

101 Best Restaurants in America

Break out your knife and fork, it's time to dig into the country's best restaurants
April 1, 2015 | 04:09 PM By [Arthur Bovino](#), Editor



From the best restaurants in San Francisco and Los Angeles to the most impressive in Chicago, [Ravi Bangaroo](#) New York City, and beyond The Daily Meal's annual list has you covered for destination meals across the U.S.

It feels truer with each year that passes: It becomes more and more difficult to rank America's best restaurants — and we say that having done it for half a decade. As interest in dining out increases, and more great chefs train younger good ones, fantastic food continues to spread across America. Exceptional culinary landscapes in big cities get better, and new and different dining scenes are born and in turn attract and inspire more greatness from a growing number of talented cooks. It makes trying to rank the country's best restaurants all the more challenging, but also all the more worthwhile and intriguing.

We have always believed that good food is good food, and so our first three 101s compared iconic pizza parlors and joints serving transcendent cheeseburgers with the lapidary perfection of a [French Laundry](#) or the genre-bending inventiveness of a [Next](#). That said, as we watched the nation's culinary scene improve, we concluded that, in fairness to both categories of restaurants, we should rank them in their own lists. Last year, for the first time, The Daily Meal's ranking of the 101 Best Restaurants in America was followed by a list of [America's 50 Best Casual Restaurants](#) — the most amazing spots in the United States serving ribs, red hots, pizzas, burgers, tacos, and other less expensive (but no less mouthwatering) dishes. Watch for this year's successor to that list, as we tackle America's 101 Best Casual Restaurants next month.

We drew up [our first 101 list in 2011](#) by asking: Where did we, The Daily Meal's editors, like to eat? Accounting for our mood, budget, and where we happen to be when we get hungry, how would we vote —

not only with our critical faculties, but with our mouths and our wallets? Where would we send friends, or friends of friends? We ended up with a shortlist of 150 places, then argued, advocated, and cajoled each other on behalf of restaurants ranging from old-fashioned to avant-garde, ultra-casual to super-fancy. Then we invited an illustrious panel of judges (restaurant critics, food and lifestyle writers, and bloggers) from across America to help order restaurants via an anonymous survey and tallied results to assemble a ranked list.

Since that first year, we've expanded the voting pool to include our city editors, special contributors, members of **The Daily Meal Council** (excluding chefs) and a growing list of panelists who have agreed to participate in the ever-increasing number of "Best" surveys we conduct.

In 2012 and 2013, we included previous winners and nominees in our ever-longer shortlist, along with suggestions from judges and readers, and in **2014**, we took the added step of asking restaurant experts and critics across the country to submit nominations of their own, both locally and nationally. We ended up with more restaurants than ever to consider, some 590 (up from last year's 430), from Maine to California, Washington to Florida, and everywhere in between.

As much as our list, and the process we use to arrive at it, has changed since 2011, one thing that hasn't changed, and won't, is that last question we asked ourselves the first year that we ranked this list: Which restaurants, old or new, adhering to tradition or cutting-edge, would you recommend to your friends, and trust that they could safely recommend in turn six degrees farther?

This year, like every year, the results of our survey were thought-provoking and potentially contentious.

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Evenly distributed across America? No way. While we try hard to represent a wide geographical spread, and as good as our overall food scene has become, there are "food towns" around the country — **Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans**, both Portlands, **San Francisco**, and a few others, including (grumble away) **New York City** — where many of the best restaurants are congregated, often because talented chefs and restaurateurs from other regions gravitate to them. We realize that there are some 71 urban areas in the United States with populations of 500,000 and above, and though they're full of restaurants, does every one of them have a few places that can *really* be compared with America's best? Even now, probably not.

As always, the question we'd encourage panelists (and readers) in areas that seem underrepresented to ask themselves is: Is the restaurant I love here something I'd recommend that people make a special trip to experience? The answer would be yes for most of the restaurants that made 2015's 101 best list — one that includes every kind of restaurant you could imagine.

You may question the results, debate the order, or argue that we should replace a number of winners with restaurants you think are more deserving. With a list like this, it would be surprising if there weren't disagreements. Indeed, there were places we pulled for ourselves that didn't make the cut, and places we thought should have been higher or lower.

Please let us know what you think we missed or misranked — we do read your comments, even if we don't always agree with them. And, as in years past, we plan to publish a follow-up with your opinions. If you turn us on to places we missed, so much the better.

We're excited about our 2015 list of America's best restaurants (you can [view the complete list on the next page](#) if you'd prefer not to view the slideshow). Their quality and the sheer diversity of menus and cuisines (not to mention the hundreds of other places that almost but didn't quite make it) demonstrate that we live in an exciting time for food in America. As we've said year after year, there are truly exciting chefs all over our country — chefs raising the gastronomic bar to a level this country has never before seen. We salute the hard-working people who make dining out a rewarding adventure. We'd also like to thank our panelists for helping (check back for a full panelist list). You can be certain we will continue to sign up more trusted panelists and refine the process by which we make our selections. What will the 2016 101 installment bring? You'll find out on The Daily Meal.



#52 Quince, San Francisco

Like the fruit the restaurant is named for (kind of a cross between an apple and a pear), **Quince's** menu is also a mixture, a refined blending of modern Italian and French-inspired fare. Located in a historic brick and timber building dating back to 1907 in **San Francisco's Jackson Square neighborhood**, the **recently redesigned, two-Michelin-starred** restaurant is both charming and elegant (there's a new entrance, private dining rooms, and a chef's counter). Chef and owner Michael Tusk, who won the **2011 James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Pacific**, creates a dining experience rooted in his relationships with a tightly knit network of only the best Northern Californian food purveyors. Every night **there are two tasting menus** (\$195 per person). The 9-course garden menu features vegetable-driven dishes highlighting the season's produce (think "first of the season" peas or Monterey Bay abalone with fiddlehead ferns), among them some things grown on the restaurant's roof-top garden. The Quince Menu (also 9 courses) is the chef's expression of his innovation, which on a recent night meant dishes like **La Belle Farm** foie gras with green strawberry and pink peppercorn and golden ossetra caviar panna cotta with chive, egg yolk, and shallot. Those hoping to sample the food without splashing out on a tasting menu should visit **the salon**, where they can order à la carte.