

OUR 50 FAVORITE RESTAURANTS

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We traveled widely and ate avidly this year as we built our annual list of our favorite restaurants in America. From Oklahoma City to Junco, Puerto Rico, to Orcas Island off the coast of Washington State, we found Ethiopian barbecue, virtuosic plant-based dishes, innovative Haitian cooking and possibly the most delicious fried pork sandwich in the United States.

While we love to see a dynamic new dining room open its doors, we're equally impressed by kitchens that are doing their best work years in. So some of our picks debuted just this summer, while others have been around for decades. The one thing they do have in common: The food is amazing, made with care by gifted people and served with warmth and commitment. These are the 50 restaurants we love most in 2022.

ABACÁ SAN FRANCISCO

In a soaring, sunlit dining room framed with hanging plants, Francis and Dian Ang and the team behind the Filipino pop-up Pinoy Heritage make every dinner feel like a party, complete with pancit and lumpia, habit-forming barbecue sticks of beef tongue and homemade longanisa, and a series of pliatos that change in step with Northern California's seasonal seafood and produce. Look for a QR code that leads you to a "secret" menu of some of the Ang family's favorite snacks, including balut and duck hearts. **TEAL RAO**

ANAJAK THAI LOS ANGELES

Technically speaking, Anajak Thai is 41 years old, but when Justin Fichtentrung took over the Sherman Oaks bistro from his parents a couple of years ago, he built on the Thai menu and natural wine list in thoughtful and utterly delicious ways. Go for the more experimental omakase-style menu on the weekend, the freewheeling spirit of Thai Taco Tuesdays, or anytime you manage to get a table and spend time with the whole grilled sea bream in a bright green pool of tangy nam jim or Southern Thai-style fried chicken. **TEAL RAO**

ANDIARIO WEST CHESTER, PA.

When Tony Andiaro and Maria van Schaijk moved from Phoenix to West Chester, Pa., in 2017, they landed in his home state and not far from her parents. The restaurant the couple opened the following year suggests other incentives. The peppery local radicchio, for instance, which Mr. Andiaro sets in a tangle over sheer slices of porchetta di testa, atop a golden round of chestnut creppelle. Or Pennsylvania guinea hens coated in a cream sauce thick with local mushrooms. Italian restaurants are popular vehicles for showcasing regional ingredients. Mr. Andiaro takes things a step further, persuading diners to believe, at least over the span of a meal, that there are few places better situated for cooking Italian food than this college town 30 miles west of Philadelphia. **BRETT ANDERSON**

APTEKA PITTSBURGH

It is not shocking to find an excellent Eastern European restaurant in a city where pierogi listicles count as clickbait. The twist at Apeka is that the food is vegan; the thrill is that you won't notice anything missing. The co-chefs, co-owners and life partners Kate Lasky and Tomasz Skowronski build depth, texture and flavor with fermentation, ingenuity (don't miss the celeriac schnitzel) and cultured nut milk as lush as crème fraîche. Their produce-driven food is shaped in part by Mr. Skowronski; a son of Polish immigrants, he grew up visiting relatives with abundant gardens in and around Warsaw. **BRETT ANDERSON**

AUDREY NASHVILLE

Sean Brock brings every bit of his culinary, intellectual and history-loving self to this restaurant, which was named for his grandmother and is dedicated to interpreting and honoring Appalachian food. What does that look like? Some dishes come from a Noma-like lab where, for example, he extracts the essence of the dried snap beans called leather briches and turns it into a demi-glace, which he uses to slick a succorash built from nixtamalized hominy and a pickled version of the same bean. An ember-roasted lion's-mane mushroom crowns the dish. Mr. Brock's hand has touched every part of the restaurant, from the rare collection of outsider art on the walls to the meditation room for staff upstairs. **KIM SEVERSON**

BACANORA PHOENIX

At this corner restaurant lit up in neon, the caramelo stands apart. It's a non-traditional take: a corn tortilla grilled until crisp and piled generously with salsa, queso fresco, plump pinto beans and shreds of carne asada. But this place is hardly a one-hit wonder. There are practically no misses on the short menu of Sonoran food, anchored by a large grill (there are no ovens or stoves) and the chef Rene Andrade's uncanny ability to balance brightness, salt and acidity. He's the kind of cook who puts as much care into a side of beans as he does into a special of grilled yellowtail collar glazed with tangy chamoy — and it shows. **PRIVA KRISHNA**

BACOA FINCA + FOGÓN JUNCO, P.R.

Unlike a typical farm-to-table restaurant, Bacoa plants its tables right in the middle of the farm, in the rolling mountains about 30 miles south of San Juan. In truth, the property grows just a fraction of the ingredients that Raúl Correa, Xavier Pacheco and René Marichal transform, most often over fire, into dishes that are rustic and sophisticated in almost equal measure. But the sense of place is so firm you can almost touch it as you sit on the veranda eating thin, almost delicate bacalaitos on a stick with improbably good garlic ketchup; shrimp over smoky fileu with the requisite crisp bottom crust; marinated rabbit left on the grill until it starts to char and served under crisscrossed leaves of flash-fried culantro. **PETE WELLS**

