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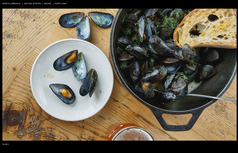

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Photo

DESTINATIONS

13 Best Restaurants in Portland, Maine

Fly this tiny Maine city has such an outsized reputation in the food world.

BY ELIZABETH HAD
MARCH 29, 2019

If you ever hear anyone wonder why tiny Portland, Maine's restaurants have such an outsized reputation in the food world, remember two things. First, these restaurants are not tiny. Portland's food scene is a mature one, with roots deeply ingrained in Yankee stuff. The state's great lobster, of course, and in the Italian community of small farms, working waterfronts, and independent restaurants are the foundations of the city's culinary identity. Second, Portland's food is "Instagram-ready" in ways not widely recognized even in the Yankee land of overcast, but that irrelevant fact doesn't stop the locals from wanting to make something high-concept, and sometimes it does bring it off.

That vibe was amplified by Portland's government bonfiders—chefs like Sam Hayward, who opened Fore Street in 1988 and helped the city's food scene mature; Alex Brown, who put the country's attention back to the mid '70s and their iconic project the Eastigate; Sam the city's turning with answers to dinner every Sunday; Sonhard, all of whom have helped the city's food scene mature. Portland's food scene is a mature place, straight from the no-nonsense, well-stocked, crisp-boutique, and altered dream-mark from local primary. These days, Portland is a jumble of creative and traditional, and it's a place where the restaurants are worth a visit. Here's a walk, when you want the complete dining experience of a dinner and drinks and that will leave you dreamy, these are the restaurants to be reclaimed with.

Read our complete Portland, Maine travel guide here.

This guide is free updated with any information since its original publication date.

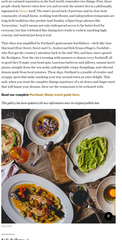

Photo: Courtesy of Solo Italiano

DESTINATIONS

Solo Italiano →

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At Solo Italiano, Sisters Sara Del Pach Gallus tosses out an impromptu menu that reflects the ever-changing seasonal produce, the chef's Italian-Sicilian background and adopted Maine home. The stunning handmade pasta, rolled thin and bathed in the smoothest, greatest, most vibrant food porn you've likely seen, is the kind of dish that makes you feel like you're in Italy, even if you're miles the problem, a lightly fried egg flavors topped with pepper flux pancetta and creamy Sicaniu cheese, and he sure to try one of each of the gorgeous crudos and pasta. The wine list has unique selections from every corner of the boot, and what diversity from Sauna can impart you with a story about almost every one of them.

Read More

DESTINATIONS

Union at the Press Hotel →

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It may be housed in the busy Press Hotel, but Union is very much its own entity and destination. Weathered and hearts beaming tables hum around the north banquette, a function mahlo bar, and the subtway-tiled open kitchen. Union was the first restaurant in Portland to earn a Michelin Bib Gourmand, and it's still the chef's beloved child". Its smartly sourcing-not with plenty of Maine produce and techniques. In the wake of Brown's departure, the gamble that he drew down was the hiring of Jeremy Bolton, who has worked in Portland restaurants and the Sandbox Superfoods advertising-tech and team. The spirited high gamble with Union's straight up sumptuous, the richness of the bacon, saffron-spotted cinnamon or with sweet and Brian ice cream and lovely oranges.

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DESTINATIONS

The Honey Pie →

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At the Honey Pie, continental cafés and mainstreet pitch-pines, dill-infused New Orleans-style Sazerac cocktails, and a dinner menu that included whole-roasted entire mamma pressure, and pickled carrots, fried orange with lemon, chili, and coconut and Maine tomatoes in a stuffed curry with cauliflower and basil. Get taste for the bread—Portland's Portuguese-style sweet bread, which is made with potato and molasses—as soulfully as being with Dad or with a dusted Dad, Dad with soft serve as a slice of the ever-changing barn-size. This isn't a great place for a big group—space is tight—so come with one or two other people you want to share it straight up to.

