

TRAVEL+LEISURE  
FOOD+WINE  
WORLD'S BEST  
**RESTAURANTS**  
2019

WORLD'S

Best

RESTAURANTS

BY BESHÀ RODELL

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*A tasting menu at Hiša Franko, in Kobariđ, Slovenia.*

CEDRIC ANGELES



▶  
Burnt-brown-sugar  
ice cream with  
maté and tangerine  
gelée at Maní, in  
São Paulo, Brazil.

# The. Whole. World.

I COULD BARELY believe my ears when the call came. The editors of *Travel + Leisure* and *Food & Wine* wanted one critic to travel the globe to come up with a list of the best restaurants in the world. They wanted that person to be me.

Of course I said yes—who wouldn't say yes? But not for the reasons you might think. There are, of course, already lists. Some are chosen by groups of experts, others by voters around the world, still others by teams of inspectors. Each method has its pros and cons.

What this list celebrates is cuisine and culture, not rankings and numbers. To have the globe reduced to one expensive multicourse menu after another is to miss out on a true taste of the world. What I want when I travel are meals that teach me something about a region's people and their lives. That's what this list is about.

For one person alone to compile such a list would be impossible. So, the editors asked a panel of food pros to nominate restaurants based on that intersection of food, travel, and culture. From their massive list, we narrowed the field and built an itinerary. Then I got on a plane. And then another. Over the course of four months, I visited 81 restaurants in 24 countries on six continents. I flew 279 hours. I still have jet lag. From those meals, I chose the 30 restaurants that were the most thrilling and the most delicious, that most immersed me in the culture of the place.

The morning after arriving in South America, woozy from altitude sickness, I found myself in a car headed for the Andean countryside. I barely remember the drive, despite the breathtaking scenery. The lack of sleep and oxygen made me a dull facsimile of myself. Three hours later, everything changed. At Mil, an incredible restaurant high in the Andes, I was snapped out of my stupor and into a sharp and pleasurable focus. On the drive back to Cuzco, my heart swelled with marvel—at the improbability of being there, the full realization of the vastness of the world, and the immense privilege I had to experience it. I had similar moments at a food truck in Tijuana and at the worn counter of a seafood joint in San Francisco. My weariness fell away, and I was renewed by the food and spirit of these places.

This is what a great restaurant can do for a traveler—clarify and synthesize the place you're in, wake you up to its wonder. That's what I was looking for on this journey: restaurants that embodied the awe of the travel experience. We hope that the ones on this list bring you the same joy.



## The Culinary Panel

**ALEX ATALA**  
chef, São Paulo, Brazil

**NYESHA J. ARRINGTON**  
chef, Los Angeles

**GABRIELA CÁMARA**  
chef, Mexico City

**MAY CHOW**  
chef, Hong Kong

**CHAD COLBY**  
chef, Los Angeles

**NINA COMPTON**  
chef, New Orleans

**BILL ESPARZA**  
writer, Los Angeles

**ROMY GILL**  
chef, Thornbury, England

**SKYE GYNGELL**  
chef, London

**SOLEIL HO**  
writer, San Francisco

**JOHN KESSLER**  
writer, Chicago

**DIEUVEIL MALONGA**  
chef, Kigali, Rwanda

**ANGIE MAR**  
chef, New York City

**LUVO NTEZO**  
sommelier, Cape Town

**ENRIQUE OLVERA**  
chef, Mexico City

**ANNE-SOPHIE PIC**  
chef, Valence, France

**ROSE PREVITE**  
restaurateur,  
Washington, D.C.

**DAVID PRIOR**  
writer, New York City

**RUTH REICHL**  
writer, New York

**MARCUS SAMUELSSON**  
chef, New York City

**GAIL SIMMONS**  
Top Chef judge,  
New York City

**PIERRE THIAM**  
chef, Lagos, Nigeria

**JENNIFER JIYUN YOO**  
importer, New York City

This around-the-world trip was organized by **Embark Beyond Travel** ([embarkbeyond.com](http://embarkbeyond.com)), founded by T+L A-List travel advisor **Jack Ezon** ([jack@embarkbeyond.com](mailto:jack@embarkbeyond.com); 212-651-3750).

ÉRIYER HUJANO

FROM LEFT: INGRED HOFSTRA/COURTESY OF BLUE HILL AT STONE BARN; TOMMI ANTONEN/COURTESY OF BLUE HILL AT STONE BARN

## Blue Hill at Stone Barns

POCANTICO HILLS,  
NEW YORK

AT ONE POINT during your meal at Blue Hill at Stone Barns, parsnips might arrive at the table, strung up on something that looks like a medieval torture device. As they swing, a server will explain that parsnips are usually picked young, but these have been left in the ground for a full 18 months to freeze and thaw, then dipped in beef tallow and dry aged before being pressed with similarly treated carrots and served as parsnip and carrot "steak." Who would think of such a thing? Who would take the year and a half to work this experiment, design a process for aging something that usually gets thrown

into a stew? Dan Barber, that's who. There are many moments like this during a meal at his restaurant, set in an old dairy barn on 80 acres of former Rockefeller land in Pocantico Hills, 30 miles from New York City. For one course, your server will invite you to follow him or her to an alcove filled with sacks of flour. You are about to get a lesson—on grain, on the growing and milling of wheat, on the density and flavor of various flours. You are invited to sample the bread, along with "single-udder butter," the udder belonging to a cow named Alice. The restaurant shares its grounds with a farm and school, but dining here gives you the sense that Blue Hill at Stone Barns' most important function is as a laboratory. Barber is an alchemist, transforming vegetables and meats and grains into new forms of being. And you are his test subject, sampling dishes such as beet tartare and "radicchio that wanted to be an artichoke." If all of this sounds rather cerebral,

▼  
From left: Blue Hill at Stone Barns sits within a converted dairy barn; the restaurant's aged root vegetables in tallow.

well, it is. But the folks at Blue Hill at Stone Barns never forget that you are here for pleasure, and the theater of the swinging parsnips is part of the grand show. This may be an ever-evolving experiment, but it is also—still, 15 years on—one of the most delightful dining experiences around. [bluehillfarm.com](http://bluehillfarm.com); *tasting menu* \$278.





