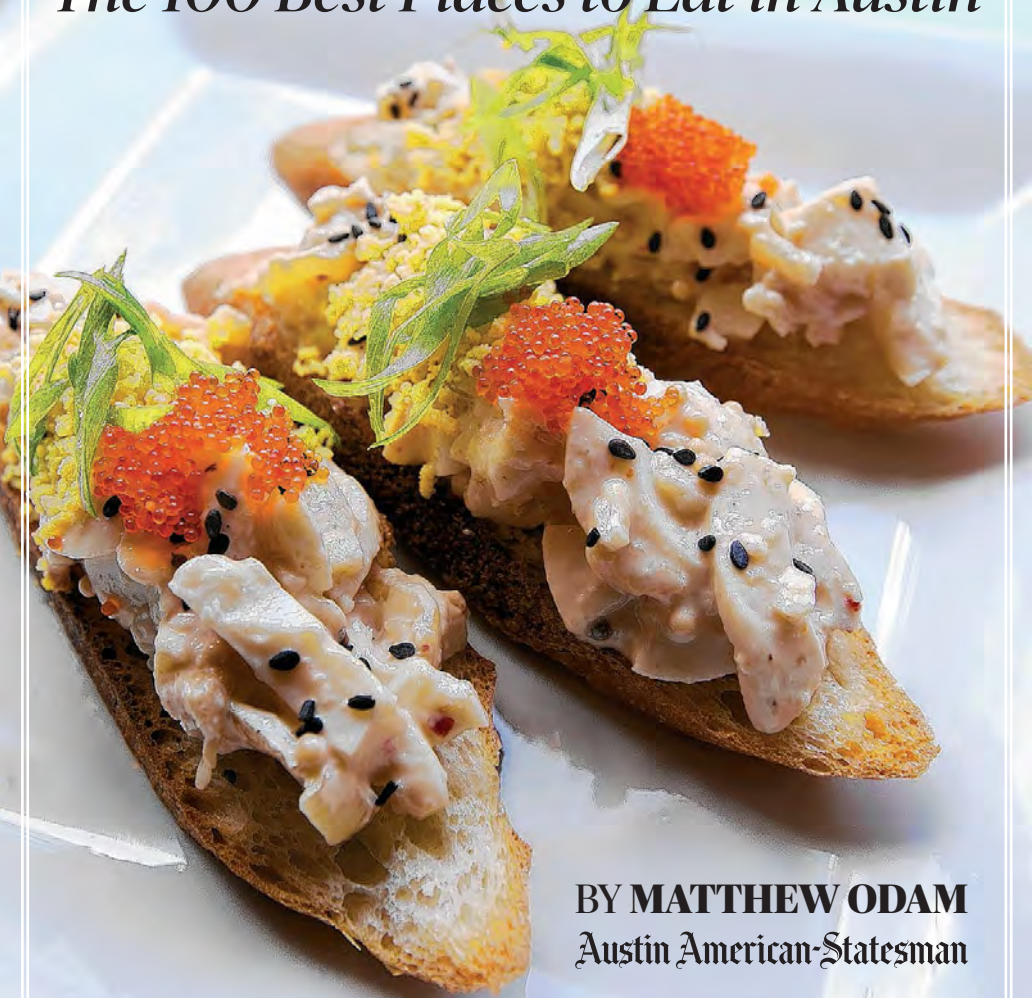


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***Guide***

*The 100 Best Places to Eat in Austin*



**BY MATTHEW ODAM**  
*Austin American-Statesman*

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# 2016 TOP 100

## *Top 25*

1. Barley Swine
2. Olamaie
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The Hollow  
Home Slice  
Hopfields  
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# RESTAURANTS

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P. Terry's  
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Parkside  
Perla's  
Pieous  
Poke-Poke  
Ramen Tatsuya

Sabor a Honduras  
Saffron  
Saigon le Vendeur  
Salt & Time  
Sa-Ten  
Second Bar + Kitchen  
Sichuan River  
Sway  
Swift's Attic  
Szechuan House  
Tacodeli  
Tan My  
Taste of Ethiopia  
Texas French Bread  
Thai Fresh  
Thai Kun  
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## ON THE COVER

Cover photo from the  
Townsend by Ralph Barrera/  
American-Statesman

# TOP 10\* AUSTIN CHEFS



**Bryce Gilmore,**  
Barley Swine  
and Odd Duck\*



**Michael Fojtasek,** Olamaie



**Taylor Hall,** Apis



**Yoshi Okai,** Otoko



**Kevin Fink,** Emmer & Rye



**Otto Phan,** Kyoten



**Jesse Griffiths,** Dai Due



**Nicholas Yanes,** Juniper



**Tyson Cole,** Uchi/Uchiko

## INTRODUCTION

# *Welcome to a year of great eating*

HOW DOES A RESTAURANT stand out in a booming city? Dedication to quality ingredients, a strong point of view, value and execution all are of great importance. A thoughtfully designed space and warm vibe help, and an exceptional staff can make all the difference between a good meal and great one.

The restaurants on this year's list have distinguished themselves in these areas. Deciding on the top spot, and then ordering sequentially through the rest of the Top 25, can make for tough work, and I am happy to report that the competition for this year's roster of best restaurants was stronger than it's been in any of the previous four years that I've created this dining guide.

Even so, Austin has experienced noticeable growing pains over the past few years. Our rapid development has led to an overextended restaurant scene rushing to keep pace with the changing city while anticipating its needs, as operators fight to establish and hone their visions and fill their staffs. This has led to some ill-conceived openings and quite a few closures (some of them surprising, many not). But the Austin restaurant landscape remains strong, and I am excited to see how this evolving markets informs our dining scene.

As we look to the future, we'd be wise to take inventory of our best restaurants, which all offer clues on how a successful establishment should be run, while also looking for fresh and creative ways to serve all areas of the dining populace at an array of price points.

In addition to the Top 25, I have also created a roster of 75 critic's picks. They range from daily drivers, like taco

trailers and sandwich shops, to high-end steakhouses and European-inspired restaurants. These 100 restaurants and trailers should serve as a snapshot for the Austin restaurant scene as a whole and guide you to some new places while reinforcing the achievements of longtime favorites.

I take my research seriously and do my best to cover as much of the city as possible, though I know hidden gems remain. I have visited each of these 100 spots, along with dozens of others, at least once in the past year. And for the first time, I've extended the reach of the dining guide to include restaurants in towns nearby, from Bertram to Wimberley, because good food and unique dining experiences can be found all over Central Texas.

There are stipulations to being considered for this list. The most important: Restaurants must have opened by July 15. I need time to make my rounds before deadline, and they need time to round into shape. That means potential contenders like June's from McGuire Moorman Hospitality and pizza restaurant Cane Rosso will have to wait until next year.

All appreciation of food is subjective, and you will surely pick nits or disagree vehemently with this list. That's great. I love feedback.

You can email [modam@statesman.com](mailto:modam@statesman.com), call 512-912-5986, snag my attention on Twitter (@odam) or Instagram (@matthewodam), or send a letter to the Statesman's office. Let's keep the conversation going.

— *Matthew Odam*

1

# Barley Swine

6555 Burnet Road. #400

512-394-8150

barleyswine.com

**W**HEN I STARTED THINKING about how to describe my top restaurant in Austin this year, I considered it in terms of a checklist: What are the qualities I would hope for in my ideal restaurant?

## **Does it have a sense of place?**

Stacks of wood line the walls outside Bryce Gilmore's Burnet Road restaurant. Inside, there's warm amber lighting, native stonework, a gorgeous bar paneled with reclaimed wood, a massive open kitchen featuring a gargantuan grill any chef would covet, playful lavatory signs that evoke childhood, and artwork of farm life that runs from the pastoral to the psychedelic.

## **Is it comfortable?**

See previous description. Beyond those details, Barley Swine offers patio seating, two bar areas inside and a dining room with banquettes and wooden chairs that actually have backs, providing a variety of dining experiences.

## **Do they take sourcing seriously?**

There are no bigger friends to local farmers and ranchers than Gilmore and his two restaurants (he also owns Odd Duck). The three dozen purveyors listed on the back of the menu aren't just suppliers; Gilmore considers them partners. ►



Barley Swine  
chef-owner  
Bryce Gilmore



# barley SWINE

Dinner Service begins nightly at 5:00pm

PHOTOS BY RALPH BARRERA/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



# *Barley Swine*





# *Barley Swine*





**It's always evolving... I like thinking of restaurants as a living, evolving thing. It comes down to the people that are working in it.” — BRYCE GILMORE**



#### **Is there value?**

While nobody would ever call Barley Swine cheap (an average meal for one may run ab out \$65), their Swine Time happy hour offers select small plates like corn-dog-battered fish collars and snapper crudo for half off from 5 to 6:30 p.m. on weekdays. And, with both a tasting menu and a la carte offerings, Barley Swine gives diners the control.

#### **Does the chef understand and appreciate the city and its people?**

Gilmore, a four-time James Beard finalist, was born and raised in Austin. At 14 he bused tables at Z’Tejas, where his dad, Jack Gilmore, was executive chef. Following culinary school in San Francisco, he worked at farm-to-table trailblazer Wink and eventually opened Odd Duck Farm to Trailer in 2009, helping set the bar for what food truck/trailer dining in Austin could be.

#### **Does the staff seem invested in the restaurant?**

There are folks in both the front and back of house who joined Gilmore shortly after the original Barley Swine opened in 2010 on South Lamar Boulevard and are still there today after the move to Burnet Road. Not only are they the kind of knowledgeable and friendly professionals most Austin restaurant owners would walk across Austin on an August day to poach, but they seem to have a genuine commitment to and appreciation for Gilmore and the restaurant. And the respect goes both ways: The entire staff, from beverage director to dishwasher, is named on the back of the menu. ►

# Barley Swine

## Does the kitchen surprise you?

Check out the springy pigskin noodles twisting around Marcona almonds and dumplings filled with shrimp mousse-line, or a plate of grilled lamb sausage popped with wheat berries and sweetened by glowing bits of mango.

## Do you know you're in Texas when you eat there?

Witness a silky chilled peach soup the color of a Fredericksburg summer sun with a mound of tart and citrusy goat cheese, or a charred slab of blood-red Akaushi rib-eye sitting atop a sweet pool of corn pudding.

## But you still know you're not too far from Mexico, right?

Pompano ceviche, thin slices of jalapeno and shards of hoja santa ride out on a puffed and rich round of masa made with pork fat.

## Is there technique and imagination without preciousness?

Delicate pasta exploding with shiitake broth and butter was one of the most divine bites I ate this year, while still being comforting. Executive pastry chef Susana Querejazu's refreshing koji rice pudding with toasted sesame, cucamelon, mango sorbet and basil oil tasted like the dessert you'd be served at a resort near the Indian Ocean following a massage.

## How is the beer, wine and cocktail selection?

All that a nerd or a neophyte could want and more.

Barley Swine checks all of the boxes. ■



“ We source everything local and we want to feature that stuff... to support as many local artisan producers and farmers and ranchers as we can.” — BRYCE GILMORE



2

# ***Olamaie***







PHOTOS BY JAY JANNER/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

1610 San Antonio St.

512-474-2796

[olamaieaustin.com](http://olamaieaustin.com)

TAKE A TEXAS CHEF, throw him in an award-winning kitchen in Los Angeles and then send him on a research mission through the South. That's the successful recipe that helped lead to chef-owner Michael Fojtasek's Judges Hill stunner. Austinites of a certain vintage may remember the cottage as the former home of Oat Willie's head shop. Then again, they might not. And it wouldn't have anything to do with extinguished brain cells. The building, which also served as home to restaurants Mars and Sagra, is almost unrecognizable from before, especially on the inside. All chestnuts, taupes and shades of gray, the restaurant has a sophisticated elegance that belies its rustic soul. Fojtasek, who earlier this year saw the departure of his co-executive chef Grae Nonas, pays homage to the South while refining the way we consider it. He transforms the heritage Southern crop benne into a nutty cream for a dish of meaty black bass and preserved scallops. A cured egg yolk,

oyster mushrooms and fragile strips of Benton's bacon give minerality, earth and salty depth to tender Gulf shrimp and the pearly texture of firm but creamy grits. When you think of Southern cooking, you probably don't think of artfulness, but the dishes at Olamaie, a restaurant named after several generations of women in Fojtasek's family, are some of the most beautiful in town: Sweet crab meat laces a bowl of shining canary melon gazpacho and glistening, floral beautyberries; and a simple salad of tomatoes, basil ice and olive oil is almost too pretty to eat. No discussion of Olamaie would be complete without a mention of their off-menu biscuits: square-cut pillows of buttermilk-imbued perfection, baked to a golden finish, with a flaky exterior and gentle crumble. Swipe them through glowing honey butter and then forget any other biscuit you've ever eaten. Bonus points for being one of only a handful of top-tier Austin restaurants open for lunch.



