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Fifty

*The 50 Best Restaurants in
Philadelphia*

50

THESE ARE the restaurants you want to eat in right now. Not yesterday. Not last year. Maybe not even tomorrow. But right now.

Philadelphia

M A G A Z I N E

*Metro Corp, 1818 Market Street,
Philadelphia, PA 19103*

Philadelphia
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Philadelphia's dining scene, like the restaurant industry at large, is in a state of flux.

There's a movement toward a new casualness, where the best meal you'll ever have could be one you eat in jeans in a neighborhood you wouldn't even have driven through a decade ago. The white tablecloth restaurants our parents knew are struggling to find or recapture relevance. This list serves as a window into the changing world of cuisine. Welcome to the revolution.

No. 1: Stateside

Chef George Sabatino is having a helluva year. He's won contests and awards. He commands the kitchen at one of the busiest, most popular restaurants in the city. And it really is as good as you've heard. Everything about the place – from the ever-changing, weirdly locavore menu that touches on every vital food trope in play on the national scene, to the bar, the room, and the energy of the knowledgeable crowd – marks Stateside as not just Philadelphia's first truly post-gastropub restaurant, but the place where American cuisine has finally come into its own.

Don't Miss: The smoked pork rilette with Korean BBQ sauce. It's perhaps the most pointed example of Sabatino's modern notion of borderless but firmly rooted locality. At the Bar: The selection of American whiskeys, bourbons and ryes is impressive. 1536 East Passyunk Avenue, South Philly, 215-551-2500.

No. 2: Marigold Kitchen

In the past three years, this onetime West Philly boardinghouse has become the best restaurant nobody talks about. Chef Robert Halpern's four (or six)-course prix-fixe meals regularly swell to 16 with additions of clever canapés, multiple amuse-bouches, and modernist trifles like chocolate-salt-dusted chestnut ravioli or beet-salad-flavored dipping dots. And all for \$65!

Insider Tip: Go with the four-course fixed-price menu. You'll get the same fun amuse-bouches as your six-course-ordering neighbors. Fun Fact: If you encounter popcorn sauced with liquid nitrogen, dig in quickly to experience the fire-breathing-dragon effect. 501 South 45th Street, West Philly, 215-222-3699.

No. 3: Vedge

No one cooks a radish like Rich Landau and Kate Jacoby at Vedge. No one treats beets, rutabagas or mushrooms the way the kitchen here does. Because of this innovation and attention to detail, Vedge isn't just the best vegetarian restaurant in Philadelphia; it's one of the city's best restaurants, period.

Get Your Mind Blown: By the sweet-potato pâté with grain mustard and toast, proof that smartly handled veggies can hold their own against proteins any day. For the Dedicated Vegetable Enthusiast: On its best days, the daily "Dirt Menu" is one of the most innovative boards in the city. 1221 Locust Street, Washington Square West, 215-320-7500.

No. 4: The Farm & Fisherman

One of a growing roster of chefs who've come home to open restaurants in Philadelphia, Josh Lawler is taking best advantage of the city's location close to the Jersey Shore and just an hour or so from the farms of Lancaster. Lawler can make vegetables sing even in the depths of winter, but with the bounties of summer, he turns his attractive Pine Street BYOB into a colorful chorus of all things seasonal. After a tour of local farmers' markets, the chef turns conductor: A Jersey tomato is coaxed to new heights, a day-boat scallop becomes a soloist, Lancaster steak stars as an entrée worth an encore.

Don't Miss: The beet steak. It's been Lawler's signature since he opened. 1120 Pine Street, Washington Square West, 267-687-1555.

5 LE VIRTÙ//NEW TO LIST

Joe Cicala's homage to Abruzzo gets more right than the pasta (which it does gloriously). It actually feels like a place you'd find out in the Italian countryside, where beautifully rustic food goes for family-friendly prices. **Food Wow:** The maccheroni alla mugnana is a single noodle, a six-foot-long hand-rolled ode to chewiness, dosed with garlic and chili flakes. And savory pecorino crepes in chicken broth is the bowl of chicken soup your mom never made you. 1927 East Passyunk Avenue, South Philly, 215-271-5626.

6 SBRAGA//NEW TO LIST

Kevin Sbraga's eponymous restaurant has improved substantially since arriving on the scene about a year ago. The service has smoothed considerably, and the Top Chef victor has toned down the stunts and gimmicks just enough, while upping his focus on providing excellent food at the (almost) bargain price of \$49 for the tasting menu. **Pro Tip:** Kevin Sbraga's food is still fun, especially at his chef's counter, where he often cooks for six people himself. 440 South Broad Street, Center City, 215-735-1913.

