

Hidden Gems & Delicious Destinations

Northwest
Southwest
Central
South
East

A Great American Food Revolution is under way across this mighty, delicious land. From Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine, here are the surprising scenes that promise tasty times ahead.

Produced by
Cindy Hatcher



NEW ORLEANS, LA
Cure bartender
Kirk Estopinal



CHICAGO, IL
Beets with Goat Cheese
Fondue at Vera



PHOTOGRAPHY (LEFT) JOHNNY AUTRY; FOOD STYLING: BLAKESLEE WRIGHT; PROP STYLING: CINDY BARR

CAMBRIDGE, MA
Salts' Heirloom Tomatoes
with Mozzarella



SAN FRANCISCO, CA
Deli counter at
Bi-Rite Market

Northwest

CRAFT COCKTAIL GAME CHANGER

Portland, Oregon's Distillery Row

New-wave cocktail-centric joints can be found in nearly any large town, but, with the recent addition of two more distilleries, this southwest Portland neighborhood testifies to the small-batch industry that lies at the center of America's artisanal-spirit rebirth. A party air prevails as visitors walk, bike, or pedicab between tasting rooms. A nominal fee earns sips of aquavit aged in pinot noir barrels, saffron-infused vodka, and lots more.

There should be no imbibing without chow. **Beaker & Flask** matches top-notch food (a small plate of Black Lentil Salad, Shaved Fennel, Radish, Soft Egg) to its craft cocktails. Eating here, you're in the nerve center of the high-spirited urban equivalent of a wine-country boom. —Ivy Manning



Portland's House Spirits



Seattle's
The Walrus &
the Carpenter

SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD SCENE

Seattle's Ballard neighborhood

The Pacific Northwest's historic maritime traditions merge with today's landlubbing locavorism in Ballard, home port for those who prowl North Pacific waters in search of salmon, halibut, and Dungeness crabs. This north Seattle neighborhood is a testament to how much the region's fisheries have evolved to serve its selective palates.

Sustainable seafood is offered throughout Ballard, often appearing on menus with other local items like foraged mushrooms or wild blackberries from the neighborhood's celebrated Sunday market. But the nexus of culinary creativity is **Staple & Fancy**, where Chef Ethan Stowell plates family-style feasts, featuring grilled sardines and geoduck crudo. Bivalve fans migrate to **The Walrus & the Carpenter**, perhaps the Northwest's finest oyster bar.

If you really want to experience what fishing-dock neighborhoods can feel like in this age of sustainability, buy directly from boats at Fishermen's Terminal. Each shimmering chinook salmon is a reminder that, for the North Pacific's fleet, Ballard is where the sea begins. —Hanna Raskin



Staple & Fancy

THIS PAGE PHOTOGRAPHY: (LEFT) JOHN CLARK; (RIGHT) THOMAS BARWICK; (INSET) GEOFFREY SMITH; PREVIOUS PAGE PHOTOGRAPHY: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) CEDRIC ANGELES; MIKE SCHACHT/312 ELEMENTS PHOTOGRAPHY; AYA BRACKETT; ANTHONY TIEULI

Santa Barbara County's wine-tasting revolution

Sideways put Santa Barbara and its pinot noirs on the map back in 2004. Now, a new generation of young winemakers is fiddling with ideas about traditional tasting rooms.

You'll see the transformation in Los Olivos, Los Alamos, and Lompoc, where a group of winemakers called the Lompoc Wine Ghetto pools shared equipment, knowledge, and 16 tasting rooms representing more than 20 local wineries, all housed in a two-block industrial complex.

This is no romantic sipping experience; it's a fluorescent-lit warehouse located behind a Home Depot. But you're clinking glasses with the winemakers themselves, and their passion for what's coming out of nearby vineyards can be every bit as beautiful as those scenic Napa clichés. —Cindy Hatcher

A VIBRANT IDEA IN WINE COUNTRY



FUN, FUNKY FOOD STORE

San Francisco's Bi-Rite

If you want to see the future of food retail for the foodie generation—not only packed with the finest and freshest wares, but deeply committed to social and environmental ideals—look no further than San Francisco's **Bi-Rite Market**, an idealized template for what a neighborhood market should be.