# *Olamaie*



# Apis

23526 Texas 71, Spicewood

512-436-8918

[apisrestaurant.com](http://apisrestaurant.com)

AN AMUSE BOUCHE OF silky butternut squash soup and airy tofu spuma graced with mushroom powder arrives, and most will instantly know they've entered a place unlike any they've visited before. The dark wood and honeyed light of the dining room are not terribly out of place in the Texas Hill Country, but that massive kitchen you saw through the windows on your way inside? That's different. It almost looks like a showroom or culinary school training facility from the outside, but inside it is all professional business. Executive chef Taylor Hall and his wife, Cassie, were ambitious in opening a fine dining restaurant and apiary 30 miles from Austin after being inspired in part by the environmental crisis of bee colony collapse disorder. But their ambition didn't stop with having about 20 of their own hives. Hall and his staff give painstaking attention to detail with all of their preparation and execution. They dry-age beef for a jeweled tartare that covers the golden brioche of egg toast draped with nutty orange French

cheese and a whisper of jalapeno. They mill their own red wheat for sourdough served with a nine-day cultured butter. Lacto-fermented ramp shoots sway in a jus of clams, chicken and aged yellow wine that surrounds plump, homemade sweet corn tortellini. Apis shines with Texas soul, but it is evoked in a manner reminiscent of a restaurant in New York or France: boneless quail filled with decadent foie gras mousse and served with smoked beet pastrami covered in ash, and rabbit saddle stuffed with a rich offal sausage plated with a potato crepe encasing the rabbit's shoulder and sheened with a Hefeweizen beer jus. The honey is not just a gimmick, either. It glazes aged duck, sweetens a few finely crafted cocktails, and a server even brought a honeycomb to our table to allow us to scrape our own viscous gold for a final cheese plate. Apis' ambition is not slowing. They will soon open a pizzeria, along with gardens (the bees will come in handy there) on their Spicewood campus, and they are eyeing Austin for a casual concept. The hills have always made for a good location to foment revolution. Bonus points for vision and unique focus on sustainability.



*Apis*





4

# Odd Duck

1201 S. Lamar Blvd. / 512-433-6521 / [oddduckaustin.com](http://oddduckaustin.com)

IN A WORLD OVERRUN with mundane comfort food, Bryce Gilmore and his crew shape-shift the genre, giving us what we want in ways we never knew could be achieved. Who knew that all that was missing from your Platonic idea of a great burger was pimento cheese made with a fried egg and a crunchy bacon terrine that tasted – in the best way – like the crispy edges of school pizza from your childhood? Fried chicken sandwich? Of course it just needed egg salad smeared on an artisanal bun that is flecked with enough seeds to choke a bird. Odd Duck makes you nostalgic for a Willy-Wonka-like place you never actually imagined and certainly never visited. There are things that may seem familiar, like mismatched dishware from your grandmother's home or favorite vintage store, but there are also vinegar and fruit shrubs and barrel-aged cocktails to sip. We've all had fried quail, but with egg salad and soy caramel? And pork belly almost seems trite, until you've eaten it with a pecan jerk glaze and a cheddar rice cake. Most brunch excursions make me drag my feet like a kid headed to the dentist, but not here. Show me another place in town that can do pastries like this and make you look at scrambled eggs anew as their soft tumble layers the bottom of a plate of soft-shell crab, mango and cherry tomatoes. Gilmore's restaurant is a Texas restaurant, which naturally means it pulls from Mexico, as with braised goat with peanut pipian and queso fresco, and a masa cake ice cream sandwich centered by peach leaf and buttermilk ice cream and topped with honeycomb candy that tastes like the crystallized goodness at the top of the honey bear that you would scrape with your peanut-butter-stained spoon as a furtive child. Bonus points for finely tuned staff, beer list and cocktails.



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# ***Odd Duck***



TINA PHAN/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



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# Otoko

1603 S. Congress Ave.

512-920-6405

[otokoaustin.com](http://otokoaustin.com)

EXPERIENCE A JAPANESE KAISEKI turned up to 11 when you step into the shoebox confines of Otoko, hidden at the top of a staircase in the South Congress Hotel courtyard. The illuminated panels that envelop the room, the Astro Boy manga doll, the soundtrack bumping with the Rolling Stones and James Brown: This is not exactly how they do things in chef Yoshi Okai's native Kyoto. The chef, who also fronts a garage rock band, has taken the traditional kaiseki service and imbued it with his colorful personality. He's at his best when he's delivering his nigiri sushi, like supple, oily Japanese kanpachi shining with a sauce of soy, mirin and sake, crimson-edged white sea bass brushed by a translucent sauce cooked down from sake and plum, or voluptuous burnt orange Hokkaido uni topped with smoked sturgeon caviar. There is an indulgence to the meal – more than 20 courses served directly from the chef, at a price tag of \$200 after tax and tip – but Otoko rewards diners with an experience unlike any in town. The exclusivity, the bright and beautiful space, the chef's attention to detail – it all adds up to a special meal that can't be replicated around Austin. Bonus points for the dark but glitzy adjacent cocktail bar, Watertrade, which serves some of the best drinks in town, as well as an interesting nonalcoholic beverage pairing for dinner.





PHOTOS BY RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

# Otoko





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6

## **Emmer & Rye**

51 Rainey St., Suite 110

512-366-5530

[emmerandrye.com](http://emmerandrye.com)



Chef-owner Kevin Fink exhibits great passion for heritage grains. Not only does he mill his own grains at his Rainey Street restaurant, he uses them as decoration in a dining room colored with the browns, whites and beiges of a Southwestern vista. He brings an artist's eye, scientist's consideration and evangelical's glee to his grain alchemy, but you don't need to know everything he does to enjoy his food. Even if you think Black Rye and Blue Beard Durum are bands playing at ACL Fest, it doesn't matter. All you need to know is that Emmer & Rye makes exceptional pasta, from firm but pliant spaghetti in a creamy and piqued *cacio e pepe* to the tensile strength of *pappardelle* spooling *guanciale* and *stracciatella* in a mild *arrabiata* and the zigzag cut of *farro mafalda* tangling with pork confit. The artisan detail extends beyond pasta to methods of preservation, fermentation and flavor-coaxing that elevate Emmer & Rye dishes to stunning heights: Sun-chokes are prepared confit in aged beef tallow and pork fat, a massive rib-eye is dry-aged in house, and a cookie made with grain-inoculated koji squeezes a beautiful orb of cocoa nib ice cream. Rarely has something so serious been so fun. Bonus points for more than two dozen wines by the glass.

PHOTOS BY DEBORAH CANNON/AMERICAN-STATESMAN





# ***Emmer & Rye***



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7

## Kyōten Sushiko

4600 Mueller Blvd.

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kyotensushiko.com



PHOTOS BY JAY JANNER/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

I don't think Otto Phan sees the world the way most people do. He had the audacity of vision to open a sushi food truck in East Austin. And it was great. He doubled down on that by opening an eight-seat omakase-focused sushi restaurant in the Mueller development in a small space that resembles a one-bedroom apartment. And it's exceptional. There is a secret art to creating perfect sushi rice, and Phan, who bounced around sushi restaurants from Austin to New York City before striking out on his own, has locked in on it. His combination of vinegars makes for a slightly sour and acidic bite to his rice. I should say rices, as I am under the impression he alternates from more lightly flavored rice for some raw pieces to more robust for his fatty pieces and somewhere in between for his cooked bites. He's like a sushi rice Goldilocks. His 22-course dinner might start with the bright bubble-gum pink Tasmanian ocean trout before moving through gentle octopus boiled in green tea and dry-aged A5 wagyu with a lingering blue cheese funk. I think it's the best beef I've ever tasted, and the fish is as good as any I've had in America. Phan applies minimal adornment to his raw fish but exhibits a chef's palate and instincts with shrimp miso on his ebi and an oregano-popped "gravy" with his abalone. At lunch, Phan serves boxed sushi, rolls and the bowls that made his trailer such a hit, lowering the financial bar for entry. Bonus points for a smart five-course sake tasting that shook up the way I think about the beverage.



# ***Kyoten Sushiko***





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## Dai Due

2406 Manor Road

512-524-0688

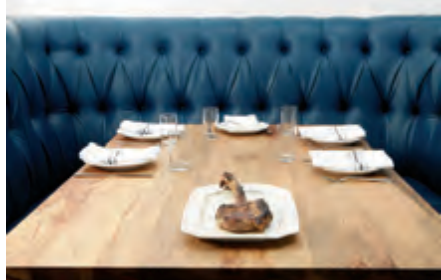
daidue.com



When I open the Austin Food Hall of Fame, the pork chop from Dai Due will be a first-ballot inductee. Chef-owner (you could also add hunter, fisher and forager) Jesse Griffiths swears it's easy: He just brines it and rubs it with some honey and pepper and lets the oak-fired grill do its magic. I'll take his word for it. Whatever the process, the meat is juicy, tender, peppery and just a little sweet. Dai Due, which started as a supper club and farmers market stand a decade ago, is a near-perfect representation of all that Texas has to offer. There are sweet, plump Gulf red shrimp licked with garlic butter hot off the grill, elk ceviche enlivened by lime and chilies, rosy coffee-cured Texas wagyu aged for 42 days, and a beautiful array of vegetables that come grilled, raw, pickled and shaved. All of it is stunning. If someone asks what being a Texan is all about, take them to Dai Due. But just because everything, including the wine, is from Texas doesn't mean the restaurant is provincial in its tastes. The wild boar confit, crispy on the outside and fork-tender inside, has been on the menu since day one, but a recent preparation highlighted Asian flavors with an herb-splashed miso boar broth, apple hoisin, kimchee and fierce chilies. I cooled my palate with some toasted seeded rye bread from pastry chef Abby Love, one of the best in the state. Her crusty and pillowlike sourdough rye is as good as you'll find, and her fig leaf ice cream with soft figs and a delicate honey tuile is the perfect salve to a Texas summer. Bonus points for the attached butcher shop, so you can grab a little something on the way home and test your own grill wizardry.

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN





STEPHEN SPILLMAN FOR AMERICAN-STATESMAN



PHOTOS BY RALPH BARRERA/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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## Juniper

2400 E. Cesar Chavez St.

512-220-9421

[juniperaustin.com](http://juniperaustin.com)

It's always exciting to see a chef shift the context in which you understand him. Nicholas Yanes served as chef and creative director for Uchi before opening Juniper. How would a chef coming from a Japanese establishment translate his point of view to fit cuisine inspired by Northern Italy and beyond? Easily. You could say that the styles, though seemingly different, share some things in common. Both can wow with artful simplicity. Take Juniper's meat and cheese boards: a slab of creamy buffalo-milk cheese decorated with figs on a board winking with pine bud syrup; glossy soppressata tingling with pickled beets and mellowed by celery; velvety prosciutto's salty fat pierced by sweet peaches – each allows for its few ingredients to stand out while delivering the



perfect bite. Juniper, its namesake tree painted large on one of the gorgeous dining room's walls, may challenge your idea of what stereotypical Italian dining means. There are excellent pastas, like strands of al dente pappardelle woven around sumptuous oxtail ragu and delicate gnocchi bursting with ricotta, and a glistening porchetta the size of a horseshoe. But you also get seared lamb belly complemented by smoky radish and ricotta, or chicken liver mousse with candied grapefruit and roasted sunchokes in an ephemeral sunchoke foam. You're going to want to keep your cannoli, with its candied citrus and dark chocolate, to yourself, so make sure you get one for everybody. Bonus points for having the nerve to let people in Austin think it's OK to get dressed up for dinner every now and then.



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This project is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department.

*Juniper*





CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

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## ***Uchi/Uchiko***

801 S. Lamar Blvd.

4200 N. Lamar Blvd.

512-916-4808

[uchiaustin.com](http://uchiaustin.com), [uchikoaustin.com](http://uchikoaustin.com)

You know you have created a modern-day institution when people can recite dishes from your menu by heart. Chef-owner Tyson Cole's sibling Japanese-inspired restaurants can claim dishes that have entered the lexicon of Austin dining. Regulars will tell you without pause that the Macha Cure's smoked yellowtail comes with a wave of yucca chips, that Thai chilies and orange supremes do a spicy and sweet dance across the Hama Chili; that miso-tamari mustard lays the tang on Ham and Eggs;

that you sear your own beef on the Hot Rock; that smoke will waft when the confit Jar Jar Duck arrives; and that a Peanut Butter Semifreddo with Apple-Miso Sorbet is an upscale homage to an after-school snack. Even with a stable of winners, Uchi still ushers in new excitement regularly. In addition to the daily specials flown in from the Tsukiji Market in Tokyo, like geoduck spritzed with lemon, the permanent menu has received new stars like sweet crab buffed by lush crab butter, and ocean trout and ham sweetened by cantaloupe. Cole, who opened his flagship in a cottage in 2003, obviously reveres Japan, but his menus also nod to other Asian cuisines, like the Thai play of nam pla in a bigeye tuna and compressed watermelon dish with mint, cilantro and Thai basil, and the Korean chili that fires up grilled broccolini. Bonus points for the small Coravin wine list, which allows diners to order glasses of top-shelf wine usually reserved for the bottle list.





## ***Uchi/ Uchiko***



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11

## **Lenoir**

1807 S. First St.

512-215-9778

lenoirrestaurant.com

Most restaurateurs should envy the distinct and easily communicated point of view executive chef Todd Duplechan brings to the restaurant he owns with his wife, Jessica Maher. It's hot-weather food: Take local and seasonal ingredients and replicate flavor profiles from other countries with climates similar to ours. Simple. Brilliant. The flavors of Mexico are showcased in a dish of taglierini made with serrano-infused water that gives the noodles a kick cooled only slightly by clouds of queso fresco. More nods to our neighbor to the south pop up in a summertime fish crudo swimming in a pool of watermelon and mezcal, with little islands of charred okra dotting the landscape in the boozy picnic dish. Speaking of picnics, the kitchen uses Central Texas peaches for a sweet barbecue sauce that glazes thin slices of yakitori pork paired with tangy pickles. Duplechan worked for Indian chef Floyd Cardoz once upon a time, and there's usually a curry dish on the menu. There was none to be found on my last visit, but I did try a brilliant brûléed spice cake and cheddar cheese ice cream sandwich spotted with garam masala spice. And say what you want about global cuisine, but Duplechan is a native Texan, so, yep, there was watermelon with that dish as well, accompanied by figs. The praise for Lenoir extends to one of the most professional service staffs in town,



one of the most intriguing wine lists and a whimsical aesthetic – I'm not sure any Austin restaurant designer can do more with less than Chris McCray, who used found materials to turn Lenoir into a sparkling, shabby chic wonderland. Bonus points for a relaxing, creekside wine garden with its own food and drinks menu.