7 FOND//2011 RANKING: 15

Fond comes to the scene with a three-pronged attack of excellence. First, you're greeted by former Lacroix front-of-the-house guru Tory Keomanivong, who takes care of diners as well as anyone in Philadelphia. Second, chef Lee Styer and his crew handle the food with skill and grace. Finally, don't even think about skipping dessert, which makes each dinner end on a high note. **Good news:** With Fond's new location comes a fully-stocked bar, though you're still allowed to BYO on weekdays. Don't Miss: Styer's risotto is second to none. And the lobster, hazelnuts and truffles added to it don't hurt. 1537 South 11th Street, South Philly, 215-551-5000.

8 AMIS//2011 RANKING: 11

This restaurant has established a distinct identity on the Vetri family tree. Amis is equal parts playful and pensive. The just-open-enough kitchen and front bar add a vibrancy and casualness to the space. There are meatballs made from swordfish. The hand-rolled pastas are superlative. And Amis has one of the city's best



charcuterie programs, with a dreamy mortadella served in tissue-thin slices with hazelnut honey, or soft and spreadable on bruschetta. **The New Upscale:** The bucatini tossed with creamy almond pesto and subtly spicy jalapeño. **Pro Tip:** The tiramisu, often available even if it's not printed on the menu, is possibly the best you've ever had. 412 South 13th Street, Midtown Village, 215-732-2647.

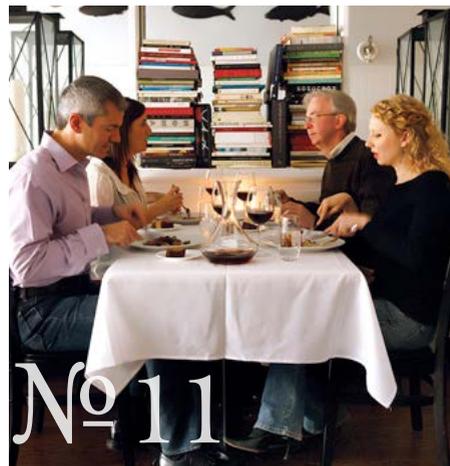
9 VETRI//2011 RANKING: 2

Homer sang hymns to Demeter and Apollo.

Photo Credit: Amis

American food bards sing hymns to Marc Vetri – and also his wine guru, Jeff Benjamin. Dinner at this mansion of ethereal pastas is the priciest ticket in town, but it delivers a blend of rusticity and elegance that's rare in any city, let alone ours, where white tablecloths give us the willies but special occasions still call out for unerring service and cooking that has integrity.

Insider Tip: The coursed wine pairings show what happens when an inspired sommelier mind-melds with a master chef. 1312 Spruce Street, Midtown Village, 215-732-3478.



10 BIBOU//2011 RANKING: 3

The menu at Bibou is short, but every plate coming out of the kitchen at this cozy, inviting BYO is a classic looked at with a modern eye. While French technique might be the Tao of every high-end kitchen that matters, chef Pierre Calmels's kitchen is here to remind us of all the reasons why French food still matters in this nouvelle American age. **What to Order:** The cassoulet is the best in the city, but the truly legendary dish here is the pied de porc, a braised pig's foot stuffed with foie gras and French lentils. **Pro Tip:** Bibou is cash-only. 1009 South 8th Street, Bella Vista, 215-965-8290.

11 BLACKFISH 2011//RANKING: 1

From the saline simplicity of raw oysters speckled with Meyer lemon to jazzed-up crudos like striped bass with yuzu syrup and radishes, Chip Roman's range of creativity with seafood is as sweeping as the decor is spare at the BYO that continues to make Conshy a dining destination. **Favorite Dish:** Smoked salmon wrapped around a panko-crusted deep-fried egg. Value Play: Tuesdays feature four courses, plus the odd amuse-bouche, for \$45. **If Only:** There were a spot to wait for your table without looming over someone else's. 119 Fayette Street, Conshohocken, 610-397-0888.

12 BRAUHAUS SCHMITZ//NEW TO LIST

Yes, you can get excellent schnitzel and Bavarian pretzels at Brauhaus Schmitz. But not embracing chef Jeremy Nolen's "Modern German" cuisine is a mistake. Dishes like his Stopfleberwurst – housemade foie gras sausage – and the lamb prepared two ways (grilled as a chop and braised as belly) are redefining how people look at German food. **Unique Pricing:** The house sells its bratwurst by the meter, so big eaters will feel right at home here. **Unforgettable Beers:** Owner Doug Hager wants to do for German beer in Philadelphia what Monk's Cafe did for the Belgians. And he's well on his way, with never-before-seen beers arriving monthly. 718 South Street, Philadelphia, 267-909-8814.

