend of tequila, lime, honey, and fizz that takes the classic hot dog and soda combo to the next level.

FULTON

101 Red River, www.fultonbaratx.com

You don't have to be a guest to chill at Fairmont Hotel's super-bright main-floor bar. Sit under the shade of a huge faux tree (aka Big Oak), admire the flooring designed to mimic our city's beautiful river system, and munch on bites like deviled eggs, smoked beef tartare, and Mexican chicken nuggets while you stare out the multistory wall of windows.

KINDA TROPICAL

3501 E. Seventh, www.kindatropical.com

This neighborhood mainstay is the kind of one-stop shop we wish were scattered throughout the city as ubiquitously as H-E-B: part bar, with an outdoor hang zone and a tailored menu of day-drinking-friendly tipples; part restaurant, with snacks like house-made black bean hummus and a pulled jackfruit sandwich; and part mini-mart, stocked with beer, wine, tasty international snacks, and occasionally a succulent or two. Take an art mag from the reading rack and stay awhile.

LAST STRAW

1914-C E. Sixth, www.laststrawatx.com

Serving up tropical vibes in this retro East Sixth nook, the Last Straw is the last word in trendy Austin summertime boozery. There are the picturesque shared-bowl cocktails, alcoholic slushies, and an ambitious beer-and-shot combination menu that'll have you glued to your seat in search of the anchoring caloric solstice of their kimchi patty melt – the umami bomb mixture of kimchi, mozzarella, and ginger scallion sauce you never knew you needed.

THE LITTLE DARLIN'

6507 Circle S Rd., www.thelittledarlin.com

There are few more relaxing ways to while away a sunny summer afternoon than sprawling out on the patio of Little Darlin' with a Lone Star and an order of country-fried steak with potato-mushroom hash, tilting back in your chair and looking up through the leaves of the tree in the center of their garden. There might be a fire in the fire pit. Someone might pass around an Antonelli's cheese plate. Just go with it, man.

NICOLAZA'S

8504 S. Congress, www.fb.com/nicolazasbar

We're *big* fans of Hopfields, so it's no wonder we've got a little crush on this new South Austin cocktail bar. With everything from horchata cocktails to curated craft beer lists on the drink menu, the food had to come prepared to wow, which is not a problem since Nicolaza's boasts the food trailer version of French gastropub fare. It doesn't hurt that the atmosphere is a cooler version of your überchic living room.

ODDWOOD ALES

3108 Manor Rd., www.oddwoodales.com

This hyper-cozy neighborhood brewpub seems like it was designed in a lab to appeal to the largest number of Austinites possible. Relaxing, Texan farmhouse-style space? Check. A wall full of locally brewed wild ales? You betcha. A menu of thin-crust pizzas and approachable small bites with a small but well-curated wine list to match? Naturally. And it's dog friendly. Because of course it is.



P6

111 E. Cesar Chavez, www.thelinehotel.com/austin/food-drink

This is next-level rooftop hanging. They source local produce not only for the dishes, but for the cocktails as well. Designed by Michael Hsu, this converted parking garage at Downtown's LINE Hotel might also be the most Instagrammable spot for faking it 'til you make it. Amp up that ambition with some tuna crudo or roasted beets.

THE ROOSEVELT ROOM
307-B W. Fifth,
www.therooseveltroomatx.com

The draw here is most definitely the 80-drink cocktail menu arranged by time periods, house classics, and new twists, but with all that booze, you're going to need some sustenance. There are 11 dishes (five small, four large, and two desserts), including sweet and spiced mixed nuts, avocado toast, several delectable charcuterie/cheese boards, and a grilled cheese – the best choice to soak up some suds.

SMALL VICTORY

108 E. Seventh, www.smallvictory.bar

A night at Small Victory is kind of like kicking back in your foodiest friend's living room. The space is intimate, with the semi-hidden entrance (one of the bar's top Google results is people asking how to find it) making you feel like a member of the in-crowd as you wind your way up the narrow staircase in search of bites and cocktails. The menu is comfortably old-fashioned, with drinks divided by glassware type and a dignified selection of small plates that's heavy on the well-composed cheese and charcuterie boards.

THE UPSIDE AND POOL BAR
1108 E. Sixth, www.eastaustinhotel.com

Nothing says summer like a poolside bar, and East Austin Hotel's new one is a doozy. With a tropical vibe expressed in fanciful tipples like their champagne paloma, it's the perfect place to sit back and sip the afternoon away. Or head inside to the Upside, their Moroccan-themed lounge full of poufs and lush textiles where you can snack your way through a global menu that includes everything from lamb kebabs to tater tots to jackfruit bánh mì.

