

# eat like a **CHEF**



No one knows the culinary side of a city better than its best chef. So in search of the finest fare in six fabulous food towns, that's exactly who we turned to. Hungry? Read on.

BY ALISON MILLER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
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*Tanya Holland at Cosecha in Oakland. Left: Sean Brock at Rutledge Cab Co. in Charleston.*

## CHARLESTON

Sean Brock's top spots pair outstanding food with inventive cocktails.

"A lot of people here have become inspired by the Low Country's culinary history. There are local ingredients available now that just didn't exist five years ago. At the same time, we've got these young, passionate bartenders who balance flavors in the same way chefs do."

### Fig

"You're never going to have a meal here that doesn't flat-out blow your mind. There's this cobbled egg dish that changes a lot—sometimes it's with steamed crab, other times it's cauliflower or mushrooms. They nail it every time. The cocktail of the day is always insanely delicious, and they have a build-your-own Manhattan menu and nine different Negronis, too." 232 MEETING ST.; EATATFIG.COM

### Rutledge Cab Co.

"The food is the kind of stuff you eat with your hands. They do awesome smoked chicken wings, and there's a Southern charcuterie

plate. Rather than fancy salamis, it's fried bologna, country ham, cheddar, pickled vegetables, and a stack of saltines. They have a diner-style milkshake machine, and for dessert I get the Nutella and banana milkshake with Buffalo Trace bourbon on top." 1300 RUTLEDGE AVE.; RUTLEDGECABCO.COM

### The Ordinary

"The menu is a celebration of seafood. My favorite thing to do is order the lobster roll, which is the best I've ever eaten, and an ounce of caviar, which

I put on top. It's a \$75 sandwich, but it's just so good—one of the most luxurious things you can put in your mouth. The cocktails are based around rum. I like the Zissou, with elderflower liqueur, because I grew up picking elderberries as a kid—and also because it's named after Bill Murray's character in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, my all-time favorite movie." 544 KING ST.; EATTHEORDINARY.COM

### The Gin Joint

"The food menu is small; they focus on doing a few things *really well*. You can get these soft pretzels with sriracha nacho cheese sauce, and they do a grilled cheese that's completely encrusted in crispy cheddar. The cocktail menu has a word bank of 16 adjectives—things like herbal, floral, smoky, and vegetal. You pick two, and they make you a drink. It's

always amazing. They also serve these insanely complex cocktails that are based on medicinal elixirs from the 18th and 19th centuries." 182 E. BAY ST.; THEGINJOINT.COM

### Two Boroughs Larder

"It's the only place in town where you can get ramen with homemade noodles and broth. But my favorite dish is the tuna conserva. Chef Josh Keeler preserves the fish in oil, then serves it over pan-fried shishito peppers. It's so simple, but it's one of the most delicious things I've ever had. When I'm there for lunch, I like to make mimosas with equal parts champagne and Orangina soda." 186 COMING ST.; TWOBOROUGHSLARDER.COM



### brew clues

Cocktails aren't the only thing worth drinking in Charleston—check out these local breweries. **Holy City** Three of its beers are available year-round; 44 more, including an oyster-season brew, come out seasonally. **Palmetto** Get your eat and drink on at this brewpub, or find its beers on tap at watering holes citywide. **Westbrook** The brewers have a penchant for barrel-aged brews and unexpected ingredients. Try the White Thai, with ginger and lemongrass.

Sean Brock is the executive chef of Husk and McCrady's. He is a six-time James Beard Award nominee and was the winner of the "Next Great Chef" episode of *Food Network Challenge*.

## soul food sampler

### DIG INTO SEAN BROCK'S FAVORITE DOWN-HOME EATS.

**MARTHA LOU'S KITCHEN** "Martha Lou and her daughter have been cooking together for the last 30 years. It's the most amazing food you'll ever eat on a Styro-foam plate." 1068 Morrison Drive

**BOWENS ISLAND** "There's a fire pit with a pile of oysters on top, and this guy shovels them onto your table. You get a towel, an oyster knife, cocktail sauce, and a bucket of beers." 1870 Bowens Island Road; bowensislandrestaurant.com

**BERTHA'S** "At a lot of soul food spots, everything is pounded with sugar, salt, and pork. But here they have a light hand. You can really taste the essence of the vegetable." 2332 Meeting Street Road

Sean Brock and Jeremiah Langhorne, chef de cuisine at McCrady's, tip back cocktails at The Gin Joint, courtesy of Joe Raya, the owner and bartender.



*The Squeaky Bean's take on a French dish called potage crécy.*

## DENVER

Artful edibles entice **Jennifer Jasinski**.