13 OSTERIA//2011 RANKING: 6

Jeff Michaud and Marc Vetri's bustling North Broad operation is one of the best Italian restaurants in the country. Whether you sit at the bar and share a speck/radicchio or escarole/gorgonzola pizza and a couple of glasses of wine, or find yourself in the see-and-be-seen dining room with its Italian primi/secondi way of eating, you're in good hands here. **Best of the Best:** The Parma pizza is one of the finest pies in the city. **Pleasant Surprise:** Osteria isn't as absurdly expensive as you might think. You can eat comfortably for well under \$100 per person. Not cheap, but a great value for what you get. 640 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, 215-763-0920.

14 ZAHAV//2011 RANKING: 16

There's no roast chicken, no pizza, no sweet-potato fries. Zahav caters neither to trends nor to your usual cravings – unless you're someone who gets regular hankerings for sweetbread schnitzel or raw lamb with sumac and shallots. What Michael Solomonov does so brilliantly at his modern Israeli hot spot is stun your brain and belly out of their gastropub complacency with fried cauliflower brightened with mint and dill, or velvety, buttery hummus with warm laffa you can tear into, or tender grilled duck hearts with sweet cherries. **Best Seat in the House:** Each weekend, Solomonov cooks personally for no more than eight people at Zahav's Chef's Counter. 237 St. James Place, Society Hill, 215-625-8800.

15 VERNICK FOOD AND DRINK//NEW TO LIST

This is a newcomer worth keeping an eye on. Chef-owner Greg Vernick is turning out accessible, clean, thoughtful food at his airy new eatery. Take, for example, the delicious, tangy sourdough bread, which he chars over lava rocks before layering on toppings such as a brandade-like briny crabmeat, or peas and bacon. Many dishes have a touch of something acidic – a pickled chili here, a black-olive dressing there – that keeps you reaching for more. **Good for all:** The easy vibe and approachable menu make it one of those rare restaurants suitable for anything: dinner with food-snob friends, cocktails with a gal pal, a meal with the non-adventurous in-laws... 2031 Walnut Street, Rittenhouse, 267-639-6644.

16 WILL//NEW TO LIST

Will was one of the most anticipated openings of the year. And yet even with all that pressure, it drew almost unanimous raves for chef Chris Kearsse's conceptual creativity and museum-grade plating, neither of which gets in the way of simple, soul-soothing deliciousness at the best new BYOB of 2012.

Can't-Miss Dish: Scallops with almond milk and uni mousse. If Only: The tables weren't so crammed together. 1911 East Passyunk Avenue, South

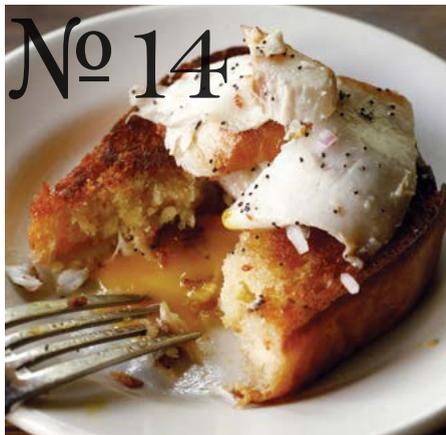


Photo Credit: Zahav

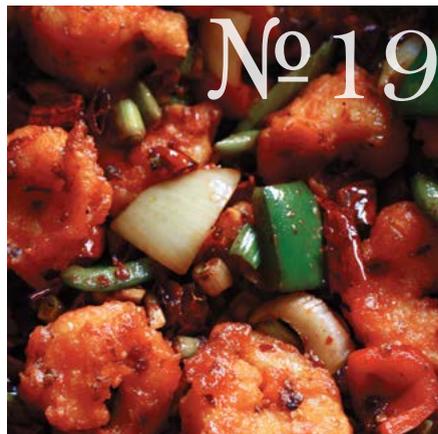


Photo Credit: Han Dynasty

Philly, 215-271-7683.

17 FORK//2011 RANKING: 21

Terence Feury was a tough act to follow in the kitchen, but bringing in hot New York chef Eli Kulp was a masterful move. Kulp has unleashed yet another blast of creativity into this venerable (but by no means stuffy) Old City institution.

Insider Tip: This is one place where entrées can outshine appetizers, so save room.

Can't-Miss Dish: Guinea hen with pear marbles and

horseradish cream. 306 Market Street, Old City, 215-625-9425.

18 ZEPOLI//NEW TO LIST

This Collingswood BYO describes itself as “very intimate.” What they mean is “extremely small” – only 35 seats, so getting in at prime time isn't always easy, even on a weeknight. And once you do get in, the tables are really close together. But you'll be treated to delicious, expertly conceived and completely un-fussy Italian plates like house-made tagliatelle topped with bottarga (a Sicilian cured fish roe), grilled swordfish or stewed rabbit. Behind the Music: Chef Joey Baldino's last job was as chef de cuisine at Vetri. **You Should Know:** That Collingswood police take the whole DUI thing very seriously. 618 Collings Avenue, Collingswood, 856-854-2670.