VIGILANTE

7010 Easy Wind #150, www.vigilantebar.com

Consider Vigilante Gastropub and Games as the ultimate three-in-one. Not only do they have food (a digital choose-your-own-adventure menu with three small plate options sent to your table for \$12 a head) and drinks (everything from wine to sake bombs to shareable boozy milkshakes), there's also a menu of games of all types, tailored to suit the energy of your evening.

WONDER BAR

11500-D Rock Rose Ave., www.wonderbaratx.com

This Instagrammer's wonderland is probably better known for their glowing *Price Is Right*-style prize wheel and carousel horse statue/posing area than anything that's actually on the menu, but some of what's inside those ridiculous themed containers (our favorite is the rainbow-hued Disco Bull) is actually pretty delicious. Pair some corn dogs or fried pickles from their carnival-themed food menu with a wheel shot and test your luck.

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ABO YOUSSEF MEDITERRANEAN FOOD Since the weather's trending hotter and hotter – *oh, stop denying it* – this silvery Manor Road trailer dispensing mouth-watering marvels of falafel and shawarma, of heavenly hummus and mint lemonade, of birthday-worthy baklava, will only become more indispensable as time goes by. **2101 Manor Rd., www.fb.com/nachausa**

ARTIPASTA Ugo and Annamaria serve straightforward scratch pasta inspired by their home city of Mantova. Featuring local produce and offering lasagna, gnocchi, maccheroni, casarecce, tagliatelle, and – of course – spaghetti alla carbonara, they've carved out a distinct family-friendly niche in the pasta truck scene (as Italians offering Italian food, the focus is on pasta as a course of its own, not proteins or sides). Check out their buzzworthy tiramisu. **7800 S. First, www.artipasta.com**

ATIA'S KITCHEN Seducing folks with his samosas (grass-fed halal beef or turmeric potato), magical green sauce, and daily scratch tea and lemonade, chef Sajjad of Atia's Kitchen is setting a new standard for food truck hospitality. Anybody, including vegans, can find something comforting and aromatic on the unpretentious Pakistani menu. **1106 E. 11th, www.atiaskitchenatx.com**

BEIRUT No matter where this truck goes, hungry Austinites follow in search of smoky baba ghanoush and sumac-topped falafel spreads. This Lebanese trailer is a delight for both vegetarians and carnivores, and there's always a delicious twist on the classics (love the rose-flavored lemonade). **3225 Amy Donovan Plaza, www.fb.com/beirutatx**

THE BIG KAHUNA The owners don't have to boast about their island flavor or aloha spirit – patrons insist that the freshness and large portion size of the ahi tuna poke and popcorn shrimp will make an instant convert out of you. That, plus the vibrancy and presentation of the sides, will make you forget you're dining in a parking lot. **1309 W. 45th, www.bigkahunaatx.com**

BOTECO ATX Brazilian street food at its finest, this bright yellow neon sign of a food truck serves up tasty yuca fries and empanadas. But the pièce de résistance is probably the picanha grelhada with sirloin steak, rice, beans, and a fried egg. **1209 E. Sixth, www.botecoatx.com**

CAMILA'S TACOS The tiny red trailer parked in the Monarch Food Mart lot next door to Cherrywood Coffeehouse is slinging some of the tastiest breakfast tacos in town. Norma Flores makes both flour and corn tortillas by hand every morning, and by the 7am opening, there's a line. Don't worry: Her tacos fly out of the sugar-skull-decorated window faster than the Frost Bank Tower's resident peregrine falcon. Be sure to use every drop of that secret recipe green salsa. **1402 E. 38th ½**

DEE DEE There are many Thai joints in Austin, but none have made quite the splash that this plucky little food truck did when it popped up on the Eastside a few years back and started racking up accolades almost immediately for its Northern Thai street food, including pork skewers, spicy papaya salad, and cooling mango & sticky rice. **4204 Manchaca Rd., www.deedeeatx.com**

DFG NOODLES Their slogan sums it up: "Go ahead, get addicted." Serving up flavors of Southeast Asia, DFG doesn't have just any old menu – they have a "menu of goodness." From chicken nuggets marinated overnight in "DFG Magic Sauce," to the Empress, a creamy coconut-curry stew delight, you'll be daydreaming about your next flavor fix from this award-winning food truck. **Check website for location: www.dfgfood.com**