PHOTOS BY RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



12

# Franklin Barbecue

900 E. 11th St.

512-653-1187

franklinbarbecue.com

Barbecue: The ride. Yes, the Franklin Barbecue line is unique and for some a hindrance they will never attempt to conquer. But let's get one thing out of the way – it's not “hipster barbecue,” as some disgruntled people have called it online. What it is is popular. And good. And maybe a little cultish. I've seen people queue up for Chinese food in San Francisco and lobster rolls in Maine, but I've never seen anything like the line at Franklin. Three hours is probably a good ballpark estimate. Of course, that can fluctuate greatly depending on the time of year, day of the week and the weather. I recently arrived at 9 a.m. and was served at noon, but judging by the people who came after me, I could have gotten there an hour later and still eaten by 12:15 p.m.



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That was on a Wednesday, with school in session (hint hint). And, as with anything, sometimes you just have to be a little lucky. As for the line, it's true, there is a great camaraderie to the ritual endured by out-of-towners and locals, and that's fostered by Aaron and Stacy Franklin's great staff. They moderate the line, let you know when food is running low, sell drinks, allow use of their impressively clean bathrooms during waits, and generally do everything they can to mitigate the hassle. The staff knows this is a special pilgrimage for many guests, so they want it to be memorable. The real memories come from the meat, obviously. And the brisket today is as good as it's ever been, the fat relaxed and rendered over a low, slow cook. The fatty pieces, lined with dark caramelized bark, jiggle and wiggle when you snatch them from the butcher paper with your fingers. And the lush, tender pork ribs hold firm but fall from the bone with a slight tug. They're better now than they've ever been. The tannic grip of muscular espresso (Aaron Franklin's morning fuel) gives a stout body and thickness to the restaurant's best sauce, while the vinegar-based sauce moistens strands of smoky pulled pork. Bonus points for leading the revolution in Austin barbecue that ushered in others like Kerlin BBQ, La Barbecue and Valentina's Tex Mex, and doing so with humility and grace.

**13**

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## ***Bufalina***

1519 E. Cesar Chavez St. / 512-524-2523

6555 Burnet Road. / 512-215-8662

[bufalinapizza.com](http://bufalinapizza.com)

University of Texas graduate Steven Dilley used to work in algorithmic equities trading in New York. I have no idea what that means, but the man certainly devised the right equation for opening a restaurant with some of the most sought-after tables in town. True to the country in which he studied the making of pizza (Italy), Dilley keeps things simple and fresh with the non-pizza part of his menu, using milky burrata cheese, wavy bibb lettuce and handmade noodles as blank slates to highlight local and seasonal ingredients like tomatoes, herbs, summer squash, root vegetables and microgreens. The stars, of course, are the Neapolitan pizzas that come out of the white pizza oven that looks like a little igloo – its glow and the

handsome walnut bar are the design centerpieces of a bare-bones restaurant with a pop-up art gallery aesthetic. The oven turns out bubbled and charred pies topped with quality ingredients that complement one another. There's the Margherita, with her hand-pulled mozzarella and colorful basil; the funky corn and nduja with roasted scallions; the pungent anchovy pie with black olives and garlic; and my favorite, the Fresca, topped with prosciutto and a lemon-splashed tangle of bitter arugula. Brooklyn pizza masters Roberta's held a weeklong pop-up at Bufalina in January, which kind of felt like the official stamp of approval from the American city best known for pizza. Bonus points for adding a second location up north and for one of the best wine lists in town.

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## Counter 357

315 Congress Ave. / 512-291-3327 / counter3fivevii.com

While Austin restaurants have generally moved away from fine dining and tasting menus, straight-backed Counter 357 has stood its ground. And it's done so with confidence and purpose. The restaurant, with its couple dozen ringside counter seats that offer a front-row look into the large open kitchen, offers fixed menus of three, five and seven courses (start with five). And the kitchen, led by executive chef Damien Brockway, finds exciting ways to elucidate its seasonal and local ethos. On one visit, beef gets a Mexican treatment with strips of nopales and masa gnocchi in a corn-studded broth made with mezcal and smoked pepper paste; another dinner saw meltingly tender wagyu strip loin zipped by the unexpected kiss of lemon puree. Creative collaboration guides the kitchen, as when one chef took an idea for zucchini bread and evolved it into a crumbly play on a tartlet packed with cumin, coriander and the sting of serrano peppers, dotted it with late-season tomatoes and twirls of zucchini and finished the plate with a smear of house-smoked yogurt dusted with sumac. A chocolate tart with roasted apples and a coconut-herb sorbet shows how the kitchen can blend comfort and craftsmanship. Counter 357, with its pale wood, stainless steel kitchen and grand sliding door that hides the main space, blends big-city elegance with science-lab seriousness, but a friendly staff and soundtrack that includes the likes of Lauryn Hill make it clear you can still feel free to relax. Fortunately, people don't relax their dress standards to the point that they arrive in shorts and flip-flops, making this restaurant one of the refreshing few where you can dress up for a formal or



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



romantic evening without being made to feel like a Dallasite. Bonus points for a sneaky good hideout bar for cheese, oysters and cocktails.



15

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## Launderette

2115 Holly St. / 512-382-1599 / [launderetteaustin.com](http://launderetteaustin.com)

The dining room's still life artwork of books, balls, plants and other everyday ephemera acts as a portal into the attic of someone's life. Fitting for a mod diner that welcomes guests like a house party. Running the show out of the kitchen is the ebullient and unpredictable host, chef-partner Rene Ortiz, along with his culinary soulmate, pastry chef and partner Laura Sawicki. Ortiz's menu feels like a dinner party run by a whimsy-driven chef who has a lot of ideas and no need for conformity or sitting still. One minute it's tandoori prawns full of Indian flair from cardamom and mint chutney, the next the chef's bounding to the Middle East for labneh with beet hummus, and another

he's dipping into the American south-east for crab toast with fennel aioli. When his attention turns to homespun comfort, you'll get a great burger with

bacon in the grind, a pastrami sandwich with hot mustard on rye, or a golden and crunchy fried chicken sandwich on airy challah bread. Sawicki makes that bread along with desserts that have a playful spirit (imagine artisanal takes on a Girl Scout Samoa cookie) and the abil-



ity to tickle your nostalgia center with an artist's deft touch (see: peach leaf ice cream atop a crumble of arugula-basil cake and ringed by peaches, almonds and blue cheese). Bonus points for the adjacent Mr. Mc's, which celebrates Louisiana with boudin and muffalettas.



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## ***L'Oca d'Oro***

1900 Simond Ave. / 737-212-1876 / locadoroatx.com

When I think about my favorite meals in Italy, I don't think about the design of the dining room or precious plating. I think about ingredients, flavor, comfort (both in the food and the environment) and community. That is why Fiore Tedesco's restaurant in the Mueller development strikes me as such a great example of why we love Italian food. Watermelon salad with a toasty and crunchy homemade granola takes me on an Italian picnic. Robust bucatini shimmering with just the right amount of red wine-braced tomato sauce in a bowl scattered with caramelized hunks of guanciale lands me at my friend's

apartment in Rome after a stop by the market, and a crostini of pear and pancetta exhibits the beauty of simplicity. While the pastas deserve praise and attention – the hen of the woods mushrooms atop a lasagna sprinkled with fermented mushroom powder are like candy – make sure to order the family-style sides, like the best sweet potatoes I've ever eaten, sprinkled with fennel powder, and chargrilled okra served with buttermilk aioli. Bonus points for the cute red and white sinks near the lavatories that look pulled straight from 1960s Italy.



PHOTOS BY JAY JANNER/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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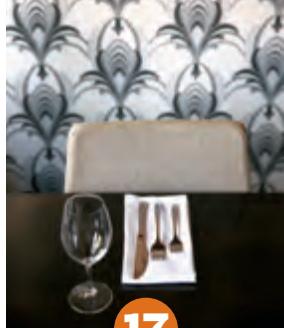
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17

## ***Fabi & Rosi***

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

Answer: The restaurant I always recommend when people want a nice, consistently executed dinner without pretense or the fad-chasing folks more interested in a scene than a good meal. Question: What is Fabi & Rosi? Chef Wolfgang Murber's restaurant stands out not just because it is one of the few very good restaurants west of MoPac Boulevard but also because it is one of our few restaurants with a decidedly European point of view. Which makes sense given that Murber is a native German. His wife and partner, Cassie Williamson, lured him to her hometown, where they opened the restaurant named after Murber's nephew and niece in 2009. Those expecting bold,

rich flavors won't be disappointed in butter-drenched escargot, a soothing beef consommé with bone marrow dumplings, rosy duck breast served with creamy polenta, or a massive raviolo stuffed with earthy minced mushrooms that you would swear were mixed with beef. Not everything carries such heft, of course. A summer salad of tomatoes livened further by lemon and dill crème fraîche tops a thick and mildly sweet steelhead trout with crackling skin. Bonus points for being the rare upmarket restaurant that features an outdoor seating area that welcomes dogs (you know, if you're into that sort of thing).

PHOTOS BY RALPH BARRERA/AMERICAN-STATESMAN







AMERICAN-STATESMAN 2016

18

## ***El Naranjo***

85 Rainey St.

512-474-2776

[elnanjojorestaurant.com](http://elnanjojorestaurant.com)

It's the little things (and the big things) that make a difference at chef Iliana de la Vega's mature escape from the Rainey Street frivolity. When the rolls come, a trio comes with them that includes salsa macha, a nutty and viscous salsa made with seven dried chilies. You won't find that many places. Also on board, escabeche and orange-flecked butter, which goes surprisingly well with the salsa. It is the kind of accompaniment you'd expect at a restaurant in Oaxaca, where de la Vega ran her own restaurant for more than a dozen years before moving to Austin. The chef explores the wonders of mole with the deep chocolate and toasted notes of mole negro, with its more than two dozen ingredients, and will likely introduce you to something new, maybe a light, herbal green mole

that swathes meaty salmon and beans, all wrapped in hoja santa leaves. The wrapped presentation returns with a Veracruzano dish of shrimp barbacoa glistening with slightly sweet and mild guajillo chili sauce carried in banana leaves. Travel from sea to land with seared tuna al pastor tacos ratcheted up by the fresh serranos in the tomatillo salsa, before gliding your fork through tender short ribs braised in chicken stock and served with a mound of floral poblano rice. Bonus points to de la Vega for not only bringing great Mexican food to Austin but also taking Austinites to great Mexican food, with regular culinary tours to Oaxaca.





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RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## Café No Sé

1603 S. Congress Ave. / 512-942-2061 / [cafenoseaustin.com](http://cafenoseaustin.com)

If you want a mini-vacation, go hang out in the South Congress Hotel and have lunch at the attached Café No Sé. The cafe is lined with bookshelves with beautiful tomes on architecture and design; there is a rack of magazines with the Hollywood trades; and the blue and white tile reminds you of the Pacific. If you don't yet feel like you've landed at

your erudite aunt's house in California, the menu will help. Toast with soft-boiled egg, feathered avocado, bright greens and aleppo-spiced carrots tastes like something you'd find in a cafe in Santa Monica. You can order the toast at a brunch highlighted by executive pastry chef Amanda Rockman's lithe, banana-studded ricotta pancakes and sublime kouign amann pastry with a caramelized shell and delicate interior that almost dissolves like a cloud. Beyond the California dreaming, at lunch you'll discover an unapologetic throwback of a burger with Kraft singles melting over double patties sandwiched between pillowy and absorbent sesame seed buns and, at night, dishes like tangy and tender lamb ribs stacked atop cauliflower and potato chaat in an exhilarating charmoula. Bonus points for serving three meals a day, seven days a week.



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PHOTOS BY RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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## Chicon

1914 E. Sixth St.

512-354-1480

[contigotexas.com/chicon](http://contigotexas.com/chicon)



It takes humility, smarts and a little bit of bravery to know when something's not quite working. And it requires intelligence, creativity and hustle to turn around a business and creative endeavor on the fly. That is what owners Ben Edgerton and chef Andrew Wiseheart did when they realized their fine-dining concept Gardner was having trouble connecting with diners. They took an austere but artful restaurant, tousled its hair, untucked its shirt and transformed it into Chicon, a sister restaurant to their ranch-inspired Contigo. They did not leave their eye for plating or flavor layering behind – witness creamy whipped feta brightened by mint, pickled green tomato and dill and perfect striped bass dusted with fermented green chili powder and draped with ribbons of zucchini – but they got a little brawnier, as with a roasted chicken and grilled camp bread served as a build-your-own taco experience for the whole table. Bonus points for a reimagined bar space that makes for more comfortable dining, drinking and socializing.

21

# Clark's Oyster Bar

1200 W. Sixth St.

512-297-2525

clarksoysterbar.com

The private dining room at a yacht club? An elegant seafood cafe on the Cape? This jewelry box seafood spot from McGuire Moorman Hospitality might be the pint-sized sibling to Perla's, but it is even more transportive. Its exceptional oyster program can take you from Washington to Nova Scotia. The tight kitchen staff works with the dexterity and speed of a crew on a submarine, turning out crispy and succulent bottlenose bass seared to an auburn finish, cioppino with depth and silky clam chowder studded with bacon. Kale and hazelnut pesto cuts into the voluptuous white wine and cream sauce of linguine with clams. Make your own casual surf-and-turf meal by starting with mildly spiced and crunchy shrimp toast before taking on a pan-seared burger, one of the best in town. Bonus points for a caviar selection that lets you feel like a Russian oligarch.