WB R  
NORTH  
AMERICA

▼  
Chef Mashama  
Bailey at the Grey, in  
Savannah, Georgia.



## The Grey

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

IS THERE another restaurant as handsome as the Grey? Savannah's 1938 Greyhound station is a dream of Art Deco design, all polished metal and buttery leather. History provides the inspiration, but it also gives deeper context to the restaurant, what is served there, and who is doing the cooking. When the bus station opened, the space was segregated. In the Grey, we see that space reclaimed.

What has elevated the restaurant to another level is its chef, Mashama Bailey, who tells stories with her cooking, choosing ingredients not just

for their deliciousness but also for their cultural importance. African-American foodways are celebrated in every dish: *ragù* is made with field peas and corn; duck comes with sugarcane *gastrique*, highlighting the ties between the sugar industry and slavery.

This amalgamation of factors earns the Grey a spot on this list—the ability to revitalize these foodways, put them into a modern, thoughtful context, and deliver them in a space that is not only beautiful but also full of historical resonance. If there's one restaurant that will help you understand the South as it was, as it is today, and what it is becoming, the Grey is that place. [thegreyrestaurant.com](http://thegreyrestaurant.com); *entrées* \$10–\$32.

## N/NAKA

LOS ANGELES

Meals at Niki Nakayama's small, elegant restaurant unfold like poetry, flavors and dishes acting as phrases and stanzas in one long, lyrical, utterly profound experience. Nakayama presents her intensely personal version of *kaiseki*, one that is almost as Californian as it is Japanese.

Over 12 courses, diners move through a series of dishes that showcase southern Californian ingredients in elaborate combinations. Raw wild sea bream comes curled on the plate, intertwined with celtuce, Jade Beauty green tomato, Buddha's-hand citron, and hibiscus and begonia flowers, all seasoned lightly with *ume ponzu*. *Sashimi* is followed by a grilled dish of Spanish mackerel with kelp and black-garlic oil, then sweet shrimp with Santa Barbara *uni*.

*N/naka* is a restaurant that would not exist anywhere else: a female chef born in California but trained in Japan, working in a format traditionally reserved for men, growing her own produce and paying homage to the edible bounty of this part of the world. [n-naka.com](http://n-naka.com); *kaiseki* from \$200.

▼  
*N/naka's "modern zukuri," with sardine, pickled red shiso, a bell-pepper meringue, and tomatillo aioli.*



FROM TOP: DYLAN WILSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; MARLAH TAUGER



WB R  
NORTH  
AMERICA

Chef Jorge León León  
and his mother, Elvia  
León Hernández, at their  
restaurant, Alfonsina.



## Alfonsina

SAN JUAN BAUTISTA LA RAYA, MEXICO

RUN BY CHEF Jorge León León and his mother, Elvia León Hernández, Alfonsina tastes like both the past and the future of Oaxacan cuisine. The setting is as personal as dining can be: the bottom floor of the León family home, about 20 minutes outside Oaxaca City. On the day I visited, men from the neighborhood were finishing up lunch, taking a stack of Elvia's warm, freshly made tortillas with them when they left. My five-course lunch began

with a tostada topped with raw slices of corbina, sautéed mushrooms, and crispy sticks of leek. Next came a white mole—a pre-Hispanic recipe made from cauliflower and corn—with sautéed shrimp and a pile of delicate squash blossoms. *Huauzontle*, a wild green with an earthy flavor, is dipped in a light tempura batter and fried, then laid over fresh cheese and *salsa macha*, the greenest sauce I've ever seen or tasted. Elvia's gorgeous, supple tortillas

are served with a pool of brick-red mole and topped with cured nopales. There is so much depth to this food, in the corn-rich tortillas, in the dusky mole, in the righteous and hallowed combination of the two. Alfonsina exemplifies what makes Mexico perhaps the most exciting place in the world to eat in 2019. Tradition is honored; newness is allowed to flourish. The wisdom of the mother is treated with the same respect as the ambition of the son. Together, they create something unique to this place and this time—something extraordinary. *183 Calle García Vigil, 52-1-55-2659-3941; prix fixe \$32.*



## Mariscos Ruben

TIJUANA, MEXICO

“IN A WEEK of fantastic eating, this is the place I remember most,” panelist Ruth Reichl said of this food truck, which chef Mirtha Rodríguez has run for the past 30 years. The specialty is Sonoran-style seafood: marlin tacos doused in creamy sauce, grilled clams with *queso blanco*. Various *aguachiles* are on offer; if crab claws are available, don’t miss them. Customers crowd in to eat side by side—locals on lunch breaks, tour groups, and travelers from all over. It’s impressive that a humble food truck could be so significant to so many, but when you cook with this much heart and skill, you’re bound to make an impression. 740 Avda. Andrés Quintana Roo, no phone; entrées \$2–\$16.



▲ Smoked-marlin tacos with guava salsa at Mariscos Ruben, a food truck in downtown Tijuana.



▲ The lively counter of Swan Oyster Depot, a 107-year-old San Francisco institution.

## SWAN OYSTER DEPOT

SAN FRANCISCO

Dining at this Nob Hill seafood counter is like being at a boisterous family meal—if the family is the whole of San Francisco, along with some enthusiastic out-of-towners. The camaraderie starts outside, where you strike up a conversation with your fellow line-standers. Once inside, your stool is close enough to your neighbors that friendliness is the only option. My advice is to come with an appetite and go for broke: a dozen oysters, followed by the not-so-secret (but not on

the menu) plate of “Sicilian sashimi”—the freshest fish of the day, doused in olive oil and pepper. Then turn to the classic crab salad: a generous pile of sweet crabmeat over shredded lettuce.

The food is practically perfect, thanks to its simplicity. The family behind it all, the Sanciminos, serve tasty things from the ocean, at peak freshness, with little adornment. But the real product they traffic in is joy—the joy of seafood, yes, but also the joy of friendship and family, of feeling like part of a community, of experiencing the humanity of a city and its people. What could be more delicious? [swanoysterdepot.us](http://swanoysterdepot.us); entrées \$12–\$30.