DISCADA There's something refreshing about a business that only offers a single product. Not only do we love Xose Velasco's exaltation of his family recipe – based in a Chihuahuan regional cooking technique – but the tyranny of choice (read: FOMO) for us is also eliminated. Besides, these tacos contain multitudes. **1319 Rosewood, www.discadatx.com**

THE DOUGHMINICAN Austin's first Dominican food trailer offers a regional twist on classic Latin fare and an Austin staple: empanadas. Chef Melvin Mendez whips up crowd-favorite beef picadillo, shredded chicken, and vegan ratatouille empanadas in addition to tostones and quipes (beef and bulgur rolls stuffed with ground beef and raisins). **1112 E. 11th, www.thedoughminican.com**

KILLA WASI Peruvian food ain't just ceviche, and chef Kati Luedecke will gladly introduce you to the wide range of bright flavors and bold ingredients Lima is known for. The aji amarillos, ubiquitous in Peru, are bountiful here, too, sliding perfect amounts of flavor and heat into this inspired, must-try Peruvian-Texan menu. **828 Airport, www.killawasiatx.com**

KREYOL KORNER Having recently upgraded her trailer and completed a culinary degree, chef Nahika Hillery impresses customers with Haitian fare that is difficult to find in Texas. Griot (fried pork shoulder), mayi moulin (Haitian grits), soup joumou (traditional Haitian beef and pumpkin soup), fresh guava punch, and fried sweet plantains stand out, but the rice and beans alone are enough to keep folks coming back. **805 Stark, www.kreyolkorner.com**

KURRY TAKOS Indo-Mexican cuisine sparks a big "hell yes" when it's from the wheeled kitchen of chef Ravi Chandra, a tandoori-trained talent who can put the best of both traditions on a paratha flatbread and win your tummy's devotion every time. *¿Habla tikka masala? ¡SI!* **2730 E. Cesar Chavez, www.kurrytakos.com**

LEROY & LEWIS Yes, this food truck's slogan boasts "New school barbecue and old school service," but don't let that first part scare you: It's traditional 'cue done even better, with alternative cuts of meat and modern twists on side dish classics that keep winning awards year after year. **121 Pickle Rd., www.leroyandlewis.com**

L'IL NONNA'S When this vegetarian pizza trailer ditched the dairy for an all-vegan menu last fall, Austin vegans rejoiced. But herbivore or not, their house-made vegan mozzarella is unparalleled, as are pies like the Meat Out (who knew beeteroni was so satisfyingly delicious?) and VBR (verde bianco rosso) with balsamic glaze, roasted garlic, and fresh arugula. **1505 Town Creek, www.lilnonnas.com**

PAPERBOY Serving next-level breakfast and brunch fare since 2015, Paperboy continues on with two trailers and a brick-and-mortar restaurant on the way. When a place can crank out crave-worthy concoctions like a breakfast sandwich with bacon, egg, and pimento cheese, the more the merrier. **1112 E. 12th, 1105 S. Lamar, www.paperboyaustin.com**

PATRIZI'S You think this truck-based Italian joint in the Vortex yard, this extension of Nic and Matt Patrizi's grandfather's culinary legacy, features some of the best pasta-forward noms in our embiggening metroplex? Just wait 'til you check out their upcoming brick-and-mortar next to Dai Due. **2307 Manor Rd., www.patrizis.com**

PLOW BURGER Even nonvegans rave about Plow Burger, which now boasts two food trailer locations (at Buzz Mill Coffee and the Flag Store of Hyde Park). With Beyond Meat patties, gooey vegan cheese, chef Isaac Mogannam's version of special sauce, and weekly specials often featuring local makers, it's finger-lickin' vegan junk food for the masses. **1505 Town Creek, 4429 Duval St., www.plowburger.com**

REPUBLIC DINER Donuts by day, burgers by night? Republic Diner pulls off the Two-Face look nicely. Starting at 5am, you can get fresh, marvelous donuts like bourbon vanilla glaze and peach cake. Then at night, the place flips and serves a delightful smashed burger on a potato roll. Republic is the trailer Gotham deserves. **1401 E. Seventh, www.instagram.com/republicdineratx**