**“Here you don’t have to dress up to have a fine-dining experience. Below are three of my favorite spots for creative, chef-driven food served in an atmosphere that’s not stuffy at all.”**

### 🍌 Fruition

“The chef, Alex Seidel, grew up in Wisconsin. He runs a farm 45 minutes south of the city, where he raises milking sheep and makes his own cheese. The space is small and cozy, with red walls and candles on the tables. I love the pasta carbonara. It’s cavatelli with peas underneath a piece of house-cured pork belly, topped with a poached egg.” **1313 E. SIXTH AVE.; FRUITION RESTAURANT.COM**

### 🍌 The Squeaky Bean

“They have bare wood tables and chandeliers made of old spoons. Their menu changes all the time, but one of the best dishes I’ve ever had there is called Choked Out. It’s sunchoke and artichoke prepared several different ways and beautifully presented. Chef Max MacKissock is brilliant. He also makes these frozen foie gras “Dippin’ Dots” that are equally fun and delicious.” **1500 WYNKOOP ST. #101; THESQUEAKY BEAN.NET**

### 🍌 Table 6

“Chef Scott Parker has been there since 2004, and he just keeps creating delicious, inventive food. He does this really great chicken liver mousse with dates, parsley, and whole-grain mustard, and his tater tots with pastrami belly, cheese curds, and sauerkraut are awesome, too.”

**609 CORONA ST.; TABLE6DENVER.COM**

**Jennifer Jasinski is the owner and executive chef of Rioja, Bistro Vendôme, and Euclid Hall Bar & Kitchen. She won the 2013 James Beard Award for Best Chef: Southwest.**

## OAKLAND

**Tanya Holland** leads you to Oaktown’s authentic global eats.

**“A lot of entrepreneurial-minded people are discovering how open and diverse Oakland really is. They’re cooking the cuisine of their heritage here, and they’re doing it with super fresh, high-quality ingredients.”**

### 🍌 Hawker Fare

“James Syhabout, who was born in Thailand and has an amazing Michelin-starred restaurant in Oakland called Commis, opened this Asian street food café two years ago. I love the *satay* beef short ribs—they’re marinated in coconut milk and spices then covered in peanut sauce, so they’re sweet and savory.” **2300 WEBSTER ST.; HAWKERFARE.COM**

### 🍌 Beauty’s Bagel Shop

“It’s based on the Jewish bagel shops in

Montreal, where the owner, Blake Joffe, has roots. The bagels are cooked in a wood-fired oven, and Blake and his girlfriend, Amy Remsen, mix their own cream cheese spreads. They also do this really great fried-chicken bagel sandwich with beet slaw.” **3838 TELEGRAPH AVE.; BEAUTYSBAGELSHOP.COM**

### 🍌 Juhu Beach Club

“This place just opened in March. The chef, Preeti Mistry, who was

on *Top Chef: Season 6*, is East Indian. She makes this popcorn with ghee, nuts, toasted cumin, and red chili powder that’s just amazing. And she has these sliders called *pavs*. I like the lamb meatball one.” **5179 TELEGRAPH AVE.; JUHUBEACHCLUB.COM**

### 🍌 Cosecha

“It’s a Mexican restaurant in Swan’s Market, a building in Old Oakland that’s kind of like the Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia. **Dominica Rice-Cisneros**, who runs Cosecha, uses lots of

local, seasonal ingredients. During lunch they do blue plate specials. Sometimes the special is fish tacos, which I love because they’re just so fresh. There are a number of Mexican restaurants around, but when you take the time to make

the tortillas yourself, it makes a big difference. They also serve great *frescas*, or fruit drinks.” **907 WASHINGTON ST.; COSECHACAFE.COM**

**Tanya Holland is the chef/owner of Brown Sugar Kitchen and B-Side BBQ. This year she was named California Chef/Restaurateur of the Year by the California Travel Association.**

DENVER PHOTOGRAPH BY MARC PISCOTTY



*Dominica Rice-Cisneros serves Tanya Holland an iced horchata latte at Cosecha.*

## hot & fresh

**WHAT’S A CUP OF JOE WITHOUT A PROPER PASTRY? TRY TWO OF TANYA’S FAVORITES IN TEMESCAL ALLEY.**

### DOUGHNUT DOLLY

“The owner makes each one of her filled doughnuts to order. The fillings range from raspberry jam to malted coffee and Mexican chocolate. I like the Naughty Cream, though. It’s kind of like vanilla custard.” **482 B 49th St.; doughnutdolly.com**

### THE CRO CAFE

“I’ve had a hard time finding a decaf Americano that’s just right, but I can get it here. The baristas are extremely knowledgeable. They use just the right amount of water and know how to get a pull with a thick *crema*. They source their beans from Sightglass Coffee in San Francisco and use only organic dairy products. They also offer drip-to-order coffee with clear glass funnels and carafes.” **470 49th St. Unit 6; thecrocafe.com**

# AUSTIN

Paul Qui takes you on a taco tour of his town.

