

Blue Ribbon  
Sushi Izakaya



# The Best RESTAURANTS of the Northeast 2012

*Arrive presents its annual roundup of the region's best restaurants.  
Delicious newcomers, tastemakers and instant classics*

— BY LIZ JOHNSON • PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON KOTOWSKI

YOU DON'T NEED US TO TELL you that Restaurant Daniel in Manhattan is the epitome of luxury or that you can get a great lobster roll at Red's Eats in Wiscasset, Maine. So to choose these new and notable restaurants, we asked ourselves: Does the restaurant do something out of the ordinary? (Foraging at Atera, Southern at Hungry Mother.) Does it hit on a current trend? (Pabu, Daikaya and Blue Ribbon Sushi Izakaya. Farm-to-table everywhere.) Do you get a feel for its city when you dine there? (Barbuzzo off Chestnut Street, Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare.) Every restaurant fit. And then we asked ourselves one last thing: Would we want to dine there? The answer, for these 18 restaurants, is: absolutely.



## JAPANESE

## Pabu

BALTIMORE • MARYLAND

WE ON THE EAST COAST haven't heard much of chef Michael Mina, but he has an empire of restaurants from San Francisco (his home base) to Vegas to Florida and D.C. Here, he's collaborating with chef Ken Tominaga to hit on the Japanese izakaya trend. Imagine small plates, Japanese style: Happy Spoon, a ceramic spoon layered with oyster, uni and ponzu crème fraîche; Maryland Crab Okonomiyaki, a crepe topped with a sunny side up egg; and skewers of chicken (including, for the adventurous, chicken hearts) charcoal-grilled on an exposed robata grill. By dining here, you'll get a feel not only for this style of dining but also for a chef who needs to be on your watch list. 410-223-1460; michaelmina.net

## ITALIAN

## Coppa

BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

BITTER APERITIFS. BRUSCHETTA. Blistered bubbles on every wood-fired pizza crust. Chef Jamie Bissonnette has slain Italian food at this tiny trattoria. Start with stuzzichini, or little snacks, such as the sea urchin and beef tongue panino with mustard seeds, and try an antipasti (tuna crudo with radish and Sriracha). But whatever you do, do not miss the pizza. You will feel like you've died and gone to heaven. Or at least Italy. 617-391-0902; coppaboston.com

## SOUTHERN

## Hungry Mother

CAMBRIDGE • MASSACHUSETTS

WHY GO FOR SOUTHERN FOOD in Cambridge rather than, say, Carolina? Because chef-owner Barry Maiden is cooking it. From boiled peanuts to chocolate terrine with peanuts, crispy rice and buttermilk ice cream—and all the excellent Southern specialties in between (catfish, collards, country biscuits)—you will delight in a meal here. Save your expense account, too: Dinner may be delicious, but it won't break the bank. 617-499-0090; hungrymothercambridge.com



Bondir

## FARM-TO-TABLE

## Bondir

CAMBRIDGE • MASSACHUSETTS

LOCAL, SEASONAL AND SENSATIONAL. Chef Jason Bond has been lauded by *Bon Appétit* and the *Boston Globe* for his farm-to-table cooking that's (for once) not run-of-the-mill slice-a-tomato-and-call-it-dinner. He's propelling the genre forward with such dishes as braised lamb tart with Turkish spices, confit lemon vinaigrette, labneh and Kalamata olive, or soft-poached eggs served atop Wagyu beef tongue boudin noir, collards, potatoes and smoked scamorza. Plus, every dish is available in a half portion. Admirable. 617-661-0009; bondircambridge.com



Bondir



Bondir

## FARM-TO-TABLE

## ABC Kitchen

NEW YORK CITY • NEW YORK

THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN Jean-Georges Vongerichten and ABC Carpet & Home could have been at best annoying, at worst crass, if only the tableware for sale wasn't so stunningly beautiful and the food served on it wasn't so mind-blowing. You've had farm-to-table, but not as chef Dan Kluger prepares it. He is a good editor and makes everything seem effortless. It's surely not. 35 E. 18th St., Manhattan. 212-475-5829; abckitchennyc.com

