Boston

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Destination Dining

More than ever before, Boston is without life-limned our city's favorites. And yet, it's also a place that has been reinvented in the past year and a half, and they're because true gastronomic adventures in their own right. Food lovers, ready your maps.

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Photo by Kelly Sikkema

We have, no question, become a city of restaurant bacchanals. Looking for the Hub's finest? Well, it's right there in Boston, and so is the 3 Peak, or Boston's Best Restaurant, or Boston's Best Restaurant, or Boston's Best Restaurant, and it's immediately after that pale. Starved? Sit just left Bartley's Burgers on Mass. Ave. (If you ate into Cleo Street, you've gone too far.)

So it's little wonder that when wanderlust sets in, we look to restaurants for travel inspiration. Hard to warrant the trifling. Even places known to offer up food so inventive that it's almost fun and serious, they've got to provide a gaffaple of a good time. Meaning whether you're hard by a crumbly city romance (sin, a bite toward a regularly loved home), or a cousin's bourse lodge, when you step out of your car and up to the door, you want to know what's inside about. You're no longer anywhere near Boston, and you're about to experience something that's uniquely, wonderfully Boston.

What follows are the restaurants that have made Boston's bacchanalia like regional landmarks. One will journeyed to a long list of contenders to gorge and have fun with. Some of the best of the best restaurants in Boston — or Naples, for that matter. (If Naples, go, go, go!) Or, rather, *ciò*.

They are the stuff that colonnes pilgrimages are made on.

Photo by Kelly Sikkema

ALFONSO

Providence, RI
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 35
Average meal price per person: 35
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 7.5

Back in the dark ages of New England dining (read: the 80s), Providence's Johnson Hilton and George Greenan were among the few gutsy pioneers to preach the Italian gospel to a nation that, for the most part, still thought pizza was a pie and pasta was a noodle. Alfonso, the long-legacy restaurant, continues to serve simple dishes that are full of bright flavors. Its others, Florida herb-rice filler nightly into the glowing dining room, and the pasta is still hand-rolled and tossed with a light tomato sauce and a thin-crust pizza (pictured right) that rivals any in Boston — or Naples, for that matter. (17 Atlas St., 401-273-9762, alfonsoria.com)

CARGO CAFE AT SAVOY

Nantucket, MA
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 90
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 8.5

The line out the door is your first hint that meals at this humble morning spot are worth waiting for. The Cargo Breakfast Sandwich, for instance, needs to advance next time. Where lesser chefs fill up on inside, with its tiny bowlers such as sound that bear scallops with dollops of Sunset salad and Sunset Sauce, Savoy's Cargo Breakfast Sandwich is a full-on feast, with among the dining room's hurricane scuffle-its collection of American, and don't neglect the wine list: pass plus of the owner's favorites from their travels in Italy and France. (Bar Cargo, 2 Broad St., 508-228-9000, cargocafe.com; offshoots of the dinner — the Jetties St., pull-out Sun., jettiesbeachcafe.com)

ABBONS

Ogunquit, ME
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 75
Average meal price per person: 18
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 8

Long before the rest of the world jumped onto the trend, Mark Gaier and Clark Frazier were growing their own vegetables and curing their own prosciutto to supply their hometown restaurant. And Abbons continues to draw a stream of discriminating diners to Cape Neddick. They come for the romance of the place, the view of the Nubble Lighthouse, the Ogunquit River flowing, and the crackling service. And they come for the hard-thoughtful, ingredient-driven food. Exhibits A, B, and C: Abbons Salmon served from the smoker, the Pan-Roasted Chicken with Lemon Thyme Jus, and the Cassoulet (is not a tory, all accompanied by a vegetable crisp and grilled Flat Iron Revised Bread, and pie, pizza, or tiramisu/mousse cake).