W B R  
NORTH  
AMERICA



✱ **WHERE TO STAY** When in Puerto Rico, make a pilgrimage to the **Caribe Hilton**, the (alleged) birthplace of the piña colada. This beachside Midcentury Modern masterpiece is located on a lush peninsula just outside Old San Juan. After sustaining damage during Hurricane Maria, it underwent a \$150 million renovation. It recently reopened with updated guest rooms and an updated spa. [caribehilton.com](http://caribehilton.com); doubles from \$330.

▲  
*Pork belly with heirloom-tomato salad at Jose Enrique.*

## ✱ JOSE ENRIQUE

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

When Jose Enrique opened his restaurant in San Juan in 2007, it quickly gained a following for its fresh takes on Puerto Rican cooking. In 2017, Hurricane Maria took the roof off and blew out the windows, but that didn't stop Enrique from immediately setting up to cook for the community. The chef eventually rebuilt and reopened, but this July, the restaurant relocated to a sleek, sprawling space by the beach. What hasn't changed is Enrique's dedication to making food that's as local as possible, from the ingredients to the dishes themselves, which showcase the exuberant cuisine of the island.

A lovely seafood cocktail is made with fat hunks of lobster and served with tiny hot arepas that provide a crispy, oily counterpart to the cool seafood. *Morcilla* (blood sausage) is perfectly spiced, bold yet comforting and eminently snackable. The mofongo has a beautifully crunchy edge, giving way to a center of soft, savory plantains with just enough garlic to make the dish sing. Ask the bartender for a drink recommendation, and she'll whip up something with rum and passion fruit and a hint of tamarind—exactly what you want when sitting a stone's throw from the sea.

The wonder of this restaurant is Enrique's dedication to the traditions of this island, its people, and its food. He has an immense capacity for taking the heartiest dishes and giving them elegance and nuance without robbing them of any of their brawn or soul. His is a remarkable talent, and that has led to a remarkable restaurant. [joseenriquepr.com](http://joseenriquepr.com); entrées \$15–\$38.



## \* MIL

MORAY, PERU

There's one obvious reason people fly to Cuzco and venture through the Sacred Valley of the Andes: Machu Picchu. Now there's another reason to make that trek. Perched on the edge of Moray, another Incan site, more than 11,800 feet above sea level, Mil is a true destination restaurant. It is that Incan legacy—plus the whole of the Andean countryside—that inspires chef Virgilio Martínez's menu and ethos. He is no stranger to greatness. His restaurant Central, in Lima, has already won him numerous accolades. But Mil is an achievement on another level altogether.

Mil is sparsely decorated, allowing the dramatic mountain light streaming in to provide the room's tranquil mood. The meal is a series of eight "moments" that reveal the bounty of Peru's ecosystems. The "plateau" course

arrives in a flurry of small dishes: lettuces sprinkled with elderberry flowers; dusty-pink lamb tartare sweetened with cabuya nectar; a cream made from custard apples. "Diversity of corn" demonstrates the

▲ From top: Mil, in Peru's Sacred Valley; the restaurant's "diversity of corn" dish.



\* **WHERE TO STAY** Halfway between Mil and Cuzco, **Explora Valle Sagrado** is the newest luxury lodge in this region and the ideal home base for a Sacred Valley itinerary. A sleek building houses 50 guest rooms, and a nearby 17th-century hacienda serves as the spa. Explora also offers excursions like a hike from Machu Picchu to Inti Punku, and its restaurant recently teamed up with Martínez himself for a special Andean menu. [explora.com](http://explora.com); doubles from \$1,110 per person, all-inclusive.

wildly different flavors inherent in each variety of corn; "central Andes" does the same for potatoes. The experience finishes with a dish that showcases the chocolate made on site—undoubtedly the best I have tasted.

Food is presented beautifully on simple tableware. There are no unnecessary theatrics. What you are left with upon departing is a deep sense of calm—along with a profound appreciation for Peruvian history, cuisine, and culture. [milcentro.pe](http://milcentro.pe); tasting menu \$160.

FROM TOP: GUSTAVO VIVANCO LEÓN; BEN SKLAR

## La Mar

LIMA, PERU

THIS IS the type of place you should visit with friends, order a wildly inappropriate amount of food, and stay at for hours. Even in a city full of excellent food, Gaston Acurio's original *cevichería*, run by chef Andrés Rodríguez, is something special. La Mar is dedicated to raw seafood: piles of ceviche, plates of *tiraditos*, appetizers of fresh fish, mangrove cockles, and lobes of sea urchin. Months later, I still dream about the deep-pink sea trout with avocado and *leche de tigre*, a spicy, citrusy marinade. Grilled and fried whole fish are available, and you can even order a whole octopus if you're really there to party. [lamarcevicheria.com](http://lamarcevicheria.com); entrées \$12–\$30.

▼ Scallops at Peruvian *cevichería* La Mar, in Lima.



FROM TOP: ÉRIVER HJANG; MARCUS NILSSON



W B R

SOUTH AMERICA



▲ Chef Helena Rizzo at Mani, in São Paulo.

## MANÍ

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

Brazil is everything you imagine it to be: vibrant, leafy, sensual. No establishment captures that colorful spirit better than Mani, Helena Rizzo's fantastic restaurant in São Paulo's artsy Jardim Paulistano neighborhood. The walls are splashed with art, and the filtered light casts exactly the right glow on the stylish patrons. This is a deeply fun place to eat.

Rizzo worked in some of Europe's most celebrated kitchens before returning to her home country to open Mani in 2006. Her food continues the celebration of all things vivid. You might start with a "ceviche" of local cashew fruit and *cachaça*, topped with a granita of the non-alcoholic cashew beverage *cajuína*. Quenching and bright, the dish sets the stage for the riot of flavor to come. Plump crayfish top a chilled purple soup made from *jaboticaba*—a fruit that

tastes like a cross between a grape and a plum—punctuated by pickled cauliflower and *amburana* nuts. House-made hot sauce, which accompanies the catch of the day, is thrilling in its laser-like piquancy.