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22

# Vino Vino

4119 Guadalupe St.

512-465-9282

vinovinoaustin.com

Not much has changed at the wine bar that Kelly Bell and Jeff Courington opened at the edge of Hyde Park in 2006. Despite the wine focus, Vino Vino maintains the comes-as-you-are casualness that has made it a favorite of locals for 10 years. The savvy staff makes the wine list approachable, and wine is everywhere, thanks in part to the massive mirrors behind the regal old bar from the Bitter End that reflect the floor-to-ceiling wine racks that line the opposite wall. Vino Vino began serving food in 2008, and the menu recently took firmer shape, broken down into several categories to help navigate diners through what could be a series of snacks or a three-course meal. The Texas bistro fare is there – pork ribs and fried quail – but chef Stephanie Cak gives it smart and punchy farm-fresh touches like the glistening pickled watermelon cubes that dot the grits on the quail dish and the tart cucumber salad and pickled peaches playing off the sticky-sweet ribs. The massive pork chop will



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take at least 20 minutes, but, with its dark char, juicy fat and just the right amount of salt, it is worth the wait. Bonus points for the cheese course and wine education.

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**AustinChinatown.com**





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## Foreign & Domestic

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

The only design touches in the men's bathroom at Foreign & Domestic are photos of members of the Cincinnati Reds. Besides being notable for the scowl on Pete Rose's face, the pictures speak to the Americanness of this restaurant from chef Ned Elliott. Elliott grew up gardening at his family's house in Cincinnati and, for a restaurant with a pig mural on its outside wall, the chef pays considerable homage to the garden's bounty with zucchini paired surprisingly with mango and a piquant aleppo pepper vinaigrette and a salad of heirloom and charred sunburst tomatoes brightened by dill and lime. The beef heart tartare is a long-standing favorite and makes for a meaty slate on which to build flavors. Recently the mild chop of ruby beef was



laced with tangy house-cured anchovies and kicked up with a pool of homemade hot sauce. Cincinnati is considered by some to be the most northern Southern city, and Elliott has long been a fan of Benton's Country Ham from Tennessee. He served it on early menus in 2010 when he opened and this summer gave it a colorful presentation with compressed melon and pickled peach on a plate smeared by balsamic vinaigrette. Imagination complements comfort with touches like the caramelized tomato broth in a dish of roasted pork belly and the bristling char of squid ink spaghetti swirling around charred squid, chilies and flecks of almonds. Bonus points for changing the way we think about neighborhood restaurants.



## 24 **The Townsend**



PHOTOS BY RALPH BARRERA/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



718 Congress Ave.

512-887-8778

[thetownsendaustin.com](http://thetownsendaustin.com)

Cocktail lovers rejoiced when the Townsend arrived on Congress Avenue, upping the previously stodgy and syrupy downtown cocktail scene along with other newcomers such as Small Victory and the Roosevelt Room. What I didn't realize at the time was that the classy bar guided by general manager Justin Elliott would also help reframe how we think about eating in bars. Other operators in cities like Portland have found success in meeting eaters where they drink, and the Townsend has followed suit. There's no reason to just be a place for pre- or post-dinner drinks when you can serve a tightly curated menu of considered and varied bar food. Chef Justin Huffman, who also serves as a sous chef at Justine's, created a menu that can do sophisticated takes on bar classics, like the red miso mayo on a burger dripping in American cheese and the North African spices on a crunchy fried chicken served with semolina flatbread. The toasts, like one topped with a floral sake egg salad and salty tobiko and onion, are perfect snacks for drinking, and the *cacio e pepe* made with squid ink pasta and showered with grana padano could sit on the menu of any Italian restaurant in town. I hope others follow the trend. Bonus points for some of the best cocktails in town – like the Herringbone, a boozy old chap made with bourbon, brandy, and herbaceous and cherry liqueurs – served in a building with almost 150 years of history.



25

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

## ***Boiler Nine***

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

What will the part of downtown centered on the reconstituted Seaholm Power Plant look like in a few years? I don't know, but I know it's off to a good start, and if Boiler Nine is any indication, it has a bright future. The restaurant is located in and named after part of the old power plant and is a fitting and muscular tribute to the building's past, fired by a wood-burning grill. The fire chars squid and cauliflower that swim in a sauce breathy with peppers, garlic and onion. It roasts root vegeta-

bles surrounded by pale emerald pools of tangy and bright Green Goddess dressing, and it sears Colorado striped river bass ringed with a powder of chorizo spice. Chef Jason Stude is even bold when he's delicate, as seen in a brilliant salad of tomato, watermelon, strawberry, chilies, ricotta and basil as colorful as the Italian flag. Bonus points for a furtive basement cocktail bar that makes killer drinks and a rooftop patio with killer views.



austin360

# Critic's Picks

\*Listed alphabetically

## ***Baguette et Chocolat***

12101 RM 2244 / 512-263-8388 / [www.baguetteetchocolat.com](http://www.baguetteetchocolat.com)

The crunch and floss of a freshly baked baguette embraces folds of supple ham and creamy brie cheese in one of my favorite sandwiches in town. True to its name, this cafe and bakery has roots in its owners' native France, and the passion and tradition are evidenced in the flaky chocolate croissants and the variety of sweet and savory crepes. Bonus points for being the best bite in the area.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## ***Bartlett's***

2408 W. Anderson Lane / 512-451-7333 / [www.bartlettsaustin.com](http://www.bartlettsaustin.com)

There's a fine line between dated and nostalgic, and Bartlett's walks that line with confidence. A yellowfin tuna burger sweetened with soy-honey glaze, a hickory burger slathered with barbecue sauce and bacon, lump crab cakes and apricot-glazed roasted chicken feel more comforting than anachronistic at this former Houston's outpost. Bonus points for not trying to be cool.

## ***Black's Barbecue***

215 N. Main St., Lockhart / 512-398-2712 / blacksbbq.com

Black's might lack the size and made-for-TV appeal of a couple of its fellow Lockhart joints, but the brisket has a sturdy bark and deep smoke penetration unsurpassed on barbecue row, the beef rib falls apart like a meat glacier and the fatty (mostly beef) sausages come stuffed in a casing that snaps. Bonus points for offering online shipping of briskets to those not fortunate enough to live in Central Texas, and the tiny confines that make you feel like you were let in on a secret.

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MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## ***Black Star Co-Op***

7020 Easy Wind Drive / 512-452-2337 / www.blackstar.coop

What this groundbreaking cooperative lacks in ambience, it makes up for with a sense of community built around beer. The thoughtful pub fare includes one of the city's best burgers, a massive patty made from Texas beef enlivened by beer mustard (of course), and the fish and chips is a clean, crunchy and flaky version of the classic. Vegetarians find flavor in a Reuben made with tempeh. Bonus points for proximity to a MetroRail station.

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THEABGB.COM



## ***Bombay Dhaba***

1207 S. First St. / 737-247-4323 / [bombaydhabaaustin.com](http://bombaydhabaaustin.com)

Keeping samosas and pakora crunchy and enticing even as they're served from a trailer is a welcome trick here. Familiar chicken tikka masala is tender, and aloo gobi somehow keeps from turning soft at this spot that also serves up consistently friendly service. Bonus points for being a trusty go-to for your vegetarian friends.

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## ***Brown's Bar-B-Que***

1901 S. Lamar Blvd. / 512-517-8520 / [facebook.com/brownsbarbque](http://facebook.com/brownsbarbque)

Salt, pepper and smoke are all Austin native and Bowie High School graduate Daniel Brown needs to create a crust on his brisket and put a little kick into his pliant pork ribs. Chicken often goes overlooked on barbecue menus, but don't make that mistake here: The tawny, rippled skin that wraps the moist meat could be its own menu item. Bonus points for the short wait.

## Capital Taco

1901 S. Lamar Blvd. / 512-457-9992 / facebook.com/capitaltaco

With its location next to a bar, you might assume this little trailer is just a place to soak up booze. Wrong. The turkey mole taco balances its wintry depths with bright pickled jalapeño and cilantro, and the sweet piquancy of ginger and mango elevate a chicken taco. Bonus points for being next to Brown's Bar-B-Q trailer, where Capital scores brisket for a taco smoothed and spiked by avocado and jalapeño for a handheld meal.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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## Cantine

1100 S. Lamar Blvd.

512-628-0348

cantineaustin.com

Restaurateurs Emmett and Lisa Fox were operating successful restaurants while some of our city's top chefs were still in high school. Their latest pulls a little from their Hyde Park Italian restaurant Asti (a just-angry-enough bucatini amatriciana) and their late Mediterranean spot Fino (smoky chargrilled octopus with crunchy papas bravas) and proves that sometimes straight-ahead food like a roasted chicken or lamb burger is more important than flashy design. Bonus points for a bar that feels equally suited for drinking or dining.

## Chen's Noodle House

8650 Spicewood Springs Road

512-336-8889

A friendly dive in the best of ways, this counter-service restaurant from George Chen is home to some of the best hand-cut noodles in town, transformed into springy squiggles that swim in bowls of crumbly lamb meatballs. Beyond the noodles, which you also can eat as part of a stir-fry, try the sesame buns squeezing savory pork or the fragrant and crispy green onion pancakes. Bonus points for its proximity to Asia Market for some inspired post-meal shopping.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Clay Pit**

1601 Guadalupe St.

512-322-5131

claypit.com

This Capitol-area restaurant has had the kind of staying power of which many Austin restaurants should be envious. And it's not coasting on its reputation. Marrow infuses its primal richness into bone-in goat curry that carries the essence of that gamy animal. Palak paneer-stuffed naan arrives hot, and bracing lamb kabobs come out tender and rosy, proof of a kitchen that has a strong sense of timing despite the large crowds. Bonus points for occasional live music and dancing.

## **Contigo**

2027 Anchor Lane

512-614-2260

contigotexas.com

How can a restaurant in a city feel like it's a ranch in South Texas? Lots of wood, leather, wrought iron, open-air seating and a laid-back vibe help, as do beer taps made of antler horns. An actual ranch in South Texas inspired the restaurant from co-owners Ben Edgerton and chef Andrew Wiseheart. There are staple dishes like a fat burger and rabbit and dumplings, but Contigo demands sharing, from a list of charcuterie-like tender pork pastрами to a smoked chicken terrine colored and popped with peach and mustard seeds. Kids can dig on a fancy grilled cheese or sip a s'mores root beer float. Bonus points for \$1 legs of fried chicken on Thursday nights.



CONTRIBUTED





CONTRIBUTED

## ***East Side King***

2310 S. Lamar Blvd.

512-383-8382

1618 E. Sixth St.

[www.eskaustin.com](http://www.eskaustin.com)

The mini empire co-founded by Paul Qui has scaled back and tightened its focus in recent years. ESK now operates its original truck behind the Liberty Bar in East Austin and a counter service restaurant on South Lamar Boulevard. The caramelized fried Brussels sprouts salad with basil, cilantro, mint and jalapeño that launched a thousand imitators is still a go-to, as are the soft and sticky sweet Poor Qui's Buns with hoisin-lacquered pork. Bonus points for inspiring countless food trucks and for framing flavorful Asian fusion in a populist context.

## ***El Alma***

1025 Barton Springs Road

512-609-8923

[elalmacafe.com](http://elalmacafe.com)

Dishes like an ancho relleno stuffed with the earthy iron of mushrooms or spinach and duck enchiladas in a rich mole indicate that longtime Austin star chef Alma Alcocer isn't playing to staid Tex-Mex palates. The sweet, gooey and savory Gringas (quesadillas of cheese, árbol salsa and al pastor with pineapple) prove that the chef isn't afraid to have a little fun. Bonus points for a rooftop patio perfect for sipping margaritas and for a chef with her name on the restaurant actually being spotted in the kitchen.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Elizabeth Street Cafe**

1501 S. First St. / 512-291-2881 / elizabethstreetcafe.com

The pinks and blues of this adorable cafe echo the candy-colored macarons that highlight a breakfast menu that also includes delicate croissants. The French boulangerie transitions to upscale Vietnamese noodle house in the afternoon and evening, with dishes like nutty and sweet shrimp and yam fritters, an Americanized take on banh mi with kaffir lime fried chicken and steaming seafood pho swimming with shrimp, snapper and crab. Bonus points for a great change-of-pace breakfast.

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MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Enoteca**

1610 S. Congress Ave. / 512-441-7672 / austinvespaio.com/enoteca

Small, circular bistro tables crowd the dining room that spills onto one of Congress Avenue's few patios at this little sister to the muscular Vespaio next door. You can stray to the lighter side of the menu with a salad of airy frisee and crispy duck confit or the cream and blush of caprese, but the Italian food here is mostly of the hearty variety, from a puffed pizza of smoked applewood bacon, caramelized onions and cambozola cheese to pockets of ravioli filled with truffled veal. Bonus points for that patio, perfect for sipping wine and people-watching.

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## ***Epicerie***

2307 Hancock Drive

512-371-6840

epicerieaustin.com

Light permeates this cafe (and cheese, wine and specialty foods shop) in Allandale that has a feminine aesthetic and a rustic soul. Chef Sarah McIntosh puts some light touches on typically weighty Louisiana cuisine, like the zippy remoulade and crunchy cabbage on a shrimp po-boy and the bites of smoked shrimp that dot fried green tomatoes. Despite its polite design, elbows come onto the table for a cheddar-capped burger and an unapologetic hot pastrami sandwich with housemade sauerkraut. Bonus points for salted chocolate chip cookies to take home.

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## ***Fonda San Miguel***

2330 W. North Loop Blvd.

512-459-4121

fondasanmiguel.com

The temple to interior Mexican cuisine in Central Austin looks like a museum or import store from the outside, and the ornate and transportive interior is packed with design touches from our neighbor to the south. The faithful still flock to the large building and its resort-like drinking spaces for snacks such as the enduring Angels on Horseback, Mexican classics such as vibrant cochinita pibil, and the piñata of a house relleno that spills with chicken, olives, capers and walnuts. Bonus points for making you feel like a successful, old-school University of Texas alumnus even when you're not.