BONNIE'S NEW YORK CITY

Decades ago, Cantonese cuisine spread far and wide through the United States. At Bonnie's, the chef Calvin Eng makes it all seem new again, no easy trick. He serves a creamy dressing thick with garlic chives — he calls it Chinese ranch — as a dip for salt-and-pepper squid. There is a version of cacio e pepe in which the pungent sheep's milk cheese is replaced by fermented tofu. You could probably write a dissertation about his char sui McBib as a metaphor for the experience of Chinese immigrant families in America. The dining room is packed pretty much from the minute the doors open, which suggests that Brooklyn understands what Mr. Eng is trying to say. **PETE WELLS**

BRENNAN'S NEW ORLEANS

Restaurants that last a long time go through phases, and Brennan's has gone through more than most. In the mid-20th century, it helped put New Orleans on the culinary map. It has been mostly a tourist destination ever since, and not always a recommendable one. That changed when Ralph Brennan, a descendant of the restaurant's founder, bought it. Since reopening in 2014, the sprawling, opulent, coral-pink restaurant in the French Quarter has been on a roll. There is a clean-lined sheen to the chef Ryan Hacker's shrimp remoulade, turtle soup and blackened redfish, interspersed with welcome innovations like octopus étouffée. If the strategy sounds familiar — a historic restaurant with one foot in the past, the other in the present — that's because it is. What sets Brennan's apart? It's fun. **BRETT ANDERSON**

CAFE MUTTON HUDSON, N.Y.

If you've been to Warren Street, the main drag in Hudson, N.Y., then you know just how upscale the small town has become. But Shaina Loew-Bannayan's Cafe Mutton, just steps from that main drag, is refreshingly down home. Orders are taken at a counter and seating is first come first served. If there's anything upscale about this restaurant, it's the careful attention paid to turning otherwise pedestrian items like fried bologna sandwiches, crepes and rice porridge into the very best versions of themselves, and the best version you're likely to try in any small town anywhere. **NIKITA RICHARDSON**

CANJE AUSTIN, TEXAS

The chef Tavel Bristol-Joseph (far right) made a name for himself in Austin with the pastries at Emmer & Rye and Hestia, which he co-owns. Here at Canje — an ode to his Guyanese roots, with a menu that also stretches across the Caribbean — he has switched gears, with brilliant results. The food is a tangy, spicy, bright, coconuty dreamscape. Tilefish soaked in tamarind and rum butter. Prawns brushed with a verdant seasoning and smoked chiles. A tres leches cake drenched in coconut milk. What makes the jerk chicken so supercharged with flavor? Mr. Bristol-Joseph ferments his seasoning. And plan on at least one order of the buttery Guyanese-style roti per person. **PRIVA KRISHNA**

CHICKEN'S KITCHEN GRETNA, LA.

The busiest day at Chicken's Kitchen is the first Tuesday of every month, when customers start lining up as early as 7:45 a.m. (doors open at 10:30) for stewed oxtails. But there are always lines at this takeout-only restaurant, where the menu changes daily. On Wednesdays, crowds form for smothered turkey necks and braised greens, on Thursdays for blackened catfish and crawfish hush puppies. The restaurant is named for its owner, Marlon Chukumerje, a New Orleans native, known as Chicken, who taught himself to cook by watching his grandmother, his mother and the Food Network. And it's well worth a trip to Gretna, just across the Mississippi River from New Orleans. **BRETT ANDERSON**

DARU WASHINGTON

Back in 2017, Dante Dana (top left) and Suresh Sundas envisioned Daru primarily as a cocktail bar with some stellar bites. What finally materialized last August at the easternmost end of the city's H Street corridor was a truly imaginative Indian restaurant, with dishes like a supple hunk of burrata submerged in a pool of fragrant black dal, and a sprightly mollee appetizer studded with scallops. Vestiges of the cocktail bar that never was remain in boozy concoctions featuring green cardamom, coriander and masala chai, as well as in the name: Daru is the Hindi word for country liquor, or hooch. **TANYA SICHYNSKY**

DEAR ANNIE CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Vibes have officially come to the Boston 'burbs. On Massachusetts Avenue, one of the busiest streets in Cambridge, Dear Annie is the perfect advertisement for itself. There is an effervescence to the room — playful neon signage, come-hither shelves of natural wines, brightly hued tableware — that spills out to the streetside patio dining area. The food is equally charming. Mussels pickled in-house are the best dinner-party version of tinned fish. The grilled cheese with poblano and corn jam is a perfect high-summer bite, and the compulsively dipable seafood fumet may be the best thing to happen to the bread course since butter. **BRIAN GALLAGHER**

DEAR MARGARET CHICAGO

Ryan Brosseau and Lacey Irby know that French Canadian cuisine is misunderstood. That's why a message at the top of their restaurant's web page warns, "No, we don't serve poutine!" What they do serve is smooth duck liver pâté crowned by pink lemon marmalade and buckwheat granola; split pea panisse riding stewed mustard greens with housemade paner; and beef-tallow-fried smelts from Mr. Brosseau's native Ontario. Mr. Brosseau, the chef, and Ms. Irby are first-time restaurateurs. Thanks to the grace of his cooking and service, Dear Margaret feels like an old soul. **BRETT ANDERSON**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SCOTT SOCHMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; CHRISTINA JOHNSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; ANDREW HOFFER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; LAUREN BIRN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; SCOTT FALK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; CHRIS GARDNER



DARU



AUDREY



APTEKA



ANAK THAI



BRENNAYS



CANIE



DEAR ANNIE

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