ROSARITO Baja cuisine in an office park might be a surprise, but Rosarito brings ocean cuisine to various parts of Austin every day. Items like the ahi tuna tostada and tempura-fried fish taco satisfy a certain craving, but the chile relleno taco is Mexican vegetarian done right. **Check website for location: www.rosaritoatx.com**

ROSITA'S AL PASTOR "It's the best al pastor, ain't it, Sheriff?" "If it ain't, it'll do 'til the best gets here." Rosita's has more than seasoned pork on a spit, but even if it didn't, it would still be worth a visit to Riverside. Sometimes, the best is enough. **1911 E. Riverside, www.rositasalpastor.com**

SASSY'S VEGETARIAN SOUL FOOD After less than a year on the highly competitive Austin restaurant scene, Sassy's has proven you can serve up all the comforts of soul food without meat and from a food trailer. Owned by local blues singer Andrea Dawson, Sassy's is an homage to Black Southern food culture – from fried cabbage and cornbread to Dawson's special Chicon N Waffles, a vegan dish that has even the carnivores raving. **1819 E. 12th, www.fb.com/pg/sassysvegetariansoulfood**

SAUCE ODYSSEY This truck boosts small-batch, artisan sauce-makers by showcasing their low-heat sauces (pepper, BBQ, and salsas) at their sauce bar, complete with free tours. In the same shady space, guests can mix-and-match their way through a chef-driven, snacky menu created to be a canvas for the sauces. Rotisserie chicken and root vegetables are the big draws here, as well as a daily "world nacho" option. No matter what, don't skip the foamy tea. **1403 E. Seventh, www.sauceodyssey.com**

SOURSOP Yes, we're shameless hams for Soursop. We write about 'em every year and dammit, you're gonna hear about 'em again this year, too. Soursop's overall generalities haven't changed – they still operate out of the backyard of St. Elmo, they still sling the city's best pan-Asian fare, and they still pair best with a Carl Kolsch – but it is the culinary minutiae that keep it all fresh, dynamic, and interesting. From the Pho-Tine 2.0 tater tots (grade A drunk food, please believe) to the SopBurger with Swiss cheese and onions roasted in bacon fat, we just can't stop ourselves from being annually impressed. **440 E. St. Elmo, Bldg. G-2, www.soursopaustin.com**



Spicy Boys

JANA BIRCHUM

SPICY BOYS Spicy Boys, parked at Zilker Brewing, is the second endeavor from the team behind Soursop. If that alone isn't enough of an endorsement that you immediately need a pint of Marco IPA and whatever delicious commodities Spicy Boys are pushing (spicy fried chicken!), then how about some iron law suggestions from us: sambal jumbo wings, a leg quarter of fried chicken, a hot gai sandwich, and (listen up, this is critical) a side of roti and a Zilker seasonal to cool you off between bites. That should hold you over until breakfast. **1701 E. Sixth, www.wemovechickens.com**

TRILL TAQUERIA Chef Nick Belloni, former executive chef of Eden East, gives guests a one-man show from open to close. Featuring organic, house-nixtamalized corn tortillas; smoked local meats; and an innovative lineup and layering of lesser-known, local farm veggies (collard greens, rapini, tempura-fried fava leaves) with fermented hot sauces that have vegetarians rushing to bring their friends. And yes, you can put an egg on it. **2421 Webberville Rd., www.fb.com/trilltaqueria**

VALENTINA'S TEX MEX BBQ When a food truck can take the Tex, add it to the Mex, and slather the whole thing in barbecue goodness, that's a magical thing. Now, with Valentina's set to move into a proper restaurant, the culinary wizardry is guaranteed to continue. May the serving of brisket tacos never cease. **11500 Manchaca Rd., www.valentinastexmexbbq.com**

VAN'S BÁNH MÌ Van's Bánh Mì is a slice of Vietnamese comfort food located in the heart of North Loop. With daily fresh-baked bread and meats flame-grilled to order, this little trailer serves up three different kinds of Vietnamese sandwiches, along with mouthwatering egg rolls and vermicelli plates for non-sandwich folks. Now all you have to decide is whether to order them with pork, shrimp, chicken, or vegetables. **201 E. 53rd, www.vanbanhmi.com**

VAQUERO TAQUERO Vaquero Taquero brings their version of taco traditionalism to Austin by way of the Rio Grande and Monterrey, and North Campus has been the prime beneficiary. Their Hyde Park truck has since been joined by a restaurant on East 31st. More al pastor, por favor. **4301 Duval St., www.vaqueroaquero.com**

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