## NEW AMERICAN

## Atera

NEW YORK CITY • NEW YORK

FORAGING USED TO BE FOR WOMEN from the old country, whom you'd see picking dandelions on the side of the highway. Now, thanks to noma, the trendsetting restaurant in Copenhagen, it's hipsters who hunt, too. Chef Matthew Lightner comes, like all good foragers, from Portland, Ore., but he cooked at noma as well as at Mugaritz, in Spain. Expect moss. Flowers. Juniper. Ash. Lightner plays with expectations and plates with precision. Textures are as important as flavors, and the courses (there are more than 20) are titled with such tactile-sounding words as *rock*, *crunchy* and *sticky*. One more trend here: a chef's counter, with just 12 seats. 212-226-1444; ateranyc.com

## NEW AMERICAN

## Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare

BROOKLYN • NEW YORK

A FLURRY OF MORE THAN 20 courses—from one-bite canapés to complicated classics plated with tweezers—is served to 18 diners at a stainless steel bar. At the center: chef Cesar Ramirez, who this year added three Michelin stars and a No. 1-in-New York nod from *GQ*'s Alan Richman to his enormous collection of other accolades. You won't want to miss a meal here, but with seats booked six weeks in advance it's likely you will. Over the summer, Ramirez and owner Moe Issa announced a second location would open on 39th Street in Manhattan. Also called Brooklyn Fare, it will have 60 seats and a no-reservation policy. Perhaps there serendipity will strike. 718-243-0050; <http://www.brooklynfare.com/pages/chefs-table>

CHINESE

## Mission Chinese

NEW YORK CITY • NEW YORK

A BRANCH OF THE SUPER-POPULAR San Francisco Chinese that started out as a food truck, then a pop-up, and now has chef Danny Bowien at the helm. He spins creative twists on standards (fried rice, egg custard, stir-fried pork), but please don't call his cooking fusion; this is simply how he thinks things should be done. You might well agree after the mouthwatering and tongue-tingling Thrice-Cooked Bacon, which is served in a bowl with rice cakes, tofu, bitter melon and what might seem like a truckload of chili oil. The Kung Pao Pas-trami will set your mouth ablaze, too. As is the case with trendy (that is, hipster and youthful) these days, the dining room is cramped and reservations are not taken. 212-529-8800; [missionchinesefood.com/ny](http://missionchinesefood.com/ny)

NEW AMERICAN

## NoMad

NEW YORK CITY • NEW YORK

SO MANY RESTAURANTS TODAY are eschewing fancy for cool that it's nice to find one that does both. A series of rooms are outfitted with 20th century-style glitter: luxurious fabrics, dark bookcases and cushioned chairs (with backs!). When it comes to the dinner, get the chicken. That sounds weird (chicken? really?), but consider this: chef-owner Daniel Humm is also in charge of the four-star kitchen at Eleven Madison Park. His roast chicken for two with foie gras, truffles and brioche bread crumbs has New Yorkers slack-jawed with surprise and swooning with pleasure. 347-472-5660; [thenomadhotel.com](http://thenomadhotel.com)

THAI

## Pok Pok NY

BROOKLYN • NEW YORK

POK POK MAY SEEM LIKE an overnight success, but chef-owner Andy Ricker, who comes from Portland, Ore., has been working on his Thai repertoire for 20 years. Unless you arrive before the 5:30 p.m. opening, you'll wait for one of the 60 tables, and the wait could be long. It will be worth it for the near-perfect replicas of northern Thai dishes showing the bracing and balanced flavors of mint, lime and chili. Rapturous praises have been sung for the lemon grass-stuffed roast chicken, for smoky sausages grilled on charcoal, for clay-pot prawns and for the complex pork larb. 718-923-9322; [pokpokny.com](http://pokpokny.com)



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JAPANESE

## Blue Ribbon Sushi Izakaya

NEW YORK CITY • NEW YORK

It was always cool to go to the original Blue Ribbon on Sullivan Street. It's open late. You'll see chefs. The food is delicious and the vibe is fun. Now add to that a new location and this year's it trend: izakaya. It's a style of Japanese pub that's a cross between a tapas bar and a gastropub. At Blue Ribbon's version, you'll find New York twists on Japanese dishes, such as chicken-liver mousse with miso, negi and challah toast. What fun! 212-466-0404; [blueribbonrestaurants.com](http://blueribbonrestaurants.com)



Barbuzzo



Barbuzzo



Barbuzzo

## FARM-TO-TABLE

**Barbuzzo**

PHILADELPHIA • PENNSYLVANIA

**WOOD-FIRED PIZZA.** Small plates. Charcuterie. A farm-to-table philosophy. Barbuzzo is hitting on all today's trends—and that's just with the dinner menu. You'll also find a barn door made of reclaimed wood, an open kitchen and a craft beer list. Chef-owner Marcie Turney and co-owner Valerie Safran have transformed South 13th Street between Chestnut and Sansom into their own mini-empire, with six restaurants and boutiques on just one block. They have newer places (Jamonera, a Spanish wine bar opened this year), but Barbuzzo embodies their spirit best. And the food—pasta; pizza; pork with sunchokes, fennel pollen and capers—is really, really good. 215-546-9300; [barbuzzo.com](http://barbuzzo.com)