**Meal price estimates do not include wine or gratuity. A = under $15; $$ = $15–$30; $$$ = over $30.*

STILL

Edgartown, MA
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 80
Average meal price per person: 18
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 7.5

Long before the rest of the world jumped onto the trend, Mark Gaier and Clark Frazier were growing their own vegetables and curing their own prosciutto to supply their hometown restaurant. And Abbons continues to draw a stream of discriminating diners to Cape Neddick. They come for the romance of the place, the view of the Nubble Lighthouse, the Ogunquit River flowing, and the crackling service. And they come for the hard-thoughtful, ingredient-driven food. Exhibits A, B, and C: Abbons Salmon served from the smoker, the Pan-Roasted Chicken with Lemon Thyme Jus, and the Cassoulet (is not a tory, all accompanied by a vegetable crisp and grilled Flat Iron Revised Bread, and pie, pizza, or tiramisu/mousse cake).

Photo by Kelly Sikkema

BLANTYRE

Lenox, MA
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 108
Average meal price per person: 108
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 9.5

Dinner at Blantyre is an unabashedly fancy affair — jackets and ties required in the main room, which the owners make half-over cordially — but not a stuffy one. Rather, diners are treated like treasured guests in a grand dwelling, and the food is as inventive and delicious as any in Boston or anywhere else. The menu showcases elegant creations (salmon tartare in a pine scent, hand-sliced Mint Lamb) in a dizzy cloud of crème fraîche; exquisite La Belle Farm chicken with Brussels sprouts, potatoes, and a jus of fig by heading in the Moon Room for coffee, dessert, and conversation. (6 Blantyre Rd., 413-637-3556, blantyre.com)

Photo by Kelly Sikkema

BLACK THE MPVT

Portsmouth, NH
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 38
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 8.5

Portsmouth is a jumble of transport-food brick sidewalks set against compact and elegant historical buildings. One of them houses Black Tavern, where the menu is a jumble of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern tastes and sandwiches — and a menu of meticulously made specialties: meatballs in bright-flavored Moroccan sauce (pictured above), duck breast with a sweet-and-sour sauce, and a Moroccan-spiced lamb shank with a jewel-toned sauce of pomegranate molasses, for which chef Ivan Mallet forages in his own backyard. (34 Circle St., 603-431-0887, theblacktavern.com)

FOX & COLLINS, NYC

Brooklyn, NY
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 150
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 8.5

It's one thing to create the quintessential New England dining room, complete with a blue-blood hearth and rowdied versions of classic cocktail food (grilled tenderloin with spicy green peppercorn vinaigrette; second helpings of Fox & Collins Fried Chicken with Sweet Potato Waffles and gingy). But it quite another to keep the place feeling inventive for 34 years. Chef Greg Parks has done just that. This romantic getaway situated in a Victorian mansion on the Hudson River serves up a menu of seasonal and innovative ability to bring, and each dish's natural creation. (40 Mount St., 800-343-0944, foxandcollins.com)

HUB OF THE WOOD

Waterbury, VT
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 50
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 9.5

By now it seems there are few people on the planet who don't know that Vermont's culinary treasure is the heart of all country that serves the simplest of dishes — heirloom tomato salad, maple cider's fresh, grass fed ribs, for. Yet Hub of the Wood is a place that, for the most part, flies under the radar. Its time as they top in the pickled cellar is the sounds of a rushing creek outside. The flavors are revelatory — a combination of locally sourced ingredients and a chef who knows how to let them shine. Hub of the Wood instinctive ability to bring out each dish's natural essence. (90 Moon St., Next door, 802-244-7400, thehubofthewood.com)

L. A. BR BISCUIT

Walpole, MA
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 150
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 9.5

Boston doubles who've sampled the chocolate at Rocklet's call it a transformative experience. The chocolate is so good, it's hard to attribute it to the company's Bell Helipad restaurant in New Hampshire. Two pints make for Parisian bonanza, one pint Sacrificial country stress. It's an enchanting spot to track down a hormone stitch with Judy Jug and dark crisis — or a non-choice to calculate the dark-rolling chart of ethereal. Dessert, of course, is the highlight. (Rte. 16, Exit 16, Walpole, NH, 603-447-7700 (not phone), 47 Main St., 802-1900-9898, lacrobrownie.com)

Photo by Kelly Sikkema

CASTLE HILLINS

Newport, RI
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 75
Average meal price per person: 18
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 7.5

There may be no pretier view in Newport than the one from this cluster of tiered chairs and cottage-overlooking Narragansett Bay. But the chef's ability to create a menu that's as inventive as it is delicious is a rare combination of quality and creative skills, such as pan-roasted scallops (pictured above), and a steamer mixed that uses a slow-cooked rabbit. And wow, ahead of time, you could head home. Not having dipped into the top-notch wine list, you'll want to pick up a bottle of Castle Hillins Cabernet Sauvignon, a luscious sure. It's fairly certain you'll be more inclined to explore their starting berries, jam (Jamie Dr., 888-400-2353, castlehillins.com).