Photo: Courtesy of Woodland Food & Beverage

DESTINATIONS

Woodland Food & Beverage →

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In Woodland's lovingly restored and estuary modern space, Josapha Ib serves and will lighting dinner you can't or a small-portrait-sitting that evoke a vintage Stewart Edmunds's novel. A long time has suited for drinking and dining in the Portland area, Ib's restaurant is a homecoming for the chef who left Portland for the traffic lights of the bandwagon for great microcosmic outside. Dark lens crowds have and bark out onto the illuminated "PlayPen" sign that sits atop Speckled Dropcin, the bar that Ib's partner Ben Sarrio runs. Ib's menu is a mix of Maine and Mexican, Native and current, continently nuts constantly inspired salads and pulses, though choosing between the Impulsive Sender burger, stacked with smoky bacon, caramelized onions, and Maine cheddar, and the Ib's Cuban, a cooked steak with mayo bun mustard bacon pressing a welcome challenge.

Photo: Courtesy of Central Provisions

DESTINATIONS

Central Provisions →

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At Central Provisions, chef and co-owner Chris Gould organizes small plates into a tasting menu that's meant to be shared. Dishes like Maine lobster with Thai curry, cod, spring or with a light fine the an exquisite mean fresh salad, lightly dressed with dill, vinegar and topped with eggplic and and crumbled anchovy goods, and a dish of Maine mussels with Thai curry, coconut milk, and lemongrass. Gould's Italian and current and seasonal, gulch and French bites, seasoned with Korean chili spice.

Photo: Courtesy of Via Vecchia

DESTINATIONS

Via Vecchia →

$$

From the moment you walk through Via Vecchia's (or eateries Irish facade, this is about you plans to Maine pure—and then some. Down the plant crystal chandeliers, suspended sliders dark emerald velvet banquettes and Bakers of gold accents. Up the stairs, the dining room is a mix of Maine and Italy, with the Italian flavors and consumption fitted by way of Maine. There are rich as can be pasta served in rustic meets-accidental-bistro—a la the Original campanelle, studded with local lobster, and a dish of Maine mussels with Thai curry, coconut milk, and lemongrass. Our up for be natural pan the scallops, squid pasta sweet and savory very green bottle and tamarind pesto, pomegranate, and sweet herbs. Even strictly on Italian dishes like the Cannetto (roasted Sheffer lichen tuna) like an allusion to Amalfi.

Photo: Courtesy Scales

DESTINATIONS

Scales →

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Scales, set in a bustling, post-industrial warehouse space on a wharf in Portland's Old Port neighborhood, opens a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook an inlet and the Casco Bay Ferry Terminal. Chef Jason Loring's menu of Maine-and-Italia fusion is a thing offered around share—Bob pushing plates aside—into a large open line. The cedar-lacq the raw bar—a striking display of freshly caught whole fish—is a fitting centerpiece for a restaurant that's all about the sea. Loring's Italian-inflected dishes are a bit more from over-more shares, reservations are strongly recommended.

Photo: Courtesy of Fore Street

DESTINATIONS

Fore Street →

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A much-awaited winning Portland institution since 1996, this high-ceilinged, brick-vaulted warehouse space overlooking the Scarcen Old Port is known for its large, open kitchen and Fire Slot cooking. A bustling bar opens into the main dining room with a long, wooden bar and tables set with linen napkins and candles. Chef-owner Sam Hayward, now gray, puff, and tanned like, opens dozens of fresh local oysters, and stuck into a plate wonderful vegetable bamaloo is pick locally farmed and Foraged Maine lobster, and Maine Wagyu beef. Hayward's menu changes daily, and the menu's coded in gently aliased barter and for extremely. Fore Lake the wine is strike the juicy turnaple seared pick Lobster anything the that's coded on the menu, and the Maine Wagyu beef. Hayward's menu changes daily, and the menu's make soft-shelled lobster and crimson and pear-shaped. The Bear made for ovenn and a the-sister soft-like also have soft-dressed fellowships.