A Mission District staple since 1940, Bi-Rite has recently evolved to earn a cult following for its local, organic produce, outstanding California wine selection, and tall counter of pasture-raised meat and sustainable Pacific seafood that glows like a gourmet altar. Small as it is, this grocery now has its own cookbook (2011's *Eat Good Food*), three organic farms, an artisanal ice creamery, and a nonprofit called **18 Reasons**, where home chefs gather around a reclaimed cypress-tree table for low-cost, urban-farm-to-apartment-table workshops, ranging from pickling basics to edible perfumery.

—Alison Bing



I want! I want!

CRABAPPLE-DAMSON BUTTER»
This Oakland, California, company makes 20 spread flavors; this tart beauty tops our list (\$12, bluechairfruit.com).

PHOTOGRAPHY: (LEFT) RANDY MAYOR; (CENTER) PEDEN & MUNK/TRUNKARCHIVE.COM; (TOP RIGHT) ADAM CARVER/COURTESY OF LITTLE BEAR; (BOTTOM RIGHT) BECKY REAMS

Southwest



Chef Josef Centeno

CRAFT BEER GAME CHANGER

Los Angeles' new gastropub scene

In this city of Champagne dreams, a craft-beer fan had to head south to San Diego for a fix. Luckily for hip hops aficionados, L.A. these days is all about well-crafted beer options and delicious pint pairings.

Just east of downtown at **Eagle Rock Brewery**, a fedora-clad crowd sips beers with names like Revolution (an American extra-pale ale) and Manifesto (a Belgian white spiced with coriander and citrus). Add a burger or salad from the **Flatiron Food Truck** parked out front, and it's one of the city's most affordable, diverse beer brunches.

Brew fans enjoy small plates of intensely flavored pub fare like the *bäco*, a hybrid flatbread and taco, at Chef Josef Centeno's **Bäco Mercat**, while Arts District newcomer **Little Bear** goes the all-out Belgian-style beer route (17 offerings on tap), serving up re-invented Belgian-accented dishes like house-smoked salmon with beluga lentils. —Jenn Garbee



Moules
Frites from
Little Bear



Flatiron Food Truck

Hidden Gems

UP-AND-COMING NEIGHBORHOOD

Phoenix's Historic Coronado Neighborhood

Urban revitalization programs can affect local food. In Phoenix, the Historic Coronado Neighborhood's efforts to preserve and rezone its historic buildings has led to a culinary revival: The neighborhood's meticulously restored bungalow, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Southwestern homes now house some of the best eateries in the city.

Start at **The Main Ingredient Ale House & Café,**

Rice Paper Eatery

a gastropub located in what was once a brick bungalow. Grab a chair on the front porch and enjoy a leisurely pint, or linger over a beer and a vegan cashew butter and red pepper-cabernet jelly sourdough sandwich on the former home's backyard-turned-restaurant patio.

On Seventh Street, you'll find Coronado's newcomers like **Rice Paper Eatery**, a Vietnamese restaurant also in a former home, where they make their own spring rolls in more than a dozen varieties. A few doors down resides **Coronado Café**, a cozy bungalow where Southwestern pork tacos with salsa verde are right at home alongside Maryland crab cakes with lime-cilantro rémoulade (the café's owners are from Baltimore).

Tuck Shop, a 1950s musician's union hall-turned-home-turned-restaurant, specializes in modern comfort food. Dishes like tomato-sauced lamb meatballs may resemble their retro counterparts on the outside, but they get a healthier 21st-century upgrade with fresh spaghetti squash, carrots, and zucchini alongside. —Jenn Garbee



Tacos Y Salsas

The intersection of Federal & Alameda avenues in Denver

GREAT BLOCK FOR FOODIES

Denver is, in its own stealth way, an international city, a culinary mash-up where Little Odessas share borders with a dozen tiny Juarez del Nortes and one can find borscht, *pho*, *tortas*, and sashimi in a single strip mall. The intersection of Federal and Alameda avenues, and the roads running off in the four cardinal directions, marks the place where the city's miniature versions of Hanoi, Guangdong, and the Distrito Federal all touch.