AMERICAN-STATESMAN 2013

## ***Freedmen's***

2402 San Gabriel St.

512-220-0953

freedmensbar.com

This century-old stunning building and its handsome wooden bar feel like they could have been pulled from a Western and plopped near campus, with an expansive courtyard to add populist appeal. Opening pitmaster Evan LeRoy left at the end of the summer, but I imagine Christopher McGhee, a longtime Freedmen's cook and La Barbecue veteran, has developed the chops to continue the supple brisket, tangy pulled pork, spicy jalapeño pimento cheese, and smoked beets with goat cheese that have helped make this one of the best barbecue restaurants in town. Bonus points for the best cocktail I've ever had at a barbecue restaurant.

## Fresa's

915 N. Lamar Blvd. 512-428-5077

1703 S. First St. 512-992-2946

fresaschicken.com

Chef Rene Ortiz slapped his culinary stamp on this charcoal chicken and taco stand, elevating it from simple convenience food. Kale's leafy strength supports a bowl overflowing with tingly achiote chicken, black beans and pickled veggies in one of the restaurant's nods to healthy living, and that kale returns in a slaw that levels the piquancy and bite of adobo shrimp, pickled red onion and tomatillo salsa on one of Fresa's complex tacos. The addition of the South First Street location with sit-down service gives an opportunity for the kitchen to expand on its family-style service with chicken, steak and fish grilled over an open flame. Bonus points for the drive-thru at the original location.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



AMERICAN-STATESMAN 2015

## Garbo's

14735 Bratton Lane

Various food truck locations

512-350-9814

garboslobsteratx.com

Heidi Garbo is a woman with the confidence to go against the grain. After moving to Texas from Florida, the New England native opened a lobster roll truck in landlocked Austin. Then she opened another. Then came a brick-and-mortar restaurant in a part of far North Austin not known for restaurants. The lobster rolls, their crimson knuckle and claw meat bursting from their toasty pouches, serve as the centerpiece for the restaurant that also delivers East Coast faves like well-developed clam chowder and (possibly a nod to her new home) a mean burger. Bonus points for giving a tucked-away suburban area the feel of the oceanside.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## ***The Hightower***

1209 E. Seventh St.

512-524-1448

[thehightoweraustin.com](http://thehightoweraustin.com)

If I lived in East Austin, I get the feeling I would be spending a lot of time at the Hightower. The staff is laid back, like the restaurant's aesthetic, but chef Chad Dolezal and his kitchen are serious about texture and layering of flavors. Scallion ash and fennel mojo play high-low with smoky and licorice appeal on a dish of mahi mahi ceviche studded by popcorn crumble, and a bread-  
ing of grits gives substantial crunch to a fried chicken taco that relies on bok choy and citrus for a balance of bitter and sweet. Bonus points for doubling equally as restaurant and bar.



JAY JANNER/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## ***The Hollow***

708 S. Austin Ave., Georgetown

512-868-3300

[thehollowbrasserie.com](http://thehollowbrasserie.com)

Chef Jacob Hilbert brings unexpected technique and a little rock 'n' roll attitude to this tame suburb. The Hollow is decorated with the bric-a-brac often found in small-town gift shops, but the menu is populated with surprises. Hilbert puts an elevated spin on the dreaded aspic salad with a vegetable terrine of carrot and cauliflower crowned with a dainty bubble of red beet foam, and coq au vin is presented as a crispy-skin-wrapped cylindrical slice speckled with celery root and apple in a pool of rich red wine and mushroom sauce. You might not think to look to Georgetown for dishes like fermented congee that serves as a bed for roasted quail with hay butter, but Hilbert is challenging the notion that execution and imagination are things reserved for big-city kitchens. Bonus points for introducing me to Georgetown's historic downtown square.

## Home Slice

1415 S. Congress Ave.

512-444-7437

homeslicepizza.com

It can be easy for the regular diner to overlook the culture of a restaurant and its impact on the dining experience. When it's so deeply rooted and seamless, it's almost invisible. But know this: Owners Terri Hannifin and Jen and Joseph Strickland have worked hard to infuse their staff with a commitment to unflappable service, quality execution and ebullient spirit, and that has as much to do with the pizzeria's success as the toasty crunch of a large pie with rosy pepperonis or an Italian sub slicked with mayonnaise. Bonus points for a walk-up window for late-night slices.



AMERICAN-STATESMAN 2015



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## Hopfields

3110 Guadalupe St.

512-537-0467

hopfieldsaustin.com

What started as a little curiosity – a small beer bar with a French-inspired menu – has expanded into one of Austin's treasures. Beer nerds can sample sours, Belgian-style wheats and hoppy IPAs served without a side of know-it-all condescension, while diners can move from the dainty and refined (waves of butter lettuce supporting slabs of crimson yellowfin tuna in the city's best nicoise salad) to the indulgence of a juicy burger with camembert cheese, or a rack of lamb with ancho jus and elotes that shows the culinary influences at Hopfields extend beyond France. Bonus points for being a sneaky great place to watch a game when they lower the big screen.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **House Pizzeria**

5111 Airport Blvd.

512-600-4999

housepizzeria.com

This pizzeria helped usher the dining options on Airport Boulevard into a new era, as the once-bustling strip of road that had lost its luster moved from fast-food joints (like the one that once inhabited House's building) to an array of considered concepts. The name of the restaurant speaks to the stars here – bubbled and charred pies like the gentle goat cheese and rosemary potato pizza and the more robust white cheddar, salami and red onions. Bonus points for a neighborhood vibe driven by an eclectic jukebox, eco-friendly ethos and solid local draft beer selection.

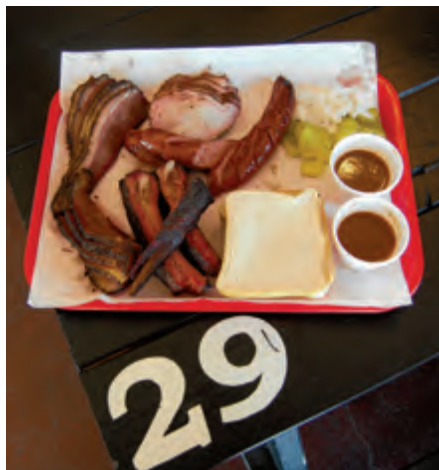
## **Hwy 29 BBQ**

110 Texas 29, Bertram

512-277-7020

www.hwy29bbq.com

Can a barbecue restaurant put a town on the map? Hwy 29 makes the case. The restaurant, in a 133-year-old stone building, introduced me to the one-stoplight-town of Bertram. Austin native Morgan Scott and partner Corey Thibodeaux opened Hwy 29 in August 2013, and though some dedicated customers come only for the chicken, the brisket sells out first, and for good reason: The slow rendering of fat makes for pliable and tender beef. Also on the menu: pepper-speckled beef-and-pork sausage with a fine grind, and velvety pork loin with well-seasoned and seared crust. Bonus points for feeling like a step back in time.



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## **Jack Allen's Kitchen**

7720 Texas 71 West. 512-852-8558

2500 Hoppe Trail, Round Rock.  
512-215-0372

3600 Loop 360. 512-351-9399

Jackallenskitchen.com



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

With a history that extends back into the 1980s as the executive chef at Z'Tejas, Jack Gilmore has some claim to being one of the godfathers of the Austin dining scene (and actual father to one of the state's best chefs in Bryce Gilmore of Barley Swine and Odd Duck). But Jack Gilmore doesn't make the list simply for resume and a trove of rich stories; he gets points for developing a farm-to-table roadhouse and bringing that quality food to some areas in town that really needed it. Crispy salmon might sound like a dish you could find in hundreds of '90s-era bistros, but here it's executed perfectly, crunchy on the outside and delicate through the middle, topped with a roasted tomatillo sauce, crab and local tomato. At the other end of the spectrum is a fried chicken sandwich slathered with hickory sauce, cheddar, bacon and jalapeño mayonnaise. It's not fancy, but good food doesn't have to be. Bonus points for a lagniappe of house-made pimiento cheese and crackers to start the meal.

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## **Jeffrey's**

1204 W. Lynn St. / 512-477-5584 / jeffreysfaustin.com

If you want to feel special, this is the place. McGuire Moorman Hospitality creates and curates a vibe and sense of place better than any restaurant group in town. They updated one of Austin's grand dames of fine dining, turning it into an exclusive steakhouse that feels like it's made for members only. Sit in the hefty bar seats or in the soft Baltic blue lounge sofas and feel like a Russian oligarch (or West Austin lawyer), as you sip a martini and eat lobster and caviar blinis or seared foie gras. The exclusivity is reinforced by some steep prices, like the \$130 tag on a 26-ounce dry-aged Beeman Ranch ribeye. Bonus points for the valet attendants' retro tennis outfits that make you feel like you've dropped into a Wes Anderson film.

## Josephine House

1601 Waterston Ave.

512-477-5584

josephineofaustin.com

Jeffrey's sophisticated kid sister feels like a preppy clubhouse, a sophisticated retreat, the dark blue house gleaming inside with marble. Escape from your afternoon with a rice bowl with poached egg or soothing tomato and melon gazpacho or indulge with a hot-smoked pork chop and littleneck clams in sundried tomato broth. Bonus points for being a great spot for a classy breakfast meeting.



CONTRIBUTED



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## Justine's

4710 E. Fifth St.

512-385-2900

justines1937.com

Jimmy Reed saunters and struts from the speakers as the vinyl spins and the bar fills with an eclectic mix of artists, musicians and neo-Bohemians looking to time-travel to a place where the Mississippi Delta meets the Left Bank. Justine's is where the beautiful and the brazen go to hide (and be seen) and play, and with a distressed pharmacy cabinet mirror, baroque doorknobs and framed concert bills announcing the Rolling Stones and Horace Silver playing in Paris, even its bathroom is cooler than you. There's the stellar burger, the go-to steak with its crispy frites and a blushing mound of beef tartare on the regular menu and a daily menu that features items like large cubes of bay-leaf-smoked tuna served in a jar and crackling confit rabbit leg that begs you to chase it down with a glass or two of Côtes du Rhône. Bonus points for welcoming you to the party, even if you didn't get the invite.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Kerlin BBQ**

1700 E. Cesar Chavez St.

512-412-5588

kerlinbbq.com

The only problem with Kerlin is that it's not open enough for true barbecue junkies: just Thursday through Sunday. But that's a small bone to pick with the trailer started by Bill Kerlin and his wife, Amelia, three years ago. A recent batch of their brisket would find few peers in Central Texas, its pepper buzz lingering but not so heavy that it obstructed the pure taste of beef slow-cooked over post oak. That same pepper stings pink ribs with meat that falls off the bone in slow motion. The sides also have few rivals: Fresh dill lifts the profile of potato salad, blue cheese lays a little funk into the cole slaw, and serving elotes at a barbecue trailer is inspired. Bonus points for teasing us with the idea they may someday introduce us to a brisket kolache trailer. A match made in Texas culinary heaven.

## **Kome**

4917 Airport Blvd.

512-712-5700

kome-austin.com

Spare but not cold, this low-slung Japanese restaurant from husband-and-wife team Také and Kayo Asazu has a personal warmth encouraged by the engaging sushi chefs at the counter. The Kome viche, salmon and mango topped with madai and sashimi and bright yuzu powder, displays the sushi evolution from the couple's original trailer. Make sure to explore non-sushi items like chicken Kara-agé (fried chicken thigh meat) and the flaky and salted grilled yellowfin collar. Bonus points for unexpected private dining option for groups.

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## **Kreuz Market**

619 N. Colorado St., Lockhart

512-398-2361

kreuzmarket.com

The size, the stature, the (relocated) history – this brick behemoth feels like it could double as the Hall of Fame of barbecue. And, though the building does feel a bit industrial, its lamb-chopped pitmaster Roy Perez gives Kreuz some rockabilly toughness. He oversees pits turning out intensely flavored beef shoulder clod (an alternative for those looking to stray from the fatty brisket most adore), fiery dry-cured jalapeño sausage and peppery ribs. Bonus points for honoring the pig with spare ribs, pork chops and the not-often-seen boneless ham.



AMERICAN-STATESMAN 2014

## **La Barbecue**

906 E. Cesar Chavez St.

512-605-9696

labarbecue.com

John Lewis got the show rolling at this trailer that hopped around East Austin before finding its current spot on East Cesar Chavez Street. They still honor his methods, with tangy pulled pork, spicy hot guts sausage glowing with sunset colorings of turmeric and cayenne, and some of the best brisket in Central Texas. The sandwich menu has extended from the El Sancho (pulled pork topped with sausage) to gonzo creations like the El Frito, loaded with pulled pork, chopped beef, chipotle slaw, black bean salad, cheese, jalapeños and Fritos. Bonus points for serving great barbecue at night.

## **La Condesa**

400 W. Second St.

512-499-0300

lacondesa.com

This beautiful restaurant, with its walls of windows, perched bar area and colorful mural, feels plucked from the leafy streets of cosmopolitan Mexico City. It helped define the Second Street District as a hip destination. There are thoughtful and delicate touches like crab and apple that refresh an appetizer of guacamole and the Asian-inspired citrusy calamansi broth of snapper ceviche. Executive chef Rick Lopez proves he's not catering to tourists' palates, as he evokes Mexico City with huitlacoche huaraches, vegetal salsa made with cactus paddles served with grilled sweetbreads and off-menu chapulines (crickets). Bonus points for the best margarita in town.

CONTRIBUTED





MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **La Flor**

4901 S. First St.

512-417-4214

La Flor's handmade corn tortillas, spotted with tanned marks from the flattop and thick and fluffy as pupusas, are as good as any I've had in town. The well-seasoned crumbles of ground beef carry a faint heat from their rumble with red chili sauce in a picadillo taco brightened with white onions and cilantro, and soft potatoes mash with a squeeze to give added creaminess to chunks of carne guisada. Bonus points for an impressive history – almost a decade of business for this trailer that sits outside a convenience store.