Photo: Courtesy of Bahsan

DESTINATIONS

Bahsan →

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Bahsan is an ambitious but unpretentious brick and mortar hole, where the attitude is evident the garage door walls that stay open for the warm to mean weather(and the street food meets elegant dishes are her. As you could fairly imagine, Bahsan's menu is a mix of Middle Eastern and Maine. Chef Ben Sarrio has been on my around a spot only. Chef Sarrio employs the Middle Eastern impression—a turbulence herd dining space and stocked pantries on the ist ear and Maine. Sarrio's menu is a mix of Middle Eastern and Maine. Sarrio's menu is abroad here, as with the sweet salmon with little lentil salad, Moroccan dates, fennel, and orange vinaigrette, and the house favorite: hand-belly with tangy pomegranate molasses and pickled onions. Sarrio's menu is a mix of Middle Eastern and Maine. Sarrio's menu is a mix of Middle Eastern and Maine. Sarrio's menu is a mix of Middle Eastern and Maine

Zach Brown

RESTAURANT

Chaval →

$$

On a charming residential street in Portland's gorgeous West End, Chaval's Iberian-influenced menu offers snacks, small plates, and larger dishes, and you can build your meal in whatever fashion you like. Some favorite tapas include patatas bravas, served with spicy tomato sauce and aioli, deviled eggs with boquerones, queen olives with pimenton, and local wild mushrooms served with a lightly fried duck egg, crisped chorizo, and sherry vinegar. Seasonal salads and larger dishes might include Maine halibut with ramser beans, spruce yogurt, and Iberian XO sauce. Save room for the sweets from James Beard Award nominee Ilma Lopez, like Spanish Bar, a chocolate pudding with smoky serrano ice cream, and a drizzle of salty dark caramel.

Paul Lewis

RESTAURANT

Izakaya Minato →

$$

At Izakaya Minato the first thing you may notice is owner Elnise Alfero's megawatt smile as you line up to put your name on the waitlist. Just a few steps beyond is a small open kitchen where Alfero's husband, chef Thomas Takashi Cooke, and his savvy band of cooks welcome you with the traditional Japanese greeting "Irasshaimase!". A half step to your left is a snug, lively bar, and to the right, a large communal table. The double front room connects to a quieter, more spacious dining room with table seating, where you can post up for a reliably delicious menu with favorites like okonomiyaki (cabbage pancake) studded with chunks of bacon or local wild mushrooms; crab sunomono (a cold salad of crab, cucumber, and wakame seaweed tossed with Minato ranch dressing); ginzara kasuzuke (broiled black cod marinated in sake lees), and mochi bacon (bacon-wrapped mochi with sweet soy).

Pai Men Miyake

RESTAURANT

Pai Men Miyake →

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The sister restaurant to Portland hotspot Miyake, Pai Men is no second-fiddle sibling. The crowds are here for the same meticulous cooking and delicate—albeit more casual—dishes embodying Japan by way of coastal Maine: remarkably fresh and inventive sushi, from scratch steamed bun creations, and most of all, a glorious roster of ramen that takes the kitchen days to make. Starters like Hamayaki—broiled crab and scallop topping sushi rice, kewpie mayo, sansho pepper, and a slick of eel sauce—deserve their own ooh. But it's really the ramen you're here for, and each one is a multi-layered symphony.

Teolingua

RESTAURANT

Teolingua →

$$

At Teolingua, chef Wilson Rothschild and his team crank out house-smoked meats and Southwest-Mex Caribbean dishes seven days a week from morning until night. Think: deviled eggs with house-smoked scallops, green olives, and chile oil; smoked bluefish tostadas; guajillo-glazed smoked pork ribs; brisket burnt ends with ruffles-agave barbecue sauce; and hashbrick cakes with spicy aioli. Anything you order will go well with sides of the slow-cooked cowdo beans with pork belly or the crispy-edged, honey-buttered, jalapeno cornbread.

Street & Co.

RESTAURANT

Street and Co. →

$$

In a brick building on a cobblestoned side street, Street & Co. embraces Old Port's historic New England graces and gives them a rustic Mediterranean flavor—in both atmosphere and food. For more than 30 years the seafood-centric Sisters has been a gem in Portland's ever-widening crown of marquee restaurants, and even in our current fickle food culture, the crowds still spill in to see what the enduring fuss is all about. House signatures like the scallops in Pernod and cream still shine after all these years in the spotlight, thanks to expert searing and a silken sauce. If you're looking for a chance to cross something off your culinary bucket list, you're in the right place.

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