19 HAN DYNASTY//2011 RANKING: 12

Han Chiang knows how to get Philly hot and bothered, whether it's with well-crafted meals like scorching Szechuan peppercorns or his deliciously profane tableside banter. This year, he added another weapon to his arsenal: Katie Loeb's tiki drinks at the new University City location. **Can't-Miss Dish:** Dandan noodles. They're just as good as you've heard. **Mandatory side:** Spicy citrus cucumbers. 3711 Market Street, University City, 215-222-3711.

20 FOUNTAIN RESTAURANT AT THE FOUR SEASONS//2011 RANKING: 9

If you're looking for the best service in Philadelphia, it's here. And the menu is perfect, too, offering smart American cuisine with French overtones. Aha moments abound, from the modernist take on a crab “cocktail” to the warm chestnut flan that accompanies the prosciutto-stuffed pork loin. One of Philly's long-time, high-end, white-tablecloth temples, Fountain is far from staid these days. The kitchen brags about its rooftop herb garden and partners with Dock Street Brewery on inventive collaborations. **Perhaps a cocktail?** Peruse the iPad wine-and-drinks list and head toward the cocktails, where local ingredients and spirits abound. 1 Logan Square, Center City, 215-963-1500.

21 AMADA//2011 RANKING: 26

Seven years can be several lifetimes in the restaurant biz, but Amada isn't showing any signs of age. Though Jose Garces has since turned into an epicurean megastar – that's Iron Chef Garces to you – his first restaurant's tapas always taste just as authentic as they did when he first opened the place way back in 2005. Plus, the service here is warm, knowledgeable and attentive. **Don't Miss:** The crab-stuffed peppers. **For Special Occasions:** The \$75 lobster paella is a must. **If Only:** You could get a table during normal dining hours. Make reservations far in advance. 217 Chestnut Street, Old City, 215-625-2450.

22 THE DANDELION//NEW TO LIST

At the British pub Dandelion, talented chef Robert Aikens sidesteps the theme-restaurant schlock by offering a menu that depends on comfort more than surprises and practiced classics over technical flourishes. No matter how often you're here, there always seems to be something new to try. **On the Level:** The Dandelion has a warren of dining rooms on different floors, but the best seats in the house are still at the crowded main bar on the first floor. **Teatime:** Complete with a full cocktail list is offered every day between three and five o'clock. 124 South 18th Street, Rittenhouse, 215-558-2500.

23 TASHAN//NEW TO LIST

"This isn't authentic Indian food," said one Tashan diner early in the restaurant's tenure. But so what? Owner Munish Narula took a huge gamble with this swank, modern Indian restaurant while charting a bold "fusion" course with modern Indian flavors. Whether this gamble pays off will depend largely on whether people like going out for Indian food and not just getting tandoori chicken. **Gamble #2:** Tashan recently launched a high-end delivery program that's somewhere between Indian takeout and a full-scale catering operation. **You Should Know:** When the hostess says, "Do you like to sit near all the action in the kitchen?," what she really means is, "Do you want to sit next to our blazingly hot tandoor ovens?" 777 South Broad Street, Bella Vista, 267-687-2170.

24 LITTLE FISH//2011: NOT RANKED//2009 RANKING: 41

It's been several years since Mike Stollenwerk's original restaurant in Bella Vista received national praise as one of America's best seafood restaurants. Stollenwerk has since sold Little Fish to chef Chadd Jenkins, and the BYOB restaurant has relocated down 6th Street to slightly larger (but still definitely little) confines. And yet it might just be a better restaurant than ever. The fish is perfectly cooked, and the \$25-and-up prices are more than justified by the creative showcasing of surf, turf and fowl, with veal sau-

sage knocking the cobia up a notch and duck with lentils and red wine making tuna feel new again.

Value Play: Little Fish's \$33 Sunday-night tasting menu is a great deal. 746 South 6th Street, Bella Vista, 267-455-0172.

25 JG DOMESTIC//NEW TO LIST

On one hand, the crab-and-corn soup comes deconstructed, with a warm cream broth poured tableside. On the other, the brussels sprouts are served simply grilled, with Allagash honey and bits of La Quercia prosciutto. The whole place is a study in contrasts – a regional menu that draws as often from Jose Garces's own Luna Farm as it does from nationwide boutique producers, a comfortable blond-wood space inside a sterile skyscraper's lobby. But what's most surprising here is that while firmly wedged into the local, farm-to-table gestalt, JG Domestic is also most indicative of the Iron Chef's daring and cutting-edge impulses. **On the Floor:** Despite the challenging location (inside the Cira Center, across from the Amtrak station), JG Domestic often still sports a line of people waiting for tables. Plan accordingly. 2929 Arch Street, University City, 215-222-2363.