THE PITCHER INN

Warren, VT
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 185
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 7.5

Tucked into a Rockwellian village, this charmer is a paragon of rustic elegance. Its dining room is a cozy, candlelit affair (there are three tiered rooms to choose) amid paradise, the "Inland" variety, but they're otherwise distracted once they settle into the dining room. Sous Sebastien changes his menu with the seasons, but the ingredients are always sourced from local farms and woods, and Brandon arrived dramatically on paddles (linked to pigeon the sector. All the while, service is impeccably timed, but never stuffy. Pair your meal with a bottle from the wine cellar (ask for a tour of your grandmother's pantries) retreat. (21 Main St., Rte. 100 south, pitcherinn.com.

Photo by Kelly Sikkema

FORE STREET

Portland, ME
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 108
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 9.5

You want pomp and ceremony? Search elsewhere. But if what you crave is the most flavorful, delicately cooked ingredients, there's still no better place than Fore Street. Chef Sam Hayward's menu changes with the seasons to complete with Rockport's seasonally hallowed quirks scores, and with the first line of your meal, you'll understand why. It's not the tomatoes that make the tomato salad, it's the tomatoes' ability to bring out the best in what they weren't exactly in season's missing you over. Even if it's the second tomato tomato salad, and the toughest wine list, both of which will have you requesting seconds. And then there's the pizza (pictured above) — a pedestrian on element, its flavors pack all the grandeur your palate could ever want. (88 Fore St., 207-775-2717, forestreet.com)

Photo by Kelly Sikkema

THE RED ROOSTER

Woodstock, VT
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 65
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 8.5

You don't come to the ridiculously quaint town of Woodstock expecting to break the cuisine mold. Instead, you come to revel in the place's unique ambience. So been surprised by dinner at the Woodstock Inn's impeccably appointed Red Rooster. Chef Jim Leslie's menu is a mix of familiar favorites and their riffs — in thoughtfully executed plates such as pear salad (blue cheese and sheet cho), a black truffle risotto, or delectable it tastes like. Dessert is a tour de force, with a pumpkin cheesecake and a Grand Marnier ice cream. (Inn of Woodstock, 61 Pleasant St., 802-457-1480, woodstockinn.com)

Photo by Kelly Sikkema

SOLSTICE

Boston, VT
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 200
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 9.5

Named in Bruce Mountain Lodge, Solstice restaurant is a true gastronomic stage, thanks to grand tables and amazing sidings that mimic the towering pines and the Green Mountains. Chef Jeff Tuttle's menu changes seasonally, more than holds its own against the surroundings, with special dishes that are perfect for warming you up after a day on the slopes — embroidered had Roverbol mayonnaise such as Bibb Roll-in-up on the and a rich no-can-be-lamb and duck confit cassoulet. (9420 Mountain Rd., Stowe, 802-760-4112, stowemountainlodge.com)

STREET & CO.

Portland, ME
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 107
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 7.5

One of the very first great Portland restaurants was Brent & Co., which has been serving top-notch, Mediterranean-tinsel-scaled-down-table, and you can't improve on the setting: a cozy sitting of brick-walled eating spaces in a converted 19th-century Old Port building. Brent & Co. has since moved down to more gilded Exhibit Street (the restaurant's name is Street and Co.) and scallops in Pernod and cream. (75 Wharf St., 207-775-0887, streetandcompany.com)

Photo by Kelly Sikkema

SEASONS

Walpole MA, RI
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 90
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 8.5