“The beauty of a taco is that it can be anything. And in Austin, the taco scene is booming. You can get everything from Mexican-style street tacos to Korean tacos, breakfast tacos to tacos stuffed with gourmet fillings.”

## Tacodeli

“This place is only open until 3 p.m. For lunch, I get the Akaushi *picadillo* taco. Akaushi is a type of Wagyu beef. Here, it’s ground and seasoned with roasted garlic, tomatoes, and caramelized onions. Or I get the *puerco verde*, which is slow-roasted pork with tomatillo salsa and queso fresco. For breakfast, it’s the Jess Special: *migas*,

Monterey Jack, and avocado.” **THREE LOCATIONS; TACODELI.COM**

## Maudie’s

“Maudie’s is a real Austin staple, and it’s where I get my other favorite breakfast taco, which is a little more Tex-Mex than what I get at Tacodeli. It’s called Pete’s Tantalizing Taco, and it’s got sausage, eggs, potatoes, cheese, serrano peppers, and onions. It’s a \$2.50 taco, but if you eat two you’re way full. I generally prefer

real Mexican tacos over the Tex-Mex kind, but I absolutely love these for breakfast.” **SIX LOCATIONS; MAUDIES.COM**

## Piedras Negras

“For me, the meat-to-veggie ratio is hugely important in a taco. Here it’s really balanced. They do a great *barbacoa* taco. It’s a decent amount of meat, and it’s covered in onions and cilantro. They’re open late: I’ve been there at 1 or 2 in the morning. I actually don’t even know what time they close.” **FOOD TRUCK; NORTH PLEASANT VALLEY ROAD AND EAST CESAR CHAVEZ STREET**

## Chi’Lantro

“They do Korean fusion really well. They have a *bulgogi* taco



tx lexicon

¿No habla español? Here’s a guide to common taco fillings.

- Barbacoa** Slow-roasted beef. **Al Pastor** Rotisserie-cooked pork.
- Picadillo** Ground beef cooked with onions, peppers, and tomatoes.
- Carnitas** Braised pork.
- Lengua** Beef tongue. Try it!
- Bistec** Steak.
- Chorizo** Spicy pork sausage.
- Suadero** Thin cut of brisket.
- Migas** Crisp tortillas in scrambled eggs.

that’s topped with Korean salad, cilantro, onions, and salsa. The meat—grilled beef that’s been marinated in a slightly sweet, garlicky soy sauce—is a really good balance of sweet and savory.” **FOUR FOOD TRUCKS; CHILANTROBBQ.COM FOR LOCATIONS**

## La Condesa

“This is my favorite spot for fancier tacos. They’re definitely Mexican-style street tacos, but the ingredients are more upscale. The *carne torcida* is awesome: smoked brisket pastrami, mustard sauce, a little bit of celery root, and mustard *crema* on a rye tortilla. It’s a beautifully designed space in the middle of downtown—high ceilings; great, festive atmosphere. And you can get margaritas there. It’s a good spot to grab dinner before seeing a show because it’s right next to ACL Live.” **400A W. SECOND ST.; LACONDESA.COM**

Paul Qui is the chef/owner of Qui and East Side King. He won the 2012 James Beard Award for Best Chef: Southwest and was the winner of *Top Chef: Season 9*.

## after hours

**THIS CHEF’S FAVORITE WATERING HOLES ARE ON AUSTIN’S EAST SIDE.**

**VOLSTEAD LOUNGE** “This is a dive bar where you can actually get really good cocktails. And it’s right next to the Hotel Vegas, a music venue.” 1500 E. Sixth St.; [hotelvegasaustin.com](http://hotelvegasaustin.com)

**THE LIBERTY** “There’s a patio in an alley, but it’s actually a really nice, open space. Liberty is kind of my home base. It’s where one of my East Side King food trucks is parked.” 1618 ½ E. Sixth St.; [thelibertyaustin.com](http://thelibertyaustin.com)

**THE WHITE HORSE** “It has more of a live music thing going on; it’s a little more honky-tonk. The beer is cheap, and it has a great patio.” 500 Comal St.; [thewhitehorseaustin.com](http://thewhitehorseaustin.com)



Looking for a side dish for your Chi’Lantro taco? Paul Qui recommends kimchi fries.