26 LE BEC FIN//2011: NOT RANKED / 2009 RANKING: 46

Chef Walter Abrams's cooking isn't as rich as that of Le Bec's original French incarnation, but his eight-plus courses, combined with new owner Nicolas Fanucci's charisma, can make you feel like a million bucks. **Now Factor:** Fruits and vegetables are the new stars at Le Bec 2.0. Think cucumber juice with watermelon and nasturtiums, or a tomato "prawn" cracker cradling carrots and beets. **Insider Tip:** Sommelier Philippe Sauriat can find gems at almost any price point. **Good to Know:** In October, an \$85 dinner option debuted as an alternative to the \$150 tasting menu. 1523 Walnut Street, Rittenhouse, 215-567-1000.

27 ZAMA//NEW TO LIST

The quality of the fish is on par with the best sushi restaurants in town, but chef Hiroyuki "Zama" Tanaka's inventive roll combinations (branzino with hot sesame oil; tuna with sesame and edamame hummus) are unmatched in Philly. **Don't Miss:** The snow crab California maki. You won't look at this sushi staple the same way ever again. **Save Room for:** Something from the equally talented kitchen, like the crisp-skinned miso black cod appetizer served with pickled vegetables and endive leaves. **Pro Tip:** Service is slow and can sometimes be forgetful, so sit at the sushi bar for an expedited meal. 128 South 19th Street, Rittenhouse, 215-568-1027.

28 JAMONERA//NEW TO LIST

Chef Marcie Turney and partner Valerie Safran's latest – a Spanish tapas joint and wine bar housed in the former home of

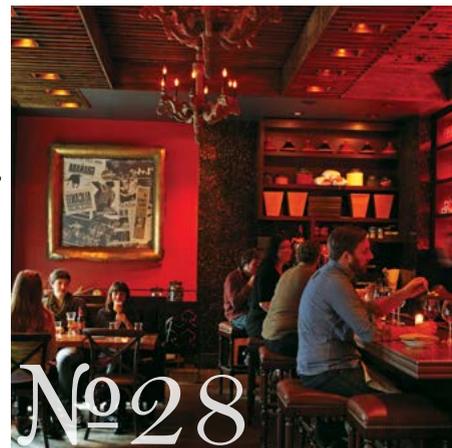


Photo Credit: The Dandelion

Bindi – has reignited our love affair with small plates, thanks to its dimly lit decor, polished service and truly sexy food. **Can't-Miss-Dish:** The smoky papas fritas with house-made sherry-vinegar hot sauce. They're like french fries for grown-ups. **Drink This:** Sherry. The servers are shockingly well versed on the extensive sherry list and can help you choose the glass that best suits your order. **Don't overlook:** The charcuteria platter and any of the other tapas containing Ibérico ham. 105 South 13th Street, Midtown Village, 215-922-6061.

29 IL PITTORE//NEW TO LIST

Stephen Starr's longtime lieutenant Chris Painter finally got his own spot, and his semi-eponymous Il Pittore is turning out pasta that's as delicate and delicious as any in this entire pasta-crazed city. Painter's pappardelle with wild boar is one of the stars, but so is the corzetti – pasta coins served with braised goat with mint and chili oil. This isn't some neighborhood red-sauce joint, and the main courses, like the braised short rib and roasted lamb chops, have the sophistication (and prices) to bear that out. **Greatness Takes Time:** The slow-cooked suckling pig is cured for 15 hours in salt, sugar and herbs, buried in pig fat, then slow-roasted for another 12. It arrives at the table plated with baby carrots, sweet pear mostarda and cavolo nero – delicious! 2025 Sansom Street, Rittenhouse, 215-391-4900.

30 ALLA SPINA//NEW TO LIST

A night at Alla Spina can be confusing. What is Marc Vetri, Philadelphia's don of high-end Italian, doing with this graffiti-tagged bar on North Broad? Where are the delicate pastas? The impeccable wine selection? Why are there Negronis on tap? What is Italian craft beer, and why is it so expensive? But come to Vetri's Italian gastropub simply looking for a good time in a fun bar and thrills abound. The fried chicken isn't remotely Italian. Poutine isn't, either, but Alla Spina's version, with mozzarella cheese curds, a guinea hen bolognese, and spuds fried in beef fat, shows there are geniuses in this kitchen. The veal cutlet hoagie is delicious, and the beef tenderloin is stunningly supple. **Don't Miss:** The best pretzels anywhere, elevated by a beer-cheese sauce. 1410 Mount Vernon Street, Philadelphia, 215-600-0017.