## **Leaning Pear**

111 River Road, Wimberley

512-847-7327

leaningpear.com

Rachel and Matthew Buchanan brought artisan food with smart flavor profiles to Wimberley and revolutionized the way people could think about local dining in this heavenly town on the Blanco River. Chef Matthew Buchanan strikes a balance, offering comfort food like house-cured brisket that holds together a perfect Reuben on marbled rye while stretching creatively with items like a pizza made with butternut squash, gingered tomatoes and sliced lamb meatballs. The fried quail sandwich is one of my favorites anywhere. Bonus points for massive slices of triple chocolate cake from neighboring Sugar Shack Bakery.



CONTRIBUTED

## **Licha's Cantina**

1306 E. Sixth St.

512-480-5960

lichascantina.com

How this ramshackle cabana on East Sixth avoided the wrecking ball of gentrification is beyond me, but I sure am happy about it. The weathered building transports you to a Mexican village, and the menu takes you to the streets of Mexico City with nopales and queso fresco tlacoyos, hibiscus flower quesadillas and chicken tinga huaraches. Bonus points for \$5 margaritas, sopecitos and more at happy hour.

## ***Lonesome Dove Western Bistro***

419 Colorado St. / 512-271-2474 / lonesomedoveaustin.com

A Fort Worth celebrity chef swaggered into Austin, a place with which he was already very familiar because of the Austin Food & Wine Festival and Austin City Limits Music Festival, and made himself at home. Lonesome Dove has some traditional oversized Texana aesthetic – taxidermy – and cuisine – garlic-stuffed beef tenderloin – but Tim Love adds thoughtful flourishes, like fettines made with wild game, and farro congee with kale pesto, pork cheek and cured egg, a modern day cowboy dish with an Asian twist. Bonus points for being a place to take out-of-state visitors wanting some of their Texas stereotypes reinforced.



RALPH BARRERA/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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## ***Louie Mueller Barbecue***

206 W. Second St., Taylor / 512-352-6206  
louiemuellerbarbecue.com

Louie Mueller Barbecue deserves to be included in the first sentence of any story about Texas barbecue. Wayne Mueller carries on the tradition of his grandfather and father with melt-in-your mouth brisket and a gargantuan beef rib with a gentle interior that belies its prehistoric heft and peppery crust. Mueller's classic beef sausage gets turned up two different ways, with jalapeño and chipotle varieties, and those looking for a sweeter sensation can tackle baby back ribs. Bonus points for a loaded baked potato that defines the form.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## ***Luke's Inside Out***

1109 S. Lamar Blvd.

512-589-8883

lukesinsideout.com

Luke Bibby is a 25-year veteran of Austin concert catering and kitchens like Jeffrey's and Granite Cafe, and he's stepped to the front of the stage with his little trailer next to the Gibson Bar. The juicy cheeseburger awash in special sauce and layered with crispy bacon is the kind you'd hope to find at a backyard party, and the Szechuan fried chicken sandwich that spills from its roll is almost big enough for two. That chicken echoes the global influences you'll find in other sandwiches like a Korean rabbit sandwich and nightly specials like a crab and basil roll with nam ploy aioli. Bonus points for being the perfect food to go with one-too-many drinks.

## ***Micklethwait Craft Meats***

1309 Rosewood Ave.

512-791-5961

craftmeatsaustin.com

A rock 'n' roll veteran (Tom Micklethwait) brought a passion for artisan sausages (get the lamb if you can) to this trailer, along with some cooks serious about food. So, in addition to hearty brisket with a crimson smoke ring, you can find stuffed quail, pickled cauliflower atop a Frito pie, and lush jalapeño cheese grits. Bonus points for the creamy buttermilk pie, the best you'll find at any barbecue trailer.



## **Noble Sandwich Co.**

12233 RM 620 North. 512-382-6248

4805 Burnet Road. 512-666-5124

noblesandwiches.com

Chef-owners John Bates and Brandon Martinez helped shift perceptions about Austin dining in multiple ways when they opened their original deli near Anderson Mill. They showed that chef-driven flavor profiles and techniques can be applied to a sandwich shop and that some of the city's best restaurants can thrive on the edges of town. Their seared beef tongue was one of the early nose-to-tail standard-bearers. Hearty breads, tangy pickles and meats prepared in-house, such as pulled pork, lush duck pastrami and roasted turkey, still make up the heart of a menu driven by sandwiches that pack big flavor while showing restraint in number of ingredients. Bonus points for occasional dinners like their collaboration this fall with Jester King Brewery.



CONTRIBUTED

## **P. Terry's**

Multiple locations

pterrys.com

P. Terry's is such a consistent and ubiquitous part of the Austin dining landscape that it's hard to believe it's been almost a decade since Patrick Terry helped us rethink what we could expect from a fast-food restaurant. His patty empire runs on humanely raised and antibiotic-free Angus beef and chicken. Quality ingredients don't stop there – they also serve Idaho potatoes hand-cut into twisting and tawny fries, cage-free organic eggs in the breakfast sandwiches, lemonade made with lemon, water and sugar, and one of the five best veggie burgers in town. For the record, my order is a double with bacon, cheese, mayonnaise, mustard, pickles, onions and jalapenos. Bonus points for always providing friendly service and consistently giving back to the community.



CONTRIBUTED



CONTRIBUTED

## **Paperboy**

1203 E. 11th St.

[www.paperboyaustin.com](http://www.paperboyaustin.com)

Having a very limited menu and hours is a loaded proposition: It gives you the chance to tighten your focus, but it also means everything has to be good. Paperboy pulls off the gambit with ease. The breakfast sandwiches are beautiful representations of the form, with fluffy brioche buns and perfect sunny-side-up eggs that have somehow defied being transported across town when I've used a third-party delivery vendor. They don't go crazy with wild and numerous ingredients. Instead, it's thick, crunchy bacon with pimento cheese, or caramelized onion maple butter with spicy goat sausage. Simple and great. Bonus points for taking a chance on a bold idea.

## **Parkside**

301 E. Sixth St.

512-474-9898

[parkside-austin.com](http://parkside-austin.com)

It's fitting that native Austinite chef Shawn Cirkiel should have the calling card restaurant on Austin's most famous street. It's just too bad most of his neighbors haven't been able to follow his lead. Texas bistro meets East Coast raw bar at this downtown spot with walls colored with the patina of time. At 8 years old, Parkside is the oldest of Cirkiel's four restaurants and still his best, thanks to the way it handles a bold grill (charred pork chop and steak colored with salsa verde) and its artistic touch at the best raw bar for posting up with a cocktail. Bonus points for a happy hour that includes the best burger value in town.

## ***Perla's***

1400 S. Congress Ave. / 512-291-7300 / [perlasaustin.com](http://perlasaustin.com)

Austin's beachside restaurant without the beach. Perla's is another prime example of McGuire Moorman Hospitality's ability to envision a restaurant and deliver down to the servers' outfits and the pens at the host stand. Sure, you go for the molten king crab and Parmesan grits, the crab Florentine at brunch, the impressive oyster selection and the meaty halibut with crispy skin – but you also go to feel transported. Bonus points for the best restaurant patio in town.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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## ***Pieous***

12005 U.S. 290 West / 512-394-7041 / [facebook.com/pieous](https://facebook.com/pieous)

Husband-and-wife team Josh and Paige Kaner have pulled off quite the accomplishment: They created a restaurant equally loved by families and food-obsessives. And they did it on the edge of town, and with the oddball combination of pizza and pastrami. Pieous piles the wobbly, perfumed folds of smoky beef pastrami into massive sandwiches, and their Neapolitan pizzas come out of the blazing oven charred and bubbled with a thick, chewy edge and gentle middle. Bonus points for giving us a reason to make a pit stop on our way out to the Hill Country.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Poke-Poke**

3100 S. Congress Ave.

512-814-1032

poke-poke.com

Texas natives and married couple Jason McVeary and Trisha Fortuna had success with Poke-Poke in Venice Beach, Calif., after leaving Hawaii, the home of poke, and this tiny spot on South Congress Avenue arrived in the sweltering Austin summer like a cool breeze. For those not familiar with poke, think a deconstructed complex sushi roll in a bowl, with mounds of beautiful, rough-cut sashimi-grade ahi tuna. (You also can get salmon.) The tuna – tossed with soy sauce, onions and sesame oil and seeds for a salty, piquant, nutty bite – sits atop a base of white or brown rice (or go Hawaiian style with no rice and a little more fish), colored and flavored with your choice of custom ingredients such as kale, ginger, macadamia nuts, pickled seaweed and more. Bonus points for natural shaved ice for dessert.

## **Ramen Tatsu-Ya**

1234 S. Lamar Blvd.

512-893-5561

ramen-tatsuya.com

I wonder if Tatsu Aikawa and Takuya Matsumoto knew what they were about to unleash when they launched their original restaurant in North Austin. Having spent time in Los Angeles and Japan, the two former DJs must have been pumping with excitement to turn Austinites on to the noodle soup. But they didn't cut any corners. The rich, creamy tonkotsu made of boiled pork bones takes 60 hours to create, and their thin vermicelli-style noodles are the perfect accompaniment in the bowl that also has a marinated egg, wood ear mushrooms and scallions. I'm partial to the lighter Ol' Skool, made with chicken shoyu broth and served with more robust noodles and bamboo shoots. Bonus points for serving chilled ramen in the summer heat.

---

## **Sabor a Honduras**

2538 Elmont Drive

512-326-1086

facebook.com/saborahonduras

Pupusas may never match corn tortillas for market dominance in Austin, but the puffy Central American staple makes for a great delivery mechanism with fuller mouthfeel. Order them stuffed with chicharrón and melted white cheese at this East Austin trailer. Another must: fried chicken wrapped in a sweet, knobby crust and covered in a tangy cream sauce. The large pieces of hot, oily bird come with pickled onions and tender medallions of fried plantains. Bonus points for expanding Austinites' ideas about food from south of the border.

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[FourthAndAustin.com](http://FourthAndAustin.com)

1800 E. 4th STREET  
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# Saffron

3616 Far West Blvd. / 512-241-1732 / saffronaustin.com

Co-owner Thiniso Tashi was raised in Northeast India by a Tibetan father and Nepalese mother, and the menu at his restaurant straddles Tibet and Nepal, with one foot in India and one in China. Persimmon-colored rounds of fried gobi Manchurian (cauliflower) resemble Indo-Chinese chicken and buzz with the seductive sting of red chilies soothed by a salty lacquer of soy. The menu's Nepalese section highlights momos, pinched steamed pouches cooled by a creamy sesame seed-based dipping sauce, cradling a mixture of minced vegetables and aromatic ground chicken. My favorite dishes? A goat curry infused with marrow, cumin, cinnamon and garlic and the puckering punch of pickled achari chicken. Bonus points for their lunch buffet.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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## Saigon Le Vendeur

2404 E. Seventh St. / 512-351-6916 / saigon7th.com

Chef Tebi Nguyen previously worked at Daruma Ramen, but the food from his native Vietnam is the star at his East Austin trailer. The nit-picking sort might ding Saigon Le Vendeur for not baking its baguettes completely from scratch (they arrive par-baked from out of state). Otherwise, the grilled pork banh mi is perfection: loads of gently sweet pork, tangy pickled vegetables, floral cilantro, crunchy cucumber and expressive homemade mayonnaise. Offerings extend beyond sandwiches with daily specials such as a bowl of lively vermicelli and crisp bean sprouts and lettuce scattered with about a half-dozen grilled shrimp perfumed by toasted garlic. Bonus points for fresh coconut water and iced jasmine tea.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## ***Salt & Time***

1912 E. Seventh St. / 512-524-1383 / [www.saltandtime.com](http://www.saltandtime.com)

A butcher shop helmed by both a charcuterie maker and a butcher ... it's like chocolate and peanut butter in the same jar. Or house-cured bacon on top of a thick burger. This place loves its meat, and with good reason, so it doesn't commit the sin of overadorning sandwiches like an Italian grinder with grape tapenade or a succulent lamb burger wiped with a whisper of creme fraiche and thin-sliced fennel. A white Sonoran pappardelle shows the restaurant has designs beyond meat, though of course it has Salt & Time's signature funky 'nduja, which you also can spread on their rotund burger. Bonus points for the attached butcher shop and strong beer selection.

---



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## ***Sa-Ten***

916 Springdale Road / 512-524-1544 / [sa-ten.com](http://sa-ten.com)

Japan reminds me of craftsmanship and perfection, even when things are seemingly simple. There is something calming and cool about this glass-walled cafe in an industrial complex that is fittingly home to artists' studios. Sa-Ten's flossy, feathery and slightly sweet toast made with Japanese milk bread recalls my cherished breakfasts when visiting Japan. The nori tama toast comes topped with crumbled egg spread across the bread's ivory expanse, with a melted layer of mozzarella holding it in place. The creamy mixture is spotted with green onions and the oceanic flavors of dried seaweed flakes. Who needs breakfast tacos when you have this? Bonus points for some of the best wallpaper in town.



AMERICAN-STATESMAN 2013

## **Second Bar + Kitchen**

200 Congress Ave. 512-827-2750

[secondbarkitchen.com](http://secondbarkitchen.com)

3121 Palm Way. 512-836-5700

[sbkdomain.com](http://sbkdomain.com)

Second Bar + Kitchen can be held up as a model for dependable modern American cuisine that mostly plays it straightforward while still offering a few international twists, from the Thai-influenced salmon dish with nam pla to a chicken mole pizza. Truffle aioli and house-made hot sauce allow french fries and fried pickles to masquerade as more upscale dishes, and the gruyere-covered hamburger made with rich brisket meat and a roster of solid pizzas are the hallmarks of a restaurant that could thrive in any city in America. That broad appeal explains why the restaurant recently expanded to a hotel in the Domain and will have a location at the airport next year. Bonus points for an open-air private dining balcony at the downtown location.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Sichuan River**

4534 West Gate Blvd.

512-892-6699

[sichuanriverchinese.com](http://sichuanriverchinese.com)

Cindy Zhao answered some South Austinites' prayers when she sold her A+A Sichuan in North Austin and brought her brand of Szechuan food south of the river. As with all good Chinese restaurants, head to the specials like the spicy jumping fish fillet. Despite its bath in an oily soy-fueled umami broth, the fish maintains a plump, meaty consistency beneath a shower of green onion and a confetti of red pepper. The smart play is to order anything that promises the heat of Szechuan. The more tame but equally flavorful move is twice-cooked pork, its fatty ribbons of belly twirling across the dish. Bonus points for delivery (to a limited area).





MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Sway**

1417 S. First St.

512-326-1999

swayaustin.com

This warm restaurant, all dark wood and nest-like light fixtures suspended over communal tables, helped introduce many Austinites to the idea of Asian food served in modern and sophisticated settings. It has seen its founding chef and his replacement depart over the years, but Sway remains relatively consistent and popular thanks to blue crab fried rice, the sticky tangle of pad Thai dusted with toasted cashews and large shrimp, and a robust vegetarian curry full of butternut and kabocha squash. Bonus points for a patio perfect for al fresco dining when the weather agrees.



CONTRIBUTED

## **Swift's Attic**

315 Congress Ave.

512-482-8842

swiftsattic.com

Executive chef Zack Northcutt left the kitchen at Swift's Attic in summer 2016 after five years, though he was replaced by longtime Swift's veteran Matthew Taylor. It will be interesting to see what Taylor brings to a kitchen that has drawn on Asian influences for dishes like Brussels sprouts with nuoc cham and mushrooms with white pepper soy and bok choy. Swift's has carved a niche as a populist gastrotroclub (peep the bar scene and the music) that can get creative without challenging its guests too much, so expect more comforting dishes like Korean steak and pork cheeks with figs. Bonus points for its Monday night burger specials that feature some of the most over-the-top takes on a burger you'll find anywhere.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Szechuan House**

11005 Burnet Road

512-832-8989

[austinszechuanhouse.com](http://austinszechuanhouse.com)

You can get orange chicken and sweet-and-sour pork at pretty much any Chinese restaurant (or airport) in America. Come to this bustling lunch spot (calmer at dinner) for a tea-smoked (then fried) duck that looks like tanned leather on the outside but crackles and pops when you bite into it, revealing tender meat. Cumin lamb zips with the familiar Mexican spice, and the pile of fragrant Szechuan peppers on the fried chicken will tingle your lips and bead sweat on your forehead. Bonus points for being a great place to dine on Christmas (if you can get a table).

## **Tacodeli**

1500 Spyglass Drive. 512-732-0303

4200 N. Lamar Blvd. 512-419-1900

701 Loop 360. 512-347-8888

[tacodeli.com](http://tacodeli.com)

Tacodeli has survived and thrived since 1999 because of considered flavor layering, quality sourcing and smart growth. Fans have long thought the taco bar could add hours and locations and blow up like some other mini-chains, but owners Roberto Espinosa and Eric Wilkerson have taken their time. The hours still stick to morning and afternoon, but there are now several Austin locations, one in Dallas and one in Houston serving the Cowboy Taco (dry-rubbed beef tenderloin sweetened with grilled corn, caramelized onions and roasted peppers and cooled with guacamole and queso fresco), the iron-packed Popeye with spinach and egg, and the smoky-sweet Papadulce centered on sweet potatoes. The fiery green Doña sauce is one of the most popular and beloved condiments in Austin, and with good reason. Bonus points for not losing their culture during their patient growth.

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## ***Tan My***

1601 Ohlen Road

512-832-9585

Mea culpa time: It's hard to suss out every good restaurant in town. I miss places for any number of reasons. Sometimes they hide in plain sight, and sometimes they are tucked away. The Tran family has operated this Vietnamese restaurant behind the Target off U.S. 183 for 21 years, but I didn't pay my first visit until this year. Now, it is my favorite Vietnamese spot in town. The pho has depth and character, and the round eye beef, often too dry in pho, was velvety and beefy, like thin-sliced prime rib at Christmas. A marinade of soy sauce, garlic and a splash of fish sauce elevates the charbroiled pork into transcendent meat candy. The pork comes on other dishes, and I am told you can order by the pound. I know what I'm ordering next time. Bonus points for friendly family service, from the parents and their children, as well as the non-family members of the team.

## ***Taste of Ethiopia***

1100 Grand Avenue Parkway  
Pflugerville  
512-251-4053

3801 S. Congress Ave. Suite 107  
512-814-3141

[tasteofethiopiaaustin.com](http://tasteofethiopiaaustin.com)

Woinee Mariam imbues her Pflugerville restaurant with a motherly affection that warms guests as much as the ubiquitous Ethiopian berbere. The spice blend infuses the tender chicken of a dish of doro wat, the national dish of Mariam's native Ethiopia. Pull the meat from the bone and snatch it up with the springy injera bread on which it arrives. You'll also use the customary bread to fold around raw marinated beef buzzing with bird's eye chili and an assortment of vegetables, like split-pea purée glowing with turmeric and a stew of tangy and mildly sweet collard greens kicked by jalapeno. Bonus points for Mariam's indefatigable spirit, which led to the fall 2016 opening of a second location on South Congress Avenue.

## ***Texas French Bread***

2900 Rio Grande St.

512-499-0544

[texasfrenchbread.com](http://texasfrenchbread.com)

Austinites of a certain age will remember when co-owner Murph Wilcott's mother opened her flagship Texas French Bread in this location 30 years ago. Austinites of an even older vintage will remember the brick building with the corner door as the Rome Inn music club. Over the past eight years or so, Murph and Ben Wilcott have transformed their mother's operation from a bakery and cafe into a neighborhood bistro with a love of wine, music and the principals of artisan craftsmanship on which TFB was founded. The breakfast pastries and sandwiches are as solid as ever, and the Wilcotts rely on the seasonal, farm-to-table philosophy to guide a small and changing bistro menu that weds France, California and Texas for dishes like classic roasted chicken, grilled quail, and usually at least one homemade pasta colored with local veggies. Bonus points for an entertaining soundtrack and newsletter.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Thai Fresh**

909 W. Mary St.

512-494-6436

thai-fresh.com

Before she and her husband, Bruce Barnes, opened Thai Fresh in 2008, Jam Sanitchat taught cooking classes in her and other people's kitchens. The couple have since turned this South Austin staple into a sort of neighborhood kitchen that fosters a communal spirit and some healthy eating habits. A bakery and ice cream shop specializing in gluten-free baked goods sits next to the original dining room, which now features sit-down service. Sweet potatoes and pineapple fortify masaman curry with a meaty sweetness, and supple sirloin packs protein into a vibrant green salad with a dressing full of the hallmarks of Thai food: sweet, sour, salt and sting. The couple met working at Hoover's, and their fried chicken sandwich puts a spicy Thai twist on the classic. Bonus points for being an early Austin adopter of the service-included pay model, which helps raise the salaries of those working in the kitchen.

## **Thai Kun**

11601 Rock Rose Ave. Suite 101.  
512-719-3332

1816 E. Sixth St.

www.thaikun.com

"I don't know how to twist it to American style. I grew up this way," chef Thai Changthong once told me about his Thai food. "This way" is with the spicy street food of his native Thailand. The chef's original East Side King truck spin-off was so successful that it led to its own brick-and-mortar location in Rock Rose at the Domain's Northside. His food alone gives the development with the perfectly paved street some actual street cred. If papaya salad sounds like a calming walk on the beach, it isn't. Thai chilies leave their stinging mark on the salad topped with fermented crab and cherry tomato. Use sticky rice to scoop it, just as you do with the ground pork larb cooled ever so slightly by cucumber and mint. Looking to savor flavor with less burn? Try the bronzed fried chicken thighs or tender steamed chicken served with chicken fat rice and a soothing chicken jus. Bonus points for bringing raw heat to a sanitized area.



DEBORAH CANNON/AMERICAN-STATESMAN



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Three Little Pigs**

6507 Burnet Road

512-653-5088

3littlepigsaustin.com

Most trailer chefs dream of someday running their own kitchen. Chef Ray Tatum flipped the script. The grumbling, long-haired hippie possesses a resume that includes restaurants like Jean-Luc's French Bistro, Brio Vista and Jeffrey's, where Tatum was the executive chef for more than a decade. He escaped traditional kitchens and started his renegade life as a trailer chef about eight years ago. His influences span from the South (meatloaf encircled by crunchy bacon and served with crisp and sweet collard greens fit for a Tennessee meat-and-three) to Southeast Asia (flank steak vibrating with fish sauce and hand-picked herbs). His Texas roots show in a surprisingly tender dish of cubed carnitas humming with familiar Mexican spices seared to the beef's surface and served with drunken beans. Bonus points for the proximity to whiskey and pinball inside the neighboring Aristocrat Lounge.

## **Titaya's**

5501 N. Lamar Blvd. / 512-458-1792

titayasthaicuisine.com

Austinites received Titaya Timrerck like a queen returning to her empire after her yearlong hiatus two years ago. With a full dining room and a waiting area regularly packed at both lunch and dinner, Timrerck can make claim to being the operator of arguably Austin's most beloved Thai restaurant. The fibrous snap of bamboo strips and zucchini fills a green curry warmed with serrano peppers and sweetened with coconut milk in one of several curries at Titaya's. If you're looking for more heat, get the seafood-packed Basil Talay, in which hot chili and garlic buzz the shrimp, squid and green mussels. Start with the savory crunch of her fried chicken that comes topped with a floral pile of fried lemongrass that looks like hay. Bonus points for filling and flavorful lunch specials for less than \$10.

---

## **Top Notch**

7525 Burnet Road / 512-452-2181

topnotchaustin.com

Car-hop stalls, charcoal grills, the hard red chairs, vintage paper cup design and one of the most recognizable signs in town ... a meal at Top Notch is a time-traveling experience back to the restaurant's 1971 opening and beyond. Yes, nostalgia helps this place into the list, but so do the milk wash and secret-recipe seasoning that give the fried chicken sandwich a pale, soft crust and tender meat. Tangy mayonnaise glistens on the thin, church-picnic bun with a simple dress of tomato, crunchy lettuce and rounds of pickles. The charcoal-fired flame marks on a juicy burger remind you of a backyard party from decades ago. Bonus points for its role in quintessential Austin filmmaker Richard Linklater's "Dazed and Confused." Alright, alright, alright.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Valentina's Tex Mex BBQ**

7612 Brodie Lane

512-221-4248

[valentinastexmexbbq.com](http://valentinastexmexbbq.com)

Growing up in San Antonio put Miguel Vidal near the crossroads of the South Texas and Central Texas culinary worlds, making him the perfect person to synthesize Mexican food and Central Texas barbecue. We can thank his family's tradition of barbecue gatherings that included hand-made flour tortillas and salsa for this melding of Tex-Mex flavors that produces a taco of fatty brisket with a peppery, ebony bark, spritzed with lime and brightened with chunky guacamole and cilantro. The tang and crunch of slaw balances the deep smoke of tender pulled pork that comes on a sandwich on the "Tex" side of the menu at this trailer, or go to the "Mex" side for smoked carnitas in a taco sweetened with caramelized onions and piqued by tomatillo and habanero salsa. Bonus points for showing us the foods we know and love in a new context.

## **Veracruz All Natural**

1704 E. Cesar Chavez St.  
512-981-1760

4208 Manchaca Road. 512-629-8238

2711 La Frontera Blvd. Suite 320,  
Round Rock. 512-388-6595

[veracruzacos.com](http://veracruzacos.com)

I can't think of an Austin taco that has gotten more national love than the migas taco at Veracruz. People across the country are catching on to what many Austinites have known since 2009, when Veracruz, Mexico, natives and sisters Maritza and Reyna Vazquez opened their flagship trailer on East Cesar Chavez Street. Yes, the tortilla strips stay crunchy amid the steaming tumult of eggs. Yes, the avocado and tomato are always fresh. Yes, the puffy and soft flour tortillas provide just the right amount of chew. But the thing that gets me every time is that perfect balance of salt and pepper. Reyna grew up cooking with their mother near the Veracruz beach, evidenced by the crunch and tenderness of seared fish tacos. Bonus points for more than a half-dozen homemade aguas frescas that recall the sisters' original fruteria stand.



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3016 Guadalupe St. #100  
512-358-6193

[via313.com](http://via313.com)

Many folks move to Austin and assimilate with the established aesthetic. Not Zane and Brandon Hunt. They came down and put their burly Michigan stamp on Austin, opening an industrial shack of a food trailer about five years ago in East Austin and serving big, thick squares of Detroit-style pizza. While Austinites had undoubtedly seen rectangular pies and square slices before, they'd never seen them this fluffy, this cheesy and this good. The Detroit layers smoked pepperoni below a mound of mozzarella and tops it with natural-casing pepperoni. When the guys opened their first brick-and-mortar location (they now own two), they brought the sensation to the suburbs, along with thinner-crust bar pizzas with Detroit-centric names like the Supremes and the MC5, which is much cheesier than the actual Detroit punk legends. Bonus points for being one of the few places in town where you can buy Fay-go soda pop.



CONTRIBUTED

## Vinaigrette

2201 College Ave.

512-852-8791

[vinaigretteonline.com](http://vinaigretteonline.com)

We give some outsiders side-eye when they try and slide into the Austin market, but Erin Wade's salad concept from New Mexico has made for a perfect fit off South Congress Avenue. The salad bar idea has limped along for decades, but Wade revitalizes it with fresh ingredients (many soon to come from a farm she is building in Bastrop) topped with an array of well-executed proteins and served in an airy, modern, bright space. One of the keys to the salads' balance: well-dressed greens, so every bite carries a flavorful sheen, from the zippy lemon-anchovy vinaigrette on a kale Caesar with Parmesan and Marcona almonds (add lemon-herb chicken) to the blush of ruby port vinaigrette on a bed of arugula draped with juicy grilled pork tenderloin, pickled fennel, sharp cheddar and matchstick green apples. Bonus points for cocktails made with juice from fresh produce.