From the **T-Wa Inn** (Denver's first Vietnamese restaurant) out to the **Empress, 88 Asian Market**, and the carnival-colored **Tacos Y Salsas** (where you can often catch white-jacketed kitchen crews enjoying post-shift tacos), the energy flows outward to Alameda Square. Here, the city's best dim sum joint (**Super Star Asian**) draws crowds of dedicated gastronomes willing to wait an hour for fluffy pork buns and chicken feet, while some of Denver's best cooks stalk the aisles at **Pacific Ocean International Supermarket** looking to score barbecued ducks, durian, cheap knives, Hello Kitty chopsticks, and other killer buys from distant latitudes. —Jason Sheehan



Barbecued ducks



facebook finds»

Local favorites from Cooking Light readers & fans

BOISE, IDAHO » "At **Bier: Thirty** in the Bown Crossing neighborhood, there's always at least 10 craft brews on tap, and they sell more than 150 types of bottled beer. As if that isn't enough, they have creative cooks in the kitchen and fun snacks and meals on the menu." —Teresa L.

MESA, ARIZONA » "The **Asian Market** is a huge Asian grocery store with everything you could possibly want in Asian food and fresh fish. It's surrounded by many Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese restaurants, of which **Unphogettable** is the best." —Patti G.

Central

SMALL TOWN PULLS BIG ORGANIC WEIGHT

Viroqua, Wisconsin

Don't let Rockwellian appearance fool you. Tiny Viroqua, Wisconsin, has more in common with food-progressive Berkeley, California, than its charming Victorian storefronts might have you believe.

More than 50 organic farms are in and around the Viroqua area, and some days they make up about half of the vendors in the famous organic farmers' market in Madison on the square. You'll find **Harmony Valley** produce at Chicago-area markets, **Driftless Organics** vegetables in Madison's restaurants, and **Footjoy Farm's** produce on Minneapolis menus.

But not everything good here gets exported: Viroqua's farmers have strengthened an already thriving local food scene. Drop by the **Viroqua Food Co-op** (membership 2,800) for local gems like **Nordic Creamery** butter (liquid gold,

so fresh, creamy, and multidimensional), **Great River Milling** flour (bread made from truly fresh, just-milled flour is as different from conventional-flour bread as the

music from an orchestra is different from the music of a transistor radio), and **New Glarus** beer (twice named one of the 10 best breweries in the world at the World Brewery Championship).

—Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl

I want! I want!

PROSCIUTTO AMERICANO»

Paper-thin, authentically delicious artisan-cured pork, straight out of central Iowa (\$8 for 3 ounces, laquercia.us).



PHOTOGRAPHY: KEVIN MIYAZAKI (BOTTOM LEFT); RANDY MAYOR; FOOD STYLING: KELLIE GEPHART KELLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY: JACOB PRITCHARD; (LEFT) JACKIE MERCANDETTI



Driftless Organics' owners Mike Lind, Noah Engel, and Josh Engel (from left)



Organic carrots from Harmony Valley Farm

West Side Market, Cleveland, Ohio

As it celebrates its centennial this year, Cleveland's **West Side Market** thrives in the midst of a next-wave back-to-the-land revival. It's one of the oldest continuously operating markets in America, embodying the region's cultural and culinary identity, preserving its old-world heritage and the traditions of the table while welcoming new generations of food adventurers.

MORE THAN A FARMERS' MARKET

In this beautiful, 27,000-square-foot hall, shoppers find ethnic specialties like kielbasa and smoked sausage, barrel-aged sauerkraut, and potato-filled pierogi. But these days, they also come for grass-fed beef, farmstead cheeses, local honey, and handmade pasta.

Surrounding the market is a burgeoning culinary district that's home to some of the city's hottest restaurants, beer gardens, and even a 6-acre urban farm.

"The West Side Market maintains all of the integrity and uniqueness that it always has, even after 100 years," says Michael Symon, chef/owner of Cleveland restaurants Lola Bistro, Lolita, and B Spot. "To me, it's 100% pure Cleveland." —*Laura Taxel*



I want! I want!