São Paulo's food scene is bursting with talent. But Mani is so unapologetically exuberant, so focused on pure delicious pleasure, I would readily fly halfway around the world to revisit it. [manimanioca.com.br](http://manimanioca.com.br); entrées \$14–\$29, tasting menus from \$125.

PLAN YOUR TRIP TO...

## Avenida Paulista, São Paulo

ON THE MAIN thoroughfare of Brazil's financial hub, world-class museums have sprung up among the corporate headquarters. At **IMS Paulista** ([ims.com.br](http://ims.com.br)), the newest branch of the Instituto Moreira Salles, recent exhibitions have included a retrospective

on the photography of Marc Ferrez. Nearby is Kengo Kuma's **Japan House** ([japanhouse.jp](http://japanhouse.jp)), which has an intricate façade made from 100-year-old hinoki trees and a lineup of Japanese art exhibits and cultural performances. And last year saw the opening of **SESC Avenida Paulista** ([sescsp.org.br](http://sescsp.org.br)). An initiative by Brazil's Social Service of Commerce that occupies some 17 floors, the multiuse space hosts art exhibitions, concerts, plays, and more.



W B R

EUROPE

► *Pintxos and produce on display at the San Sebastián bar Ganbara.*

## GANBARA

SAN SEBASTIÁN, SPAIN

The opportunities for eating well in San Sebastián are countless, but if you're hoping to experience its unique dining culture, you'd best drink wine and eat *pintxos*. A cab driver told me that the best way to judge a place was by the size of the crowd spilling out onto the street. And the largest, happiest crowd is at Ganbara. Chef Amaia Ortuzar's house specialty is wild mushrooms, sautéed with garlic and served with an egg yolk. The mushrooms are meaty and perfectly salted, the

egg yolk rich and silken—this was truly one of the most perfect dishes I ate during my travels. One thing that elevates the restaurant is the lovely basement dining room, where you can have a full sit-down meal of Basque specialties like charcoal-grilled fish on skewers and hake cheek served in a melon green sauce.

Ganbara encapsulates everything good about eating in this part of the world: the produce and seafood, the conviviality of a crowded *pintxos* bar, and the joyous ease of the restaurant-as-party—one that happens every day, because life and food are always worth celebrating. [ganbarajatetxea.com](http://ganbarajatetxea.com); *entrées* \$16–\$33.



## Hiša Franko

KOBARID, SLOVENIA

AS SOON as I stepped through the door, I understood that this meal would do justice to its breathtaking setting. Chef Ana Roš and her husband, Valter Kramar, tell a story with the bounty of the Soča Valley, and they've single-handedly put Slovenia on the global culinary map. A convivial staff welcomes you to the 19th-century building, offering a glass of Slovenian wine. The chef stops by with the relaxed humor of an old friend. A series of 11 courses lands on your table: chickweed and green peas, a taco made from kale with hazelnut miso, a savory doughnut filled with intensely delicious lamb brains. Butter for your spelt-and-whey sourdough arrives covered in bee pollen, which tastes of the essence of springtime. [hisafranko.com](http://hisafranko.com); *tasting menu* \$169.

▼ *Chef Ana Roš on the grounds of Hiša Franko.*



### PLAN YOUR TRIP TO...

## Slovenia's Soča Valley

DINNER AT Hiša Franko is well worth the trek—but how do you get there? And what else is there to do? The rugged region around Kobarid, in the valley of the Soča River, is a great place to work off your meal. Just a few miles from the Italian border, Kobarid is reachable from both Ljubljana and Venice in about two hours by car. The restaurant can arrange a taxi, but renting a car will be cheaper and

give you a chance to explore. Stay at the inn attached to **Hiša Franko** ([hisafranko.com](http://hisafranko.com); *doubles from* \$135), or make your base one of the area's many lodges, like the design-forward **Nebesa Chalets** ([nebesa.si](http://nebesa.si); *villas from* \$230). Meander through the stunning Alpine terrain, raft on the blue-green river, take a cable car up into the Julian Alps, or tackle the 15-mile-long **Soča Trail** ([soca-valley.com](http://soca-valley.com)). Visiting in winter? **Kanin-Sella Nevea Ski Resort** ([kanin.si](http://kanin.si)) is just a short drive from Ljubljana.





## ST. JOHN LONDON

Perfect. It's the only word for Fergus Henderson and Trevor Gulliver's ode to all things British and meaty—25 years on, it's as thrilling as ever. There are famously no flowers on the tables, no piped-in music. In other words, nothing to distract you from the task at hand: eating, and eating well.

Order the marrow: cylinders of bone housing the wobbly essence of meat, served with toast and a pert parsley salad. It is the restaurant's most famous dish because it so encapsulates the intensity of dedication to simplicity, quality, and meat.

I ate there in early spring, and alongside the marrow I enjoyed a plate of asparagus, served with a dish of melted butter and a pile of salt—a pure springtime pleasure. I'm not sure I've ever been so satisfied, on so many levels, as I was after this meal. I was even happier when the bill came. In a world of exceedingly expensive dining, St. John is a relative bargain. It was, and is, simply perfect. [stjohnrestaurant.com](http://stjohnrestaurant.com); entrées \$21–\$32.



◀ The convivial dining room at Antichi Sapori, a farmhouse restaurant in Puglia.

## Antichi Sapori

MONTEGROSSO, ITALY

I TRIED to take a cab to dinner, but there are no cabs in Montegrosso, so my innkeeper drove me herself. “We call it a town,” she said, pulling up to a tiny collection of buildings, “but really, Montegrosso is just one street.” Set among the endless olive groves of Puglia, Antichi Sapori is the passion project of Pietro Zito, who tends to a large garden nearby, much of which is set aside for native greens and herbs. Zito's aim is to keep the historic traditions of the region alive.