A Chaps Pit Beef sandwich isn't complete without Tiger Sauce, a housemade mix of mayo and horseradish.

## BALTIMORE

Barbecue in B'more? You better believe it, says **Duff Goldman**.

**"You never hear people talk about Baltimore barbecue, but it's a very distinct thing. We have what's called pit beef. It's shredded or sliced super thin and served on a roll. It tends to be sweeter—more like Kansas City 'cue than Carolina."**

### Chaps Pit Beef

"I put a big pile of horseradish on my sandwich, to the point where it's almost painful. It's way out in

East Baltimore, but it's worth the trip. Personally, I think it's the best pit beef in Baltimore." **5801 PULASKI HIGHWAY; CHAPSPITBEEF.COM**

### Boog's Barbeque

"It's owned by Boog Powell, the former Orioles first baseman, and it's on Eutaw Street, right behind

center field at Camden Yards. During O's games you can actually find Boog working and signing autographs. Bring cash, a Sharpie, and a clean baseball." **ORIOLE PARK AT CAMDEN YARDS; ORIOLES.COM**

### Big Bad Wolf's House of Barbeque

"This one's a favorite among the staff at Charm City Cakes, and it's another great option for outstanding Baltimore barbecue.

But my favorite thing on the menu is actually the Eastern Shore Chicken. It's baked, then finished on the grill, and it's covered with a healthy amount of Old Bay. It's also the only place I know of where you can get a big, fat slice of watermelon for a buck." **5713 HARFORD ROAD; BIGBADWOLFSBBQ.COM**

### Mission BBQ

"Before they opened, these guys drove around the country tasting barbecue. So in addition to serving

Baltimore pit beef, they have Texas, Carolina, St. Louis, Kansas City, and even California-style barbecue. They've turned two huge Army transport trucks into a mobile smokers that they use for special events. You know you're in for a treat when one of those big beasts rolls up." **7748 RITCHIE HIGHWAY, GLEN BURNIE; MISSION-BBQ.COM**

**Duff Goldman is the chef/owner of Charm City Cakes and Charm City Cakes West. He is a two-time James Beard Award nominee and the former host of Ace of Cakes.**

## good catch

**SATISFY YOUR APPETITE FOR SEAFOOD WITH DUFF'S STANDBYS.**

### GERTRUDE'S

"Every restaurant in Baltimore has rockfish imperial—crab meat mixed with mayo, parsley, lemon, and Old Bay, stuffed into a piece of striped bass. But John Shields does it best." *In the Baltimore Museum of Art; johnshields.com*

### FAIDLEY'S

"It's one of the places people talk about the most, but it really is the best crab cake in town." *203 N. Paca St.; faidleyscrabcakes.com*

### JOHN STEVEN LTD

"You can get soft-shell crab on a plate rather than in a sandwich. There's not a lot of batter; they just flour and pan-fry it, so you know exactly what you're eating." *1800 Thames St.; johnstevensavern.com*



Salty Tart's Meyer lemon variety.

## MINNEAPOLIS

For **Sameh Wadi**, these bakeries rise to the top.

**"A lot of people think Minneapolis is a small town that's not that exciting in terms of food. But the dining scene is really evolving, and bakeries are one of the areas in which the city shines."**

### Rustica Bakery

"They do awesome traditional French pastries. Every time I'm there I get *kouign amann*, also known as butter cake. It's what all puff pastry wants to be when it grows up. The shop is right by Lake Calhoun, so it's a great place to pick up a loaf of bread for a picnic." **3220 W. LAKE ST.; RUSTICABAKERY.COM**

### Patisserie 46

"They have the best croissants in town. You can go there any time of the day and the pastry case looks immaculate, which is difficult to do when you have so many different things. It's a French bakery, and the owner, John Kraus, does a marvelous job with everything from the simple things, like that perfect croissant, to composed desserts." **4552 GRAND AVE. S.; PATISSERIE46.COM**

### Salty Tart

"I'm a huge fan of the cherry-chocolate chip cookies and the seasonal fruit tarts. The chef, Michelle Gayer, used to be the pastry chef at Charlie Trotter's in Chicago, and she co-wrote a dessert cookbook with him that won a James Beard Award. What you get at Salty Tart is the opposite of what you get at Patisserie 46. She's more rustic. Anything that involves a lot of love and butter, she's good with." **920 E. LAKE ST.; SALTYTART.COM**

**Sameh Wadi is the chef/owner of Saffron Restaurant & Lounge and World Street Kitchen. He is a six-time James Beard Award nominee and appeared on Iron Chef America: Season 8.**