SMOKIN' HOT SAUCE» This Chicago sauce brings searing heat without sacrificing its smoky, full-bodied flavor. A perfectly balanced hot sauce (\$8 for 8 ounces, fieryalyce.com).

Vera's Roasted Mushrooms with Thyme



UP-AND-COMING NEIGHBORHOOD

Chicago's West Loop

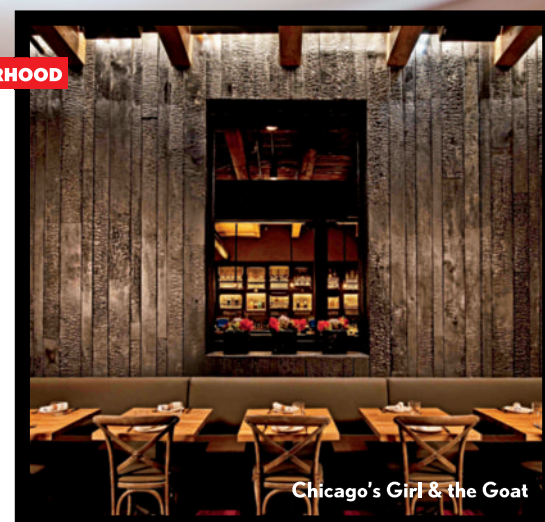
When the 2008 recession hit, it left many of the pioneers of Chicago's West Loop sleepy or shuttered. Now the neighborhood is waking up to booming restaurant business.

The reservations rush began two years ago, when *Top Chef* season four winner Stephanie Izard opened the now-white-hot **Girl & the Goat**. Almost

instantly, her wait list was two months deep. Alinea alum Jeff Pikus soon popped up across the street, breathing new life into bistro classics at **Maude's Liquor Bar**.

In 2011, husband-and-wife team Mark and Elizabeth Mendez quickly gained a following for their Spanish wine bar, **Vera**. When Alinea chef Grant Achatz opened **Next** (for which he won a 2011 Trailblazing Chef award from us and a Beard award this year) and the **Aviary** (an innovative cocktail lounge) last year, it was clear that the West Loop had become the nerve center for the city's forward-thinking chefs.

So far this year, a former gyros joint has become a quirky late-night spot called **Au Cheval**, Chef Paul Kahan opened **Publican Quality Meats** (a butcher shop and sandwich haven), and Jared Van Camp has debuted **Nellcôte**, where the chef mills his own flour from local wheat. Meanwhile, a slew of other chefs have signed leases on Randolph Street: Once Izard opens her second restaurant, **Little Goat**, this fall, she'll have *MasterChef* judge Graham Elliot (**G.E.B.**, a bistro) and Alinea vet Curtis Duffy (**Grace**) as new neighbors. —*Julia Kramer*



Chicago's Girl & the Goat

PHOTOGRAPHY: (TOP TO BOTTOM) MIKE SCHACHT/312 ELEMENTS PHOTOGRAPHY; ANTHONY TIEULI; RANDY MAYOR



ST. LOUIS, MO »
"DiGregorio's Market is THE BEST Italian market! They feature the best cheeses, Italian meats, and pastas around! They have their own line of sauces and a beautiful selection of olive oils, balsamic vinegars, and wines. You can't beat the service and friendly staff ... they've always been very helpful!"
 —*Terry L.*

RAPID CITY, SD »
"Someone's in the Kitchen has just about every piece of cookware, dinnerware, party ware, and gadgetry you could possibly want. I've found some great gourmet finishing salts there, too—Hawaiian Red and smoked Chardonnay."
 —*Stephanie C.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: ERICA GANNETT; (TOP LEFT) COURTESY OF CULTIVATE KANSAS CITY



URBAN FARM NETWORK

Kansas City's New Roots

One of the most exciting things happening in America's Bread Basket is occurring not in its swaying fields of wheat and corn but on neighborhood blocks and vacant lots within Kansas City. And much of it is thanks to the efforts of **Cultivate Kansas City**. By supporting urban immigrant growers like the **New Roots for Refugees** farm, this grassroots organization is creating a small market base for city growers of all backgrounds.