Everything about this place is an embodiment of rusticity, from the

tiled dining room to the hearty cooking. Start with baked artichoke hearts or a bowl of fresh fava beans topped with sharp cheese. Then come two servings of pasta: this is where I discovered what chicory should *really* taste like, bitter and bracing; here intermingled with handmade orecchiette. The main course is grilled sausage or meat (sometimes donkey, but I marveled at the pork). Antichi Sapori represents the way Puglians have been dining for hundreds of years, and most of all, it feels outrageously generous, in its cooking and hospitality but also in its spirit. I left full, happy, and sleepy—and one of the waiters was kind enough to drive me home. [pietrozito.it](http://pietrozito.it); prix fixe \$45.



◀ Marrowbones, madeleines, and other assorted dishes at London institution St. John, in Smithfield.

CEDRIC ANGELES



Noma, in Copenhagen. Below: Faeroe Island sea snails with snail roe and kelp butter at Noma.

## Noma

COPENHAGEN

RENÉ REDZEPI'S restaurant has been examined from almost every angle. And yet, going to the new Noma—the restaurant reopened on an urban farm in early 2018, after a yearlong closure—still feels like a wondrous discovery. Arriving for a meal, you begin with a drink in one of many greenhouses set among gardens overlooking the water. In the late spring when I visited, seafood was the restaurant's focus. One fat scallop in its shell, naked aside from its bright orange roe, set the tone for the evening. It tasted of pure fresh ocean sweetness—the soul of the sea. This kitchen can craft magic from lumpfish roe, thickening it with egg yolk and pairing it with grilled wild garlic leaves, convincing you it's the most decadent thing you've ever had. I have eaten meals nearly as



accomplished as what Redzepi delivers, but nowhere have I experienced anything close to the hospitality of Noma. I've never had such meaningful connections with cooks and servers as I did there. So yes, the food is good. Thoughtful, beautiful, delicate, bold. But Noma's greatest achievement may lie in something not edible at all: its deep and palpable humanity. [noma.dk](http://noma.dk); tasting menu \$380.

FROM TOP: ULF SWANE; EVAN SUNG; CEDRIC ANGELES

## SORBILLO NAPLES

With a line that's as legendary as the pizza, it's tempting to skip Sorbillo for another pizzeria in Naples. But arrive just before opening and you'll likely make it in. And what a wonderful feeling, to roll up your sleeves and dive in to these resplendent pies: tart sauce; gooey cheese; and a perfectly blistered crust. What is it that makes Sorbillo the best? It's hard to say—perhaps it's the char created by the wood-fired ovens, or the organic tomatoes in the sauce. There is likely a little magic involved, something unknowable that turns dough plus sauce plus cheese into something greater than the sum of its parts. If you speak no Italian, you'll do fine guessing and pointing—this method garnered me one of the best pizzas of the bunch, an artichoke option with a glorious, pure acidity. The go-to order is the margherita with buffalo mozzarella, which takes the already decadent pie and ramps it up with a deliciously creamy element. Sorbillo also has outposts in New York and Milan, but some things are worth a pilgrimage. And to eat Neapolitan pizza this good in Naples with a glass of fantastic local wine was a religious experience. [sorbillo.it](http://sorbillo.it); pizzas \$4–\$9.

▶ Pizzaioli slinging pies at Sorbillo, in Naples.





W B R

EUROPE +  
THE MIDDLE  
EAST

## \* Saturne

PARIS

PARIS PRESENTS a conundrum. Blow your budget on a tasting menu? Follow the cool kids to the casual wine bars? Try to find the best classic bistro? Saturne strikes a lovely balance, adhering neither to fashion nor tradition but somehow embodying the best of both. This was one of the most ethereal meals I've ever had: a raw oyster under a froth of watercress mousse, asparagus wrapped in garlic leaves, a tiny fava bean tart topped with Tomme de Savoie and edible flowers. Chef Sven Chartier was only 24 when he opened Saturne in 2010. In the months since I ate there, he has announced plans to close in October and focus on a new project. But to omit Saturne from this list would deny some folks two months or so of delicious eating, and I can't wait to see what Chartier will do next. *saturne-paris.fr; tasting menu \$110.*

▼  
*Blue lobster with apricot at Saturne, in Paris.*



## EL SOUSSI BEIRUT, LEBANON

Raji El Kebbe has been cooking breakfast in this L-shaped nook of a kitchen for 43 years. His warmth and energy as he mans the single open flame are part of why El Soussi is legendary in Beirut, but that reputation is also thanks to his cooking. Lebanese breakfast is superior to most other kinds—who wants cornflakes when you can have *fatteh*? At

El Soussi, El Kebbe fills a deep bowl with crisp pita bread, spoons over warm stewed chickpeas, then covers it in a blanket of tart yogurt. The final touch is a crown of sizzling pine nuts, cooked in lamb fat with gobs of garlic. There are also salads, plus a hummus that may be the best you've ever eaten. The eggs with *awarma*, or lamb confit, are not to be missed. El Soussi is not in a fashionable or ritzy part of Beirut, the

▲  
*Raji El Kebbe cooks over a single burner at his Beirut restaurant, El Soussi.*

dining room is as basic as they come, and you'll need to pay in cash. But it is a welcoming place, despite the language barrier. If I could eat breakfast at one restaurant every day for the rest of my life, it would be this one. *fb.com/elsoussiresto; breakfast \$3–\$6.*



\* **WHERE TO STAY** Anything but garden variety, **Les Jardins du Faubourg** is the newest hotel in Paris's Eighth Arrondissement. Inside a classic town house, the 36 rooms offer views of either the city or the property's lush grounds. Chef Bruno Doucet, of Paris favorite La Régalade, helms the kitchen. Place de la Concorde is at the doorstep—and, just beyond that, the Champs-Élysées. *jardinsdufaubourg.com; doubles from \$505.*



WB R  
AFRICA

4Roomed eKasi Culture, in Cape Town's Khayelitsha township, draws inspiration from across Africa.