Barbuzzo

## ITALIAN

**Amis**

PHILADELPHIA • PENNSYLVANIA

**BIG, BOLD AND BOISTEROUS**—just what you want from a casual trattoria from Marc Vetri, Philadelphia's star chef behind Vetri and Osteria. *Amis* means “friends,” and you should take as many as you can to share these small plates done Italian style: arancini with a meaty ragu; fritto misto with a fan of artichoke leaves; cacio e pepe; cannelloni; carpaccio. You will revel in the food and rollick in the scene: an industrial feel with exposed ductwork and brick walls softened by wood tables and candlelight. The energy is most palpable at the chef's counter overlooking the open kitchen. 215-732-2647; [amisphilly.com](http://amisphilly.com)

## BISTRO

**Bibou**

PHILADELPHIA • PENNSYLVANIA

**BALANCING BETWEEN SURRENDER** (to y peasant food like marrowbones and game) and restraint (following the haute cuisine instincts that come from having worked at Le Bec-Fin and Daniel), chef-owner Pierre Calmels has found a modern, exciting way to do bistro food. His menu has rustic sensibility for today's adventurous eaters, but his more elegant plates will please those more accustomed to fine dining. This is cash only, BYO and very French: Take your best Burgundy. 215-965-8290; [biboubyob.com](http://biboubyob.com)



SPANISH

## Estadio

WASHINGTON • D.C.

When you can get great tapas at a neighborhood place like Estadio, it goes to show how far Spanish food has come. You can hardly go wrong with anything on the menu, from the terrific jamóns to the curated selection of cheeses to classics like patatas bravas and tortilla española. The cocktail program is deservedly lauded, too. Another don't-miss? The hanger steak, which should be paired with one of the terrific Tempranillos. 202-319-1404; [estadio-dc.com](http://estadio-dc.com)



JAPANESE

## Daikaya

WASHINGTON • D.C.

THOUGH NOT OPEN AT press time, we fully expect this noodle joint (first floor), izakaya (second floor) and Japanese cocktail bar (nearby) will be on everyone's to-try list this year. The restaurant, co-owned by Sushiko co-owner Daisuke Utagawa and partner Yama Jewayni, has former José Andrés protégé and minibar chef Katsuya Fukushima, also a partner, in the kitchen, and the menu is expected to have twists on traditional ramen, using unusual toppings such as basil and mozzarella. No phone or website at press time.

FARM-TO-TABLE

## District Kitchen

WASHINGTON • D.C.

OH, ANOTHER FARM-TO-TABLE with exposed brick, bare Edison bulbs and kitchen towels as napkins? You could say, "Yawn," but you should say, "Yes!" From Drew Trautmann, the chef formerly at Mendocino Grille & Wine Bar in Georgetown, you'll find duck confit, pork shank with sauerkraut, and mushroom-and-potato hash topped with egg. Serious flavor, serious fun. 2606 Connecticut Ave. NW. 202-238-9408; [districtkitchen.com](http://districtkitchen.com)

THAI

## Little Serow

WASHINGTON • D.C.

WITH JUST 28 SEATS, a strict no-reservations policy, a family-style Thai menu with no choices or substitutions and a setting in a former Dunkin' Donuts, you wouldn't expect this place to be the hottest ticket in D.C. But once you discover that Johnny Monis, the chef at the modern Greek sensation Komi, is at the helm, it all makes sense. He returned from his honeymoon to northeast Thailand obsessed with the food and has turned his talent to creating seven-course dinners (for \$45!), with such dishes as laap pal duk, a salad of chopped catfish with shallots and chilies, and pork ribs grilled, smoked and served with red chili paste. This is not your typical Thai, we can tell you that. No phone. [littleserow.com](http://littleserow.com)

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- HIS 102 Western Civilization II

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- COM 171 Fundamentals of Human Comm.
- CSC 101 Introduction to Computers
- ENG 101 Composition
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- SPA 102 Elementary Spanish II

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5:00 pm - 8:30 pm

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- PSY 111 General Psychology I

**ONLINE**

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