At Kansas City's original organic market at Brookside, you'll find Burmese, Somali, Bhutanese, and Burundian immigrant farmers selling kale, chard, broccoli, carrots, and beets in vivid colors matched only by the vendors' traditional dress. Along the way, they've succeeded in expanding the localvore spectrum—as well as the internationally spiced palate—of the entire community. —*David Hanson*

Hidden Gems

Detroit's Eastern Market

Urban advocates across America are discovering what Detroit understood 120 years ago: Farmers' markets boost local economies. Since 1891, Detroit's **Eastern Market** has expanded to three open-air halls to accommodate more than 250 vendors and Saturday crowds of up to 40,000. The latest addition is **Detroit Market Garden**, a 2.5-acre, nonprofit urban farm yielding 60 kinds of fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Eastern Market is a symbol of something larger afoot.

Detroit was hammered by the recession, but its citizens are fighters, and pockets of the city are starting to look like an urban offshoot of Farmville. To fight blight and source more local fresh food, neighbors began tearing down fences and planting gardens as far back as the 1990s. Today, more than 382 community gardens and 64 schoolyard farms are flourishing in the Motor City—and more urban farms are in the works, with hundreds of individuals and organizations like the **Garden Resource Program Collaborative** providing seeds and know-how.

Access to all of this garden goodness has grown easier in recent years: Locals can now hike and bike from downtown to Eastern Market via **Dequindre Cut Greenway**, a nature trail reclaimed from an abandoned railway line. Restaurants encircling Eastern Market proudly feature "Grown in Detroit" produce, including collards for the black-eyed pea and collard soup at **Russell St. Deli**. And boxes of locally sourced produce are distributed citywide through Detroit's nonprofit **Fresh Food Share Program**. —*Alison Bing*

MORE THAN A FARMERS' MARKET



Detroit's Eastern Market



Club Sandwich from Russell St. Deli



Cure bartender Kirk Estopinal



UP-AND-COMING NEIGHBORHOOD

New Orleans' Freret Street

When **Cure**, a craft cocktail bar, moved into New Orleans' Freret Street corridor, it started a revolution of sorts. Until about five years ago, this eight-block stretch in Uptown New Orleans was a mishmash of neglected buildings—everything from an abandoned firehouse to a king cake factory. Then, an appreciative crowd began migrating to Freret for some of the best classically inspired cocktails in the city, made with house-made bitters and tinctures. Next came **Dat Dog**, a hot dog stand serving offerings from all over the map (Slovenian sausage shares menu space with more locally inspired crawfish or alligator dogs). Other iconic American foods have since arrived on the scene, including **The Midway**, baking creatively topped deep-dish pizzas, and Adam Biderman's **Company Burger**, with juicy patties and house-made pickles. When Chef Adolfo Garcia decided to open not one but two more eateries here—**The High Hat Café** is casual Southern, while **Ancora** showcases Neapolitan-style pizza—the area had officially arrived as a fully realized dining destination in its own right. "Visitors looking for iconic New Orleans dishes might not seek it here," says local food writer Pableaux Johnson, author of the upcoming iPad food guide *Eating New Orleans*. "But for locals, the scene is vibrant, bustling, and tasty as hell." —Cindy Hatcher

so tasty!



Almaco Jack at Reef

SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD SCENE

Houston, Texas

When Chef Bryan Caswell of **Reef** began featuring lesser-known seafood like tripletail, rainbow runner, or sea bream—items referred to as bycatch, meaning they often get caught in grouper or shrimp nets and are thrown away—Houstonites clamored for it. Caswell, along with food writer Robb Walsh and entrepreneur Jim Gossen, have tirelessly championed the sustainable-seafood movement in the Gulf. Walsh, author of *Texas Eats*, helped identify the unique reef-specific oyster appellations from nearby Galveston Bay (it doesn't get more Texas than requesting oysters from Lonesome Reef or Ladies Pass). Gossen's **Louisiana Foods** (located in Houston, despite its name) works with fishermen to process catches locally, and Caswell highlights the Gulf's bounty in dishes like baked oysters with pickled Indian lime or rainbow runner-mayhaw ceviche. Between these pioneers and the grassroots education efforts of the Foodways Texas organization, Houston has become a beacon on the sustainable-seafood scene.