## \* 4Roomed eKasi Culture

CAPE TOWN

THIS CITY HAS no lack of high-end, European- and Asian-influenced restaurants. Some of them are very good. There are wineries on the nearby Western Cape where you can have lunch overlooking vineyards, eating food that might lead you to believe you're in California or France. But Cape Town is not in America or Europe. It's in Africa. 4Roomed eKasi Culture makes no secret of that fact: what's celebrated here is the food and culture of Africa, and South Africa in particular.

It is located in the Khayelitsha township, about a 30-minute drive from the center of Cape Town. The restaurant's name pays homage to

the four-roomed houses in which chef Abigail Mbalo-Mokoena grew up, where multiple families cohabit and a communal culture of hospitality prevails. In a leafy courtyard, Mbalo-Mokoena and her staff express that culture beautifully. The chef is intent on attracting tourists and locals of all backgrounds to invigorate the economy of the township.

If you're lucky enough to be in South Africa with a large group, you can book a private, multicourse meal that showcases her fine-dining chops. For the regular diner, the more casual eight-course shareable "feast" is fantastic—and at about \$18 per person, an incredible value.

First comes a wave of salads and vegetable dishes, like *pap* (similar to polenta) scented with nutmeg and topped with *bisto*, a rich and sweet tomato relish. Mbalo-Mokoena cooks a refined version of *umngqusho*, a staple South African dish made with samp—large, dehulled kernels of maize—with coconut cream and tarragon.

Next come a deeply flavored vegetable curry, chicken cooked with fennel, and tender sous vide beef topped with arugula and caramelized onions. Dessert often includes a burnt-sugar component—a wink to Mbalo-Mokoena's run as a contestant on *MasterChef South Africa*, where she was eliminated over her burnt sugar. [4roomedekasiculture.com](http://4roomedekasiculture.com); *prix fixe* \$18.

\* **WHERE TO STAY** Design Hotels' eagerly anticipated launch in Cape Town, **Gorgeous George**, was worth the wait. Guest rooms are modern and sultry, with leather headboards and floor-length curtains in moody hues. The real star of the show, though, is the rooftop pool: with its glass sides and green-tile stripes, it's the Instagram set's newest muse. [gorgeousgeorge.co.za](http://gorgeousgeorge.co.za); doubles from \$158.



ADRIAN LOUW

Le Wine Chambre is a temple to South African wine near Johannesburg.

## LE WINE CHAMBRE

ILLOVO, SOUTH AFRICA

Opened in 2017 by Walter Melato, a black wine professional in an industry long dominated by white South Africans, Le Wine Chambre is a joyous celebration of the vinous bounty of this country. There's a glassed-in room with bottles stretching to the ceiling, and around 25 wines are available by the glass. Zimbabwean chef Harold Saidi cooks a menu that is international in scope, though one of the most exciting things about Le Wine Chambre is seeing African wines paired with African dishes. Chicken livers in *piri-piri* sauce were bright and spicy and fantastic with the recommended Riesling, and a Stellenbosch Chardonnay was thrilling with a grilled kingklip with lemon butter. Le Wine Chambre provides a place where wine, food, and culture bloom into a specifically South African experience. [lwcillovo.com](http://lwcillovo.com); *entrées* \$5–\$16.





W B R  
AFRICA



◀  
*A sardine tagine, smoked eggplant, and fried olives at the Ruined Garden. Below: The courtyard of Riad Idrissy, home of the Ruined Garden.*



## The Ruined Garden

FEZ, MOROCCO

THE MEDINA OF FEZ is a maze of hidden delights, ornate thousand-year-old palaces, and homes that only reveal their beauty once you've stepped inside. Near its center is the Ruined Garden. There's an enchanted feeling in the courtyard—lush greenery drapes over the tiled floor, lights twinkle in the foliage above, and the scent of saffron and stewing meats wafts from the open kitchen. That saffron is front and center in a vegetable tagine that mixes flavors and textures beautifully. Smoked eggplant comes on a plate with creamy cheese and a swoop of honey. If you're a planner, try one of chef Najja Amrani's dishes that must be ordered in advance: *mechwi*, the slow-cooked lamb, is a house specialty. Eating there was the closest thing to being welcomed into someone's home to sit in the courtyard, eat beautifully prepared traditional dishes, and be treated like a valued family friend. [ruinedgarden.com](http://ruinedgarden.com); entrées \$8–\$13.

PLAN YOUR TRIP TO...

### The Fez Medina

WITH ITS labyrinthine passageways crowded with pedestrians and the occasional donkey, the Fez medina feels like a relic from another time. The UNESCO World Heritage site is famously

difficult to navigate, so it's worth hiring a guide. T+L A-List travel advisor **Michael Diamond** ([michael@cobblestoneprivatetravel.com](mailto:michael@cobblestoneprivatetravel.com)) can plan a trip, complete with an expert to escort you to

sights like **Fondouk el-Nejjarine** ([nejjarine.co.ma](http://nejjarine.co.ma)), a caravansary turned woodworking museum, and **Dar al-Magana** (*Rue Talaa Kebira*), the 14th-century clock house, as well as artisans' workshops. Stay at **Riad Fes** ([riadfes.com](http://riadfes.com); doubles from \$199), and be sure to stop by the rooftop bar for a sunset glass of Moroccan *vin gris*. Visit **Médir Art**

([fb.com/medinartfes](http://fb.com/medinartfes)) for bold prints and modern spins on crafts like babouches and woven goods. Duck through an unassuming entrance to **Le Jardin des Biehn** ([jardin-desbiehn.com](http://jardin-desbiehn.com)). The hushed courtyard, with its trees and fountains, is an inviting spot for a mint tea, while the shop stocks top-quality vintage carpets, caftans, and jewelry.



**VEA**  
HONG KONG

Your first impression of VEA will likely be the restaurant's sense of whimsy: food comes atop a music box playing a wistful tune, or with scrolls of poetry at the side, or spritzed with wine from a perfume bottle. All this drama could easily veer into self-serious pretension, but the tone is lighthearted and joyous. Chef Vicky Cheng is doing more than cooking delicious food: he is representing his hometown, and doing it with heart.