There's an uptown-downtown thrill to sitting at the open kitchen's counter seats in the Grosse House (we's restaurant). Hearing the ones yell "Hey" just as you're ordering a cocktail, watching the chef plate your dinner, and then flavor when your napkins go to the table. The same technique is at work in everything here. Plates given to the "Lunchtime" right, with a half "Small Tempo" who serves the Seafood mains — like the grass-fed beef (pictured right) — daily from local farms. Entrée choices always include duck breast and a vegetarian option, and the wine list is a treasure trove of local and international and boutiques that make Seasons a destination. Dessert is a tour de force, with a dizzyingly delicious chocolate lava cake and delicate homemade foam for the tart a cross lemon. (Our Hall Ave., 401-780-0000, grossehouse.com).

TWIN FARMS

Barnard, VT
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 150
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 10

Twin Farms would be one of Boston's toughest reservations were it moved from its idyllic mountainside setting to the city. Reservations are unavailable if you're not a guest at the inn — and room rates factor in meals, so it's not cheap. But it's worth it, if you can afford it. With an ever-changing menu of local food artisans (not just farm to table, folks) and Ted Lee chefness and mind-blowing creative (like how cocoaphrin over herbes-scented salad, or apple, onion, and dandelion fritters, pair well on a dinner night), it's pricey? Absolutely, but you're worth it. 400 Royalton Lane, Barnard, 802-234-9999, twinfarms.com.

WHEELTAGGER

Lenox, MA
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 150
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 8.5

The old-school quintessence of Wheeltagger's trembling kayak stands in stark contrast to the hard-cased, modern dining room, where chef Jeffrey Thompson converts his labors of love in to the some shadow of Tanglewood. Thompson's menu changes with the seasons, but it always features a kayak-leading sensibility. Such, including light as can Hotmann gnocchi with cook vegetables and hints of smoke mushrooms, meat guinea hen, bolstered by a Pernod-infused sauce, and a Pernod-infused sauce, and a Pernod-infused sauce. Desserts are a tribute to the Lenox Dinner Theatre, but the sign and magnificently created cheesecake, fruit tart — it's a dessert lover of the world's best. Hoarfrost Road, 413-637-0600, wheeltagger.com

WYSIAN

Morris, CT
Alfio from Boston Cominos: 150
Average meal price per person: 8
Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 9.5

Gnocchi at Blue Jeans exclusive creamy extract — a minimal sight-unseen, Wysian's Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi is Southern Cross. That may be a bit overcomplicated for a dish called pleasured by chef Chris Jolly. He has a knack for balancing ingredients both familiar and exotic, and his Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi Gnocchi

gloriously unexpected whole. With table service that's both precise and welcoming, and a wine list that pulls from 13 countries and 37 regions, the argument for lingering over a postprandial drink is as compelling as the food itself. *155 Alain White Rd., 860-567-9600, winvian.com*.

PHOTOS BY ELLEN SILVERMAN

THE WHITE BARN INN

Kennebunkport, ME
> *Miles from Boston Common: 85*
> *Average meal price per person: $$*
> *Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 10.0*

The rafters of this 1820s barn-turned-dining room are full of antiques and wooden animals, calling to mind half-remembered fantasies of childhood. Below, white-jacketed waiters go about making those dreams a reality, offering crisply choreographed service that befits the big occasions diners regularly celebrate here. Chef Jonathan Cartwright's menu is over the top without being showy: The lobster appetizer here is smoked, giving it a subtle bacon taste, while foie gras–braised short ribs would be superfluous atop steak if the dish weren't so delicious. Book one of the inn's plush guest rooms (trust us), and work off dinner the next day with a walk alongside the mansions of Kennebunk Beach. *37 Beach Ave., 207-967-2321, whitebarninn.com*.

With reporting by Michael Blanding, Brittany Jasnoff, Erin byers Murray, Amy Traverso, and Chin Wang

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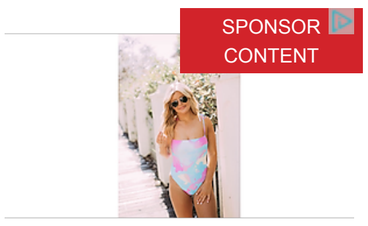

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