—Cindy Hatcher

Atlanta's Buford Highway Farmers' Market

Farmers' market, no: It's as big and industrial as a Boeing plant. But this may be America's greatest imported-food emporium. The variety outshines that of, say, Yaohan in Richmond, B.C., or the Queens-born Hmart chain. You'll find not only Asian foods here but also African, Mexican, and even Eastern European. (Lithuanian frozen cheesecake bars? Tasty!) There are nearly 100 yards of dried Asian noodles alone, and an overwhelming tea selection. The produce section always turns up surprises; ditto the seafood counters (periwinkles, doctor fish). It's not as holy to Atlanta foodies as you'd expect, but this is Disney World for global food hounds, a Smithsonian of packaged goodies for every appetite.

—Scott Mowbray

PHOTOGRAPHY: (LEFT) CEDRIC ANGELES; (RIGHT) RYANN FORD; (INSET) DAVID GRUNFELD



I want! I want!

SOUTHERN OLIVE OIL»

Who knew? This Georgia company produces delicious oils now catching the attention of star Southern chefs (\$32, georgiaolivefarms.com).



OFF-THE-BEATEN-PATH EATS

The Florida Keys' Best Foodie Finds

When leviathan cruise ships began docking in Key West in 1984, they diminished some of the Conch Republic's offbeat charm. In their wake came the usual tourist-town suspects: bars with spinning cylinders of sugary frozen cocktails and deep-fried whatever. But the quintessential Key West experience can still be found with a little exploring.

Part of the charm is crazy diversity.

Croissants de France overcomes the 90-degree temps and near 90% humidity to produce as perfectly flaky and buttery a croissant as you could want, and **Seven Fish**, located on a quiet, shaded neighborhood corner, serves a tasty curried snapper. Just across Cow Key Bridge on Stock Island lies **Hogfish Bar & Grill**, the kind of place that seems like a template for every seaside "shrimp shack" you've ever visited. Except this is the real deal. Nab a waterside table and experience the namesake hogfish, a "have-it-when-we-have-it" treat. It's fine, flaky, and sweet with an almost scallop-like flavor. If it's not available, steamed local shrimp and ice-cold beer make a fine meal, too. —Phillip Rhodes



Local favorites from Cooking Light readers & fans

ASHEVILLE, NC »

"**Early Girl Eatery** definitely captures the spirit of our town, but I would never let a foodie miss out on **Curate** for delicious tapas!" —Alex W.

East



THE GRANDDADDY OF PUBLIC MARKETS

Philadelphia's Italian Market

Philadelphia is a town that grew up around its terminal markets, hemmed in on all sides by water and farmland. It has food history the way a big old tree has roots, sunk deep into the past and forming its present. Today's food revolution is built on those roots, make no mistake.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the blocks surrounding the Italian Market—the oldest outdoor market in the United States, unchanged in so many ways from the moment of its founding that walking the pavement in front of its clustered stalls feels a little like time travel.

There are butchers here who can trace their lineage back through generations (and will at the drop of a hat), fish merchants and cheesemongers, bakeries that flour the air, poultry shops, and more than 40 produce vendors who stack their Jersey tomatoes and greens in piles under sagging awnings and keep their stock of Italian truffles under glass like diamonds.

Thirteenth Street might be hotter, Fishtown hipper, Reading Terminal more packed with swells, but the Italian Market is where Philly grew up. Go there to see glimpses of America's melting-pot cuisine in the first blush of its youth.

—Jason Sheehan



Salts' Vegetables with Goat Cheese and Roasted Barley



Chef Tony Maws from Craigie on Main



Cambridge's Bondir



Slow-Poached Egg and Pork Belly from Hungry Mother

(East)

Area Four in Cambridge, Massachusetts

When Chef Steve Johnson crossed the river from Boston's top-ranked Hamersley's Bistro to work at Cambridge's perennially popular Blue Room in 1996, his city-chef friends thought he'd pulled into the slow lane. Cambridge was small-time, with mom-and-pop places that cooked for students. Then, all that changed. "Landlords got aggressive," Johnson says. "Suddenly they were offering deals."