31 PUB & KITCHEN// 2011 RANKING: 27



Photo Credit: Il Pittore

The well-done gastropub model is the draw here. That, and the space, which is rustic without sacrificing comfort, and the vibe from the no-nonsense crowds drawn by the smart but restrained cocktails, a carefully curated beer list, and a menu full of things like watercress salad with pork cracklings, cassolette d'escargots, and rainbow trout stuffed with crab mousse, served over fennel-scented polenta. **At the Bar:** George Costa has a drink for every mood and a story for every drink. **Just a Taste:** You can make

a terrific meal out of the sides – that is, if you don't feel weird sitting at the bar and eating "Guts and Glory" chicken stuffing with a spoon. 1946 Lombard Street, Graduate Hospital, 215-545-0350.

32 PUMPKIN //2011 RANKING: 37

Ian Moroney's South Street mainstay got a rustic makeover this year, but the cooking remains as elegant and honest as ever, from one of the most exquisitely seared duck breasts to the enveloping warmth of a side of sweet-potato polenta. **Insider Tip:** Bring your good wine – this BYO's glassware befits a grand cru. Dessert to Get: Warm chocolate cake. Pumpkin always does it right. **Value Play:** The five-course Sunday dinner for \$40 can't be beat. 1713 South Street, Graduate Hospital, 215-545-4448.

33 BARBUZZO//2011 RANKING: 10

So it's a little tight in there. And a little hard to snag a reservation. Still deal with it, or you'll miss out on the city's best-executed Mediterranean-inspired menu and also the joy of ordering a lengthy parade of small plates, each better than the next. (Unless you start with the lardo pizza. There's nothing better than that.) Whether getting into this convivial little sliver of a restaurant means 45 minutes at the door or three weeks on Open Table, Barbuzzo is one of those rare Philly spots that are always worth the wait. **Sure Bets:** The late-night menu offers \$3 drafts, \$5 wine and \$10 pizza, Sunday to Thursday, 10:30 to midnight. 110 South 13th Street, Midtown Village, 215-546-9300.

34 KANELLA//2011 RANKING: 44

This solid Cypriot BYO might be best known for its brunch (thanks in part to an appearance on the Food Network), but dinner is where chef Konstantinos Pitsillides really shines. From the daily selection of house-made dips to a simply grilled whole fish or a deeply flavored, marjoram-spiced octopus ragout, there's just not a bad dish on the menu. **What to Get:** About those dips ... pray that the creamy, salty carp roe version is in the rotation on your visit. **Pro Tip:** The Sunday-night family-style meze dinners (\$30 to \$35 per person). 1001 Spruce Street, Washington Square West, 215-922-1773.

35 SOVANA BISTRO//2011 RANKING: 39

Sovana can feel like an anomaly; it's hard to understand how an establishment this attractive, tasty, accessible, consistent, energetic and inspired can be tucked away in a Kennett Square shopping center. Chef Nick Farrell doesn't reinvent the wheel here; he just cooks everything on the constantly changing, Chez Panisse-evoking menu at the highest level, and elevates ingredients to their best possible state. So the sweetness of roasted squash is punctuated by sour cherries in a salad; apples and bacon are tossed in toasted caraway vinegar to form a slaw; and a potpourri of corn,





salami, jalapeño and feta makes for a memorable pizza topping.

Apologies in Advance: To Sovana's cadre of faithful regulars for blowing up your spot. 696 Unionville Road, Kennett Square, 610-444-5600.

36 BISTRO 7//2011 RANKING: 30

It's one of the city's last good secrets. Although why a cozy little BYO with consistently wonderful food would still be a secret is beyond us. The service can be a little weird sometimes

(example: the server who wandered off, mid-spiel, to pet a pretty dog out on the sidewalk), but that's not enough of an issue to detract from the creative "modern French" menu, with stars like a salted terrine made of red and yellow beets, a brioche-and-truffle-stuffed roast chicken, and the classic tarte tatin with maple syrup crème brûlée. **Don't miss:** The escargots stewed in a fennel Pernod cream – decadent enough to feel French and unfussy enough to be likeable. 7 North 3rd Street, Old City, 215-931-1560.

37 NECTAR//2011: NOT RANKED / 2009 RANKING: 32

Patrick Feury is doing fine work at his Chester County restaurant – a welcome oasis in what's generally a dining desert. The Asian influence here comes from Feury's stint in the kitchen of Le Cirque 2000 under Cambodian chef Sottha Khunn, and is best exhibited in dishes like the wok lobster with local corn fried rice and Thai basil, the striped-bass-and-scallop hot pot, and the edamame-chanterelle dumplings. Plus, the seasonal sushi rolls—from pumpkin-pomegranate in the fall to soft-shell crab in the summer—are always a hit. **Don't Overlook:** The cheese plates. They're Feury's personal obsession. 1091 Lancaster Avenue, Berwyn, 610-725-9000.