Even without the spectacle, the cooking would have held my rapt attention. One of the most memorable dishes I've had all year was the crisp sea cucumber. After being stuffed with a mousse-line made from mud crab, the spiny beast is placed on a vibrant yellow sauce made from the roe of the crab. A spritz of Shaoxing wine finishes the dish. The things I love about VEA are the things that make Hong Kong such a singular and wonderful place. It is modern, but with elements that are traditional, stylish, and fun; it is international while remaining true to its roots. *vea.hk*; tasting menu \$215.

*Smoked quail eggs at VEA, in Hong Kong's Central district.*

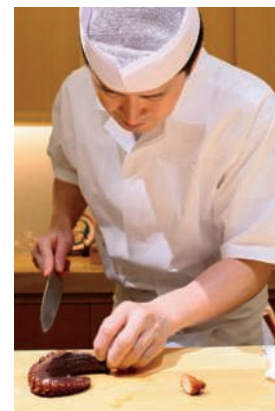
JONATHAN MALONEY

**SUSHI YOSHITAKE**

TOKYO

There is a no-phones-on-the-counter rule at Sushi Yoshitake. Still, I managed to take one surreptitious note on mine: "Lean tuna: meat, ocean, air, grain, flowers, life!" Phone ban aside, the eight-seat sushi counter is more relaxed than many of its counterparts—chef Masahiro Yoshitake will happily help you choose a sake, and smile as he hands you *nigiri*, offering instructions on the best way to enjoy each piece. A parade of appetizers starts the meal, including a tender steamed abalone in a velvety liver sauce. But the sushi had me agog, from that tuna that somehow encompassed all of nature and the universe in the deep red flesh to a sweet and meaty *aji* and the tiny, creamy *uni*. There are a number of legendary hard-to-book, hard-to-afford sushi counters in Japan, and almost any will offer an incredible meal. But Sushi Yoshitake stands out, for its food, wine, technique, and chef—who exudes far more welcome than he does strict austerity. *sushi-yoshitake.com*; *omakase* \$322.

*A chef at work at Sushi Yoshitake, in the Ginza district of Tokyo.*



FROM TOP: GENTL + HYERS; ADAM GOLDBERG



*A thali at Shree Thaker Bhojanalay, in the Kalbadevi neighborhood of South Mumbai.*

**Shree Thaker Bhojanalay**

MUMBAI

THE SIGN on the wall says PLEASE DON'T WASTE FOOD. This noble sentiment becomes hard to honor as the hosts enthusiastically insist you try just one more thing. "No, no, I'm

full," you'll say. "Yes, yes, just try." Chef Gautam Purohit's all-you-can-eat Gujarati restaurant, which has served Mumbai since 1945, is one of the world's great examples of true hospitality. A *thali* plate is placed before you, quickly filled by waiters carrying trays and vats containing all manner of deliciousness: dal, *pulao* made with

fresh young coconut, creamy okra, vegetable curries, bitter gourd studded with cashews, fritters filled with fragrant herbs, paneer patties, and a cup of fresh buttermilk to wash it all down. As soon as one dish is empty, a waiter appears to tell you it must be refilled. "You will try." Resistance is futile. *fb.com/shreethaker1945*; thali \$7.



▲ Diners slurp dumpling soup at Samcheongdong Sujebi, in the Samcheong neighborhood.

## Samcheongdong Sujebi

SEOUL

A VAT OF soup and a plate of potato pancakes: that is why you go to Samcheongdong Sujebi. That's why everyone else goes there, too. Those are the two things you'll see on almost every single table. And they are the things I keep going back to in my mind, even after some rather exemplary Korean barbecue and elevated bites elsewhere in Seoul. The soup in question is *sujebi*, wheat dumplings floating in a broth of anchovies, ginger, kelp, and clams. The soft dumplings retain their structure but aren't even a tiny bit chewy. The broth is so

comforting in its umami-rich austerity it feels elemental. Douse it with soy sauce or leave it be; either way you'll find solace in its homey depths.

The *gamjajeon*, or potato pancake, comes in a few variations, one of which has only one ingredient: potato. It's the texture that makes it so special, the perfect balance of crisp and soft. A container of fragrant, piquant kimchi on the table adds spice and intrigue. Samcheongdong Sujebi has been open for almost four decades, serving hundreds of customers per day. It doesn't play particularly well on Instagram. It isn't dining engineered to inspire jealousy in others. It is simply a place that does one wonderful thing (or, more accurately, two wonderful things) better than anywhere else. [sujaebi.co.kr](http://sujaebi.co.kr); entrées \$7–\$14.



W B R

ASIA



▲ Tsukemen-style ramen is the specialty at Fuunji, in bustling Shibuya.

## FUUNJI

TOKYO

The line at Fuunji is intense: it took me and my son about an hour to move from the end of the queue outside to the 15-person counter. But that wait gives you a chance to observe the gregarious owner, Miyake-san, perform his theatrical routine—his cooking and plating of noodles and ladling of soup is a dance as much as it is work. You'll also have time to figure out the ticket machine, which is how you order and pay.

The specialty is *tsukemen*: thick dipping broth with noodles on the side. You can ask for a large or medium serving—the cost is no different whether you want a huge meal or simply a large one. The noodles are perfectly chewy, the broth (made with chicken and kombu) so decadent you'll think you're slurping the platonic ideal of pure flavor. And though Miyake-san is known for his *tsukemen*, his ramen is awfully good, too. A few days after our meal with Miyake-san, in the midst of a particularly expensive and fancy dinner, my son said, "This is fine, but Fuunji cost twenty bucks, and I'd so much rather be eating there." He's a wise kid. [fu-unji.com](http://fu-unji.com); ramen \$7–\$9.