Now it seems every ambitious chef in Boston is following him across the river to what's known as Area Four, the small stretch between Cambridge's Kendall and Central squares.

Since Johnson opened his own **Rendezvous Central Square** in a former Burger King, it's become a standard for New American cuisine characterized by particularly fresh fish: He lives and fishes from a houseboat on weekends. Then Tony Maws moved his popular Craigie Street Bistrot two blocks from Rendezvous, renamed it **Craigie on Main**, and the area officially became the new hot spot of fine dining.

Just across the street is **Salts**, a Cambridge farm-to-table pioneer that serves immaculate Provence-inspired menus. And **Hungry Mother**, at the Kendall Square end, has become a destination for French-inflected Lowcountry cuisine. Add to this Boston's best new restaurant, **Bondir**—Jason Bond's elevated farm-to-table menus—and you have a week's worth of destination dining. —Corby Kummer

UP-AND-COMING
NEIGHBORHOOD

UP-AND-COMING TOWN

Portland, Maine

The Portland on the West Coast may be attracting most of the hip foodie attention these days, but dining options in the breezy Atlantic old-timer are heating up, too.

Just off Monument Square at Portland Public Market House, a daily line of lunch-goers forms at **Kamasouptra**, choosing from options expected (creamy Clam Chowder) and less-so (Beer and Cheddar made with a Red Ale from nearby Sebago Brewing). Toward the waterfront, they are filing into **Paciarino**, where husband-and-wife chef/owners Fabiana de Savino and Enrico Barbiero prepare hand-made scallops-and-haddock ravioli.

Diners looking for Latin-inspired menus hit up **El Rayo Taqueria**, a former garage on York Street that offers excellent fish tacos with a side of roasted pumpkin seeds—a healthier option than the usual tortilla chips. Next door at sister restaurant **El Rayo Cantina**, the modern Mexican menu features nearly 30 tequilas and snacks of *tlayudas*, hot tortillas spread with black beans, shredded cabbage, crema, and mushrooms.

At Middle Street's **Bresca**, Krista Kern Desjarlais is redefining the sandwich. Case in point: Her smoked trout in a kombu-flecked roll, with pickled shallots, capers, and mustard greens in Meyer lemon vinaigrette. That's not your old-timey fish sandwich. —Nancy English

TACOS



Bresca's Smoked Trout Sandwich

Frankie's 457 in Brooklyn

CULINARY REBOOT

Brooklyn's New Italian Comfort Food

Brooklyn has gone from a part of New York City that food-

obsessed Manhattanites couldn't take seriously to a borough they fret is gaining the upper hand. Several of Brooklyn's neighborhoods are well into their second and third waves of trendsetting—all since the late '90s. The latest to receive a new serving of Brooklyn spin: The Carroll Gardens and adjacent Cobble Hill neighborhoods, where traditional Italian comfort food is being updated with more flavor and superb quality, less quantity—and much of it sourced from neighborhood butchers, artisans, bakeries, and grocers.

These 'hoods have deep Italian immigrant roots, boosted lately by a wave of top-notch chefs returning home to cook food inspired by their grandmothers (or acting for all the world like that's what's up). Kicked off by the wonderfully affable **Frankies 457** (with two Manhattan outposts), the trend has accelerated with eateries like **Brucie** and **South Brooklyn Pizza**. "It's a trend that's exploded, but it's built on what was already there. A return to elevated Italian comfort is happening everywhere, but this area is ground zero," says Ed Levine, founder of *seriouseats.com*. —Cindy Hatcher



Frank Falcinelli (left) and Frank Castronovo (right)



I want! I want!

ARTISANAL VANILLA EXTRACT» Replace the vanilla bean yearly and top off the alcohol, and this Brooklyn vanilla extract will last indefinitely (\$15 for 4 ounces, *binxgoods.com*).