38 BISTROT LA MINETTE//2011 RANKING: 4

This place is like a dream of France: a tiny little Parisian bistro ripped from its moorings along the Seine and dropped smack in the middle of Philly. On its best nights, there is perhaps no restaurant in the city so capable of transporting you somewhere other than where you are. **Must Try:** If you walk out of here without eating the snails, someone should just punch you. **If Only:** The bar were a bit more serviceable. Six crowded seats and a (deliberate) lack of certain spirits can make the place a challenge for non-wine drinkers. 623 South 6th Street, Queen Village, 215-925-8000.

39 OYSTER HOUSE//2011 RANKING: 8

This delightfully gimmick-free seafood spot is always jumping. And for good reason: The oysters are fresh, the cocktails are strong, and the atmosphere is coolly casual. Happy hour gets dependably loud and raucous, but the attentive staff always makes you feel like you're the only table in the joint. **Must-Eat Appetizer:**

Chilled colossal wild shrimp cocktail. These are, seriously, the biggest shrimp you've ever seen. **Must-Drink Cocktail:** Mother's Ruin Punch. But just one, or you might fall off your bar stool. And you should definitely be eating at the Oyster Bar. **Miss The Crowd:** By dining at Saturday brunch. The menu changes regularly, but the impeccable service and the sweet, meaty lobster roll always stay the same. 1516 Sansom Street, Center City, 215-567-7683.

40 BUTCHER AND SINGER//2011 RANKING: 19

A lot of people think steakhouses don't belong on Best Restaurant lists because it's hard to screw up a steak. Well, Stephen Starr's sexy Walnut Street supper club, straight out of a Mad Men scene designer's handbook, does steaks better than anyone else in the city, and manages to nail every other detail of the dining experience with laser precision. **You'd Be Crazy to:** Skip the Baked Alaska. Or the chance to dine here on someone else's dime. 1500 Walnut Street, Rittenhouse, 215-732-4444.

41 LACROIX//2011 RANKING: 5

A legend just for the number of current execs and chef-owners who have done time inside its kitchen, Lacroix under chef Jon Cichon is a house in transition, moving toward a more modern, more inventive take on haute (mostly French) cuisine without sacrificing the artistry that makes the dining here so fine in the first place. **Pro Tip:** While dinners at Lacroix recently went fully prix fixe, if you ask nicely you can still order individual items off the tasting menu in an à la carte fashion. **Breakfast of Champions:** The brunch here remains the one against which all others in the city ought to be judged. 210 West Rittenhouse Square, Rittenhouse, 215-790-2533.

42 STANDARD TAP//2011 RANKING: 45

Yes, you can get a burger here – a very large and very good one, at that – but this NoLibs stalwart offers much, much more. Specifically, inventive and startlingly fresh fare leaning heavily on locally grown ingredients, presented through a tidy chalkboard menu that changes daily depending on what's available and what chef Carolyn Angle feels like cooking. **Insider Tip:** Go on the early side, before seven, to grab one of the mondo wooden booths that comfortably fit six. 901 North 2nd Street, Northern Liberties, 215-238-0630.

43 MATYSON
//2011 RANKING:
40

This place has a regular à la carte menu, but what really matters are the weekly \$45 tasting menus cooked up by chef Ben Puchowitz – often at the last minute, often inspired by random notions flitting through the kind of mind that can conceive of 50-odd unique, always interesting, occasionally brilliant tasting menus per year.

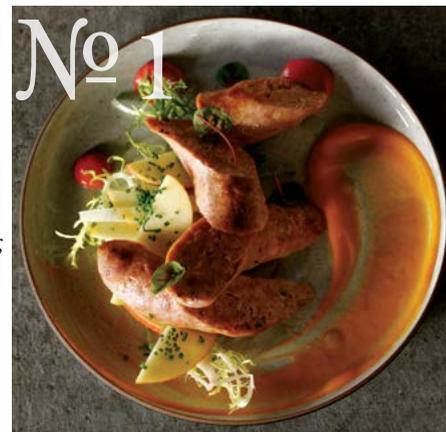


Photo Credit: Stateside

Smart Business: The regular menu, while not bad by any means, is definitely there for those who want to play it safe and order the chicken breast. The tasting menus, on the other hand, exist to please those looking for something a bit more challenging and innovative. 37 South 19th Street, Rittenhouse, 215-564-2925.

44 KOO ZEE DOO // 2011 RANKING: 13

You want octopus in gravy? Koo Zee Doo is your place. Potato and salt cod croquettes, or whole sardines, perfectly grill-marked and laid over a tangle of roasted peppers? Koo Zee Doo is it. This cozy BYOB is a Portuguese restaurant, sure, but it really exists to fit a mood, to be the place you want to hit when craving the rustic comforts of exposed brick, an uncorked bottle, a small room full of light and voices, and the soul of an entire culture expressed through a few simple plates. **Bring Friends:** The food is served family-style and is meant for sharing. 614 North 2nd Street, Northern Liberties, 215-923-8080.