## PLAN YOUR TRIP TO...

## Bangkok

AFTER YOU'VE had your fill at Nang Loeng Market, venture beyond the surrounding government buildings to the **Queen's Gallery** ([queengallery.org](http://queengallery.org)), which showcases both rising Thai talents and more established names within a striking five-story, Brutalist-style structure. Climbing the 300-plus steps up to **Wat Saket** (344 Chakkraphat Diphong Rd.) is ambitious in the Bangkok heat, but the payoff is sweeping views of the Grand Palace and Chinatown. Shoppers will delight in the craftsmanship of the master jewelers at **S.J. International** ([sjewelry.com](http://sjewelry.com)); keep an eye out for pieces by **Kavant & Sharart** ([kavantandsharart.com](http://kavantandsharart.com)), which have a more contemporary aesthetic. The area immediately surrounding the market isn't great for hotels—unless you're outfitted with a giant backpack and elephant-print pants. Instead, take a cab to the **Siam** ([thesiamhotel.com](http://thesiamhotel.com)); doubles from \$613), an intimate Art Deco hotel on the Chao Phraya River with impeccable service.



FROM LEFT: CHRISTOPHER WISE; SIMON PYNT/COURTESY OF BURNT ENDS

▲  
Vendors at the lively Nang Loeng Market, in Pom Prap Sattru Phai.

## NANG LOENG MARKET

### BANGKOK

You don't really need to seek out great food in Thailand; all you have to do is step out onto the street, and there it is. The food I found at the street stalls while walking from one Bangkok restaurant to another was universally more interesting, satisfying, and delicious than the much more expensive things I found inside those restaurants. This may be cliché, but it is also true.

I can't possibly proclaim one of those street stalls the best, but I can direct you to the market with the most history, charm, and variety—and that is Nang Loeng. It was officially opened in 1900, and aside from a recent structural update to its central food court, it has barely changed since then. When it was built, most of the trading in Bangkok was done from small boats at floating markets, but the king, inspired by marketplaces he had seen in Europe, asked the department of public works to build a walkable covered arcade in a part

of the city that was being transformed into an administrative and residential precinct. Nang Loeng now sits in the midst of a fascinating historic section of town, and the food within is influenced by the many ethnic groups that settled nearby.

Around the edges of the market you'll find a wide variety of *khanom wan*, or Thai desserts. Closer to the central food court, there are stalls selling snacks, Chinese-influenced noodle dishes, and Thai-style curries. At one, I had a perfect, lacy seafood pancake made with egg and rice flour; at another, a fiery roasted eggplant salad infused with chiles and shrimp paste and topped with fried shallots and a hard-boiled egg. You can ask for your lunch to go, or just buy garlicky Thai sausages and whole tiny fish to snack on as you stroll.

Go early—the lunch rush is intense and the vendors pack up by mid-afternoon—and go hungry. You will want to eat so much more than is humanly possible. There are worse problems to have. *Nakhon Sawan 6 Alley*, Pom Prap Sattru Phai district.



## Burnt Ends

### SINGAPORE

IN SOME WAYS, this Chinatown spot is barely Singaporean at all. It bills itself as “modern Australian barbecue”; the chef, Dave Pynt, is from Perth, and the staff is a diverse crew from all over. But that's fitting in one of the world's most thrillingly international cities.

Smoke and char rule the day. There are steaks galore, which embody everything good about the meeting of meat and flame. But some of the best things are vegetable-based, like grilled garlic shoots with gremolata, and

smoky, tender fennel over *burrata*. One of the great things about Burnt Ends is its flexibility—you can easily spend a fortune on red meat and wine, but you can also stop by for a beer and a “Burnt Ends sanger,” an immense pulled-pork sandwich that costs about \$15. Most seating is at a long counter facing the kitchen, which gives you the sense that you're eating at the bar of the world's greatest pub, a feeling made stronger by the fact that the drinks are outstanding. An Australian/Singaporean/pub/fine-dining barbecue restaurant? Yes, please. [burntends.com.sg](http://burntends.com.sg); entrées \$15–\$70.

▲  
A pulled-pork “sanger” at Burnt Ends, in Singapore.



W B R

ASIA + AUSTRALIA



The spread at Masque, a fine-dining restaurant in Mumbai.

## \* Masque

MUMBAI

MASQUE IS NOT easy to find. Hidden deep in an industrial section of Mumbai, inside a former cotton mill, the restaurant's entrance suggests an enchanted doorway into another dimension. Outside is all dark steel and grit; inside are the soaring ceilings and sleek modernity of what is possibly the most ambitious restaurant in India. Chef Prateek Sadhu spent time in the kitchens of Alinea, the French Laundry, and Noma, and those influences are on display, but the flavors here are

decidedly Indian. Sadhu often focuses on his native Kashmir, which he visits frequently to seek inspiration. *Katlam*, a Kashmiri bread as flaky as any croissant and yet denser and richer, is paired with a small bottle of ketchup made from *jamun*, or black plum. Sticky smoked pork neck is brightened by local mango, which also appears alongside a dessert of black-rice ice cream. The level of passion from the staff—the servers, the impressively mustachioed sommelier, the cooks who usher you into the kitchen for one special course—is almost unnerving. Give in to it. [masquerestaurant.com](http://masquerestaurant.com); *tasting menu \$56*.



▲ A black-ant lamington at Attica, in Ripponlea, an inner suburb of Melbourne.

## ATTICA

MELBOURNE

What is Australian food? If I could employ the show-don't-tell method of explanation, I'd take the asker for a meal at Attica. Through his thoughtful and playful tasting menus, chef-owner Ben Shewry explores the myriad aspects of Australia's culinary personality: a take on avocado toast (a nod to Melbourne's ubiquitous café dish) garnished with finger lime and mint; nostalgic, cheesy Vegemite rolls; lamingtons, the iconic teatime dessert, coated in black ants. Shewry's dedication to ingredients and dishes that are, above all else, Australian, is a blessing. [attica.com.au](http://attica.com.au); *tasting menu \$206*.

\* **WHERE TO STAY** There's arguably no better place to stay in Mumbai than the **Taj Mahal Palace**. The 543-room property, with its original 1903 Moorish-style building intact, is across the street from the Gateway of India and just a stone's throw from the city's best street markets. Plus, the service is legendary, with over-the-top gestures like guests' names spelled out in rose petals. [tajhotels.com](http://tajhotels.com); *doubles from \$335*.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF ATTICA; ATHUL PRASAD