MATTHEW ODAM/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Winebelly**

519 W. Oltorf St.

512-487-1569

[austinwinebelly.com](http://austinwinebelly.com)

Before there was Winebelly, there was bohemian coffee shop the Green Muse. And for those who worried that the switch a few years ago meant their neighborhood was gentrifying or changing too much, too fast, Winebelly put those fears at ease. It pulls off the familiarity and friendliness of a coffee shop with the added sophistication of a wine bar. On the light end, you can order a pretty roasted beet salad that features strawberries one week and blueberries and candied pistachios the next, or a plate of expressive cured white anchovies. Trying to decide whether the fish would be best with a pinot grigio or a dry rosé? The knowledgeable staff will walk you through the 100+ bottles on the list and tell you what red stands up best to gamy and sweet grilled lamb ribs. Bonus points for holding the haughtiness.



RODOLFO GONZALEZ/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

## **Wink**

1014 N. Lamar Blvd.

512-482-8868

[winkrestaurant.com](http://winkrestaurant.com)

Owners Stuart Scruggs and Mark Paul have devised a solid blueprint for a restaurant that blends neighborhood friendliness and special-occasion flair. The men, whose careers in this town stretch back to the 1980s, opened this intimate restaurant in 2001 and have endured over the years thanks to their trend-setting farm-to-table menu. It rotates regularly but is built on sturdy ground. One key to lasting success: surprise people while still playing the hits. You know you'll always find foie gras (but maybe you didn't know it would come with a bright cucumber salad and rich almond butter), and your favorites, such as scallops and veal sweetbreads, will always shape-shift, with a recent meal popping with orange-ginger vinaigrette on the former and the nuttiness of kabocha squash on the latter. Bonus point for veteran staff and the cozy and convivial adjacent wine bar.

## ABOUT THE CRITIC

# Matthew Odam

**M**ATTHEW ODAM IS AN Austin-born, fourth-generation Texan who has been writing about Austin restaurants for more than a decade. He has served as the restaurant critic and reporter at the Austin American-Statesman since 2011. Odam also travels across the state and North America, eating in restaurants from Vancouver, Canada, to Portland, Maine, for his Statesman travel and dining column, the Feed to Go. The Texas Associated Press Managing Editors and American Society of Features Journalism have recognized Odam's work with five awards for criticism and features writing.

Odam's love for food started as a byproduct of his grandparents' garden and his grandmother's cooking. His interest blossomed when he studied literature in Rome during his college years, a city to which he would return a

few years later to work as a tour guide (and to eat).

It's impossible to pin down his favorite meal, but an oak-grilled ribeye steak with grilled Gulf shrimp has a special place in his heart. As does pizza, pasta, Mexican food, hamburgers, hot dogs, sandwiches, roasted root vegetables, cheese, fresh cucumbers dusted with salt, charcuterie, gelato, barbecue, sushi and, well, you get the point.

When he's not eating, he's reading, traveling, at the movies, spending time with his dog and girlfriend, admiring the Hill Country, watching sports or wondering why he continues to play golf.

Follow Matthew's culinary journey:  
Email: [modam@statesman.com](mailto:modam@statesman.com)  
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Twitter: [@odam](https://twitter.com/odam)

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Fabi & Rosi.....56

### HAMBURGERS

P. Terry's.....89  
Top Notch.....103

### INDIAN

Bombay Dhaba  
(trailer).....70  
Clay Pit.....72  
Saffron.....94

### ITALIAN

Bufalina.....50  
Enoteca.....74  
Juniper.....42  
L'Oca d'Oro.....54

### JAPANESE

Kome.....84  
Kyoten Sushiko.....36  
Otoko.....28  
Ramen Tatsu-Ya.....92  
Sa-Ten.....95  
Uchi/Uchiko.....45

### MEDITERRANEAN

Cantine.....71

### MEXICAN

Capital Taco (trailer) 71  
El Alma.....73  
El Naranjo.....57  
Fonda San Miguel.....76  
Fresa's.....77  
La Condesa.....85  
La Flor (trailer).....86  
Licha's Cantina.....86  
Tacodeli.....98  
Veracruz All Natural  
(trailer and  
restaurant).....104

### NEW AMERICAN

Apis.....20  
Barley Swine.....8  
Bartlett's.....67  
Boiler Nine.....66  
Café No Sé.....58

Chicon.....60  
Contigo.....72  
Counter 357.....52  
Dai Due.....40  
Emmer & Rye.....32  
Foreign & Domestic..64  
The Hightower.....78  
The Hollow.....78  
Josephine House.....83  
Lauderette.....53  
Leaning Pear.....86  
Lenoir.....48  
Luke's Inside Out  
(trailer).....88  
Noble Sandwich Co..89  
Odd Duck.....24  
Parkside.....90  
Salt & Time.....95  
Second Bar  
+ Kitchen.....96  
Texas French  
Bread.....101  
The Townsend.....65  
Vino Vino.....62  
Winebelly.....107  
Wink.....107

### PIZZA

Home Slice.....79  
House Pizzeria.....80  
Pieous.....91  
Via 313 (trailer and  
restaurant).....106

### PUB FOOD

Black Star Co-Op.....68

### SALADS

Vinaigrette.....106

### SEAFOOD

Clark's Oyster Bar.....61  
Garbo's (trailer and  
restaurant).....77  
Perla's.....91  
Poke-Poke.....92

### SOUTHERN

Olamaie.....16

### STEAKHOUSE

Jeffrey's.....82  
Lonesome Dove  
Western Bistro.....87

### THAI

Sway.....97  
Thai Fresh.....102  
Thai Kun (trailer and  
restaurant).....102  
Titaya's.....103

### TRAILERS

Bombay Dhaba  
(Indian).....70  
Brown's Bar-B-Que  
(Barbecue).....70  
Capital Taco  
(Mexican).....71  
East Side King  
(Fusion, also has  
a restaurant).....73  
Garbo's (Seafood, also  
has a restaurant)...77  
Kerlin BBQ  
(Barbecue).....84  
La Barbecue  
(Barbecue).....85  
La Flor (Mexican)....86  
Luke's Inside Out (New  
American).....88  
Micklethwait Craft  
Meats (Barbecue)..88  
Paperboy  
(Breakfast).....90  
Sabor a Honduras  
(Central  
American).....92  
Saigon le Vendeur  
(Vietnamese).....94  
Thai Kun (Thai, also has  
a restaurant).....102  
Three Little Pigs  
(Fusion).....103  
Valentina's Tex Mex  
BBQ (Barbecue)..104  
Veracruz All Natural  
(Mexican, also has a  
restaurant).....104  
Via 313 (Pizza, also has  
a restaurant).....106

### VIETNAMESE

Elizabeth Street  
Cafe.....74  
Saigon le Vendeur  
(trailer).....94  
Tan My.....100

## TOP 100 BY **Location**

### CENTRAL

Clark's (Seafood) ..... 61  
 Clay Pit  
 (Indian, trailer) ..... 72  
 Epicerie (French-  
 Louisiana) ..... 76  
 Fonda San Miguel  
 (Mexican) ..... 76  
 Foreign & Domestic  
 (New American) ... 64  
 Freedmen's  
 (Barbecue) ..... 76  
 Fresa's (Mexican) ..... 77  
 Hopfields (French/  
 New American) .... 79  
 Jeffrey's  
 (Steakhouse) ..... 82  
 Josephine House  
 (New American) ... 83  
 Noble Sandwich Co.  
 (New American) ... 89  
 Olamaie (Southern) ..16  
 Texas French Bread  
 (New American) .. 101  
 Titaya's (Thai) ..... 103  
 Uchiko (Japanese) ... 45  
 Via 313 (Pizza) ..... 106  
 Vino Vino  
 (New American) ... 62  
 Wink  
 (New American) ..107

### DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

Boiler Nine  
 (New American) ... 66  
 Counter 357  
 (New American) ... 52  
 El Naranjo  
 (Mexican) ..... 57  
 Emmer & Rye  
 (New American) ... 32  
 La Condesa  
 (Mexican) ..... 85  
 Lonesome Dove  
 Western Bistro  
 (Steakhouse) ..... 87  
 Parkside  
 (New American) ... 90  
 Second Bar + Kitchen  
 (New American) ... 96  
 Swift's Attic  
 (Fusion) ..... 97  
 The Townsend  
 (New American) ... 65  
 Via 313 (Pizza) ..... 106

### EAST

Bufalina (Italian) ..... 50  
 Chicon  
 (New American) ... 60  
 Contigo  
 (New American) .... 72  
 Dai Due  
 (New American) ... 40  
 East Side King  
 (Fusion, trailer) ..... 73  
 Franklin Barbecue  
 (Barbecue) ..... 49  
 The Hightower  
 (New American) ... 78  
 Juniper (Italian) ..... 42  
 Justine's (French) ... 83  
 Kerlin BBQ (Barbecue,  
 trailer) ..... 84  
 Kyoten Sushiko  
 (Japanese) ..... 36  
 L'Oca d'Oro  
 (Italian) ..... 54  
 La Barbecue (Barbecue,  
 trailer) ..... 85  
 Lauderette  
 (New American) ... 53  
 Licha's Cantina  
 (Mexican) ..... 86  
 Micklethwait Craft Meats  
 (Barbecue) ..... 88  
 Paperboy (Breakfast,  
 trailer) ..... 90  
 Sabor a Honduras  
 (Central American,  
 trailer) ..... 92  
 Saigon le Vendeur  
 (Vietnamese,  
 trailer) ..... 94  
 Salt & Time  
 (New American) ... 95  
 Sa-Ten (Japanese) ... 95  
 Thai Kun  
 (Thai, trailer) ..... 102  
 Veracruz All Natural  
 (Mexican, trailer) ..104  
 Via 313  
 (Pizza, trailer) ..... 106

### EVERYWHERE

P. Terry's  
 (Hamburgers) ..... 89

### NORTH

Barley Swine  
 (New American) .... 8  
 Bartlett's  
 (New American) ... 67

Black Star Co-Op  
 (Pub Food) ..... 68  
 Bufalina (Italian) ..... 50  
 Garbo's (Seafood) .... 77  
 House Pizzeria  
 (Pizza) ..... 80  
 Kome (Japanese) ..... 84  
 Ramen Tatsu-Ya  
 (Japanese) ..... 92  
 Szechuan House  
 (Chinese) ..... 98  
 Tacodeli (Mexican) ..98  
 Tan My  
 (Vietnamese) ..... 100  
 Thai Kun (Thai) ..... 102  
 Three Little Pigs  
 (Fusion, trailer) ... 103  
 Top Notch  
 (Hamburgers) .... 103

### NORTHWEST

Chen's Noodle House  
 (Chinese) ..... 71  
 Saffron (Indian) ..... 94  
 Noble Sandwich Co.  
 (New American) ... 89

### OUTSIDE AUSTIN

Apis (Spicewood, New  
 American) ..... 20  
 Black's Barbecue  
 (Lockhart,  
 Barbecue) ..... 68  
 Hwy 29 (Bertram,  
 Barbecue) ..... 80  
 The Hollow  
 (Georgetown,  
 New American) .... 78  
 Jack Allen's Kitchen  
 (Round Rock,  
 Comfort) ..... 82  
 Kreuz Market (Lockhart,  
 Barbecue) ..... 84  
 Leaning Pear  
 (Wimberley,  
 New American) .... 86  
 Louie Mueller  
 Barbecue (Taylor,  
 Barbecue) ..... 87  
 Taste of Ethiopia  
 (Pflugerville,  
 Ethiopian) ..... 101  
 Veracruz All Natural  
 (Round Rock,  
 Mexican) ..... 104

### SOUTH

Bombay Dhaba  
 (Indian, trailer) ..... 70  
 Brown's Bar-B-Q  
 (Barbecue, trailer) ..70  
 Café No Sé  
 (New American) ... 58  
 Cantine  
 (Mediterranean) .... 71  
 Capital Taco  
 (Mexican, trailer) ... 71  
 East Side King  
 (Fusion) ..... 73  
 El Alma (Mexican) ..... 73  
 Elizabeth Street Cafe  
 (Vietnamese) ..... 74  
 Enoteca (Italian) ..... 74  
 Fresa's (Mexican) ..... 77  
 Home Slice (Pizza) ... 79  
 Jack Allen's Kitchen  
 (Comfort) ..... 82  
 La Flor  
 (Mexican, trailer) ..86  
 Lenoir  
 (New American) ... 48  
 Luke's Inside Out (New  
 American, trailer) ... 88  
 Odd Duck  
 (New American) ... 24  
 Otoko (Japanese) .... 28  
 Perla's (Seafood) ..... 91  
 Pious (Pizza) ..... 91  
 Poke-Poke  
 (Seafood) ..... 92  
 Ramen Tatsu-Ya  
 (Japanese) ..... 92  
 Sichuan River  
 (Chinese) ..... 96  
 Sway (Thai) ..... 97  
 Taste of Ethiopia  
 (Ethiopian) ..... 101  
 Thai Fresh (Thai) .... 102  
 Valentina's Tex Mex  
 BBQ (Barbecue,  
 trailer) ..... 104  
 Vinaigrette  
 (Salads) ..... 106  
 Winebelly  
 (New American) ..107  
 Uchi (Japanese) ..... 45  
 Veracruz All Natural  
 (Mexican, trailer) ..104  
 Via 313 (Pizza) ..... 106

### WEST

Baguette et Chocolat  
 (French) ..... 67  
 Fabi & Rosi  
 (German) ..... 56  
 Jack Allen's Kitchen  
 (Comfort) ..... 82  
 Tacodeli (Mexican) ..98



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