45 PERCY STREET BBQ // 2011 RANKING: 49

Where do you go for serious barbecue in a city not really known for serious barbecue? To the guy famous for his duck hearts and doughnuts, of course. With Percy Street, Michael Solomonov brings to the city an adopted tradition of smoked meats and classic sides that can hold its own against all comers. **Pro Tip:** Percy Street already pours the best root beer float in town (Yards root beer and homemade vanilla ice cream), but go during happy hour and you can spike yours with a half-price shot of bourbon. 900 South Street, Philadelphia, 215-625-8510.

46 FEDERAL DONUTS // NEW TO LIST

Is it strange to have a fried-chicken-and-doughnut operation listed among the 50 best restaurants in the city? Absolutely. But even setting aside the fact that this is the brainchild of one of the city's best chefs (Michael Solomonov), and that it seems almost custom-designed to fill a set of low-down cravings, one cannot deny Federal Donuts' high ranking in the modern Philly scene. It's not just liked, but beloved by its fans, and deservedly so. Everything here, from the wildly flavored doughnuts to the unique and challenging rubs and glazes on the chicken, is an original. **Eat Naked:** Despite all the wild flourishes of color and flavor, the plain honey doughnut that comes alongside every order of chicken is still the best breakfast treat here. 1632 Sansom Street, Center City, and 1219 South 2nd Street, South Philly.

47 SUPPER // 2011 RANKING: 42

Chef/owner Mitch Prensky didn't invent upscale comfort food, but he's trying hard to perfect it. His recipe: Meld thoughtful cooking and a light hand with a dose of Jewish grandma, a sprinkle of Southern flair, some whimsy, and

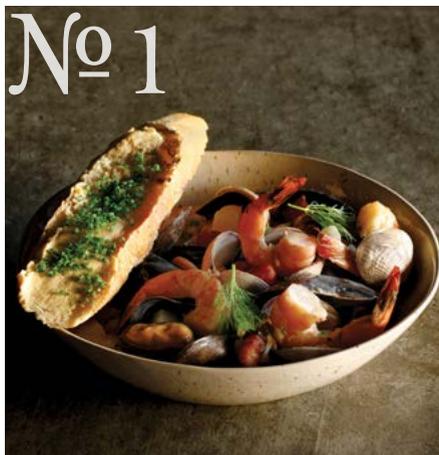


Photo Credit: Stateside



Photo Credit: Stateside

superlative bounty from a farm that grows stuff just for him. The results are quintessentially American. **Bonus Points:** For the playful brunch, with dishes like a pastrami chicken salad sandwich, a house-made hot dog, biscuits and country ham, and duck fat fries that aren't awful. **Green Thumb:** Supper is one of the most purely local and seasonal restaurants in town. 926 South Street, Philadelphia, 215-592-8180.

48 MICA // NEW TO LIST

Chestnut Hill's lack of a high-end dining scene has befuddled locals for a long time. But the addition of the attractive and intimate Mica and the cooking of Chip Roman have combined to give the top of the hill a destination restaurant all its own. Roman's successor to Blackfish shows that the young chef has continued to grow and is turning out refined plates of New American cuisine. **Hard to Believe:** The seasonal cocktails at Mica are a revelation, not at all what you'd expect from a restaurant that doesn't have a bar. 8609 Germantown Avenue, Chestnut Hill, 267-335-3912.

49 TALULA'S GARDEN // NEW TO LIST

The union of Aimee Olexy and Stephen Starr had a rocky start. There were three head chefs before the vintage metal chairs in the charming yard had begun to oxidize. But since those early shake-ups, the restaurant has quietly produced tight meals and, much to the disappointment of local food blogs, minimal drama. The army of Olexy-ites whirls about efficiently, depositing mushroom soups, torchons of foie gras and loins of pork on eager diners' tables. **Pro Tip:** When the weather's good, a glass of wine, a board of cheese, the setting sun and a constant breeze make this the quickest and most beautiful escape in Philadelphia. 210 West Washington Square, Washington Square West, 215-592-7787.

50 PARC // 2011 RANKING: 35

Is there anywhere in Philadelphia you feel more glamorous eating than in Stephen Starr's dusky lit homage to the humble French bistro? The charming tile, the flattering cinematic lighting, the warm and lively bar, quaint restrooms, sidewalk tables lined up like toy soldiers, even the profusion of tiny dogs just screams Arc d'Triomphe chic without drifting over the line into Epcot Center schlock. And if there's a dish more irresistible than the archetypal roast chicken, nestled atop pommes puree and bathed in the bird's own succulent juices, we have yet to find it. **Insider Tip:** Dress fashionably. The French hostess notices diners with a bit of European flair and seats them at prime tables by the windows. 227 South 18th Street, Rittenhouse, 215-545-2262.