My job as Eater’s restaurant editor is to travel the country year-round. (Greatest gig ever.) At each destination — whether I’m reviewing a specific restaurant in Los Angeles or Indianapolis, or gorging my way through the astonishing breadth of Houston’s dining scene, or writing about the Vietnamese cultural influence on New Orleans — I’m also deliberating over
which places to include on this annual list of 38 restaurants. It’s the cornerstone of my work, the culmination of my calendar.

"Best" is the most subjective word in the English language, and narrowing down this group is as grueling as it is exhilarating. Of course these places all serve wonderful food: avant-garde noodle bowls in Manhattan, soul-soothing roast chicken in San Francisco, Lebanese mezze in Michigan, the Russian layered salad known as "herring under a fur coat" in Portland, Oregon. Their culinary excellence is a given. But each of these restaurants also leads the dining conversation in their communities — and by extension, the nation. Together, they form a mosaic illustrating how we eat in this country, and how we build culture around food.

Like the city-based Eater 38 maps on which it is modeled, this roster of restaurants evolves slowly. The worst part is removing places from the list to make way for new ones (or, in the case of Houston’s Oxheart, a stalwart of previous years’ lists, because of its upcoming closure to revamp). Both inclusion and exclusion ultimately always come down to the question of which restaurants feel most relevant right now — even if their relevance comes in the form of a certain timelessness. Newcomers this year include a Sichuan upstart in California’s San Gabriel Valley, a fine-dining star in Minneapolis, and a standard-bearer of Southern graciousness in Birmingham, Alabama. (To qualify for inclusion on this list, restaurants must be open for at least 18 months; the too-young serious players get their own list, our annual Best New Restaurants in America roundup).

Get Right to the Good Stuff
The Complete List →
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This is the third year of this list; more than half of the restaurants recognized have been here before, and those standard bearers who’ve made it in every time — there are fourteen of them — are hereby designated Hall of Famers. Just as exciting: This year, for the first time, I’ve named a
Best Restaurant in America. Dining at this luminary is such a dynamic experience that, honestly, the decision to name it as the finest among paragons wasn’t all that difficult.

Most of all, in a complicated time for our country, this body of restaurants represents a definition of the United States that I cherish: multicultural, ambitious, welcoming. These are places for us all to savor. I’ll meet you at the table.

The Best Restaurants in America

★★ = an Eater Hall of Fame restaurant, on this list for three consecutive years

The 2015 list | The 2014 list


Restaurant of the Year

**Blue Hill at Stone Barns**

Pocantico Hills, New York

You can start to understand chef Dan Barber’s revolutionary ethos by reading his books, watching
his TED Talks, or dropping by the Manhattan outpost of his Blue Hill mini-empire. But for the most thorough — and deeply pleasurable — immersion into his world, you have to make the trek 30 miles north of New York City to the Stone Barns Center. There, you'll find Barber's crown jewel: Blue Hill at Stone Barns, a restaurant tucked in the hills of a century-old working farm. Stone Barns isn't just an exquisite fine-dining restaurant serving magnificent tasting menus; it's an experiment, a laboratory, a learning center, and a model for the future of agriculture. The travel itself builds anticipation: on the train or in a car, the city falls away, mile after mile, until finally you turn down the farm's long, winding driveway, where the surrounding lushness tunes your mind and senses for the feast ahead. Read more about Blue Hill at Stone Barns, the Best Restaurant in America

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**eet the Newcomers**

eyond their freshness on our list of the best restaurants in America, there's no easy throughline with this group—and that's as it should be. Our class includes restaurants from every corner of the U.S., with menus reflecting cuisines both homegrown and mostly young trailblazers but also one institution in a city around since 1962. One thing they do all have in common at each of them, I sighed with intense anticipation and thought to myself, "This place is special. I need to know about it.” —BA

**Petit Trois, Los Angeles** | French cuisine is making gains as a front-and-center cuisine across America, and I'd say that Ludo Lefebvre's transcendent take on bistro food singlehandedly nudged things along. He runs this tiny, all-day, card-only, walk-in-only spot with Vinny Dotolo and Shook (their sensational tasting menu counter Trois Mignon, which was on this list last year, sits next door), and in hands classics like rolled omelets, butter-drenched butter escargot, and croque monsieurs have more refinement and moxie than you remember. 718 Highland Ave., 323.468.7727. littitrois.com
Read more about Petit Trois →

**La Petite Grocery, New Orleans** | The elegant dining room at Justin Devillier's Garden District charmer—hardwood floors, crown molding, dim lighting as thick as caramel—unwinds with its quintessential New Orleans vibe, and the bartenders craft an impeccable Sazerac. Devillier's kitschy style leans contemporary, but with flawless dishes like beignets and turtle Bolognese, still evokes an unmistakable sense of place. 4238 Magazine St., New Orleans, 504.891.2882. lapetitegrocery.com
Read more about La Petite Grocery →

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The Best Restaurants in America - Eater

**New York** | Cosme heralds a new generation of high-upscale Mexican restaurants, gradually appearing across the nation, run by natives of Mexico (many of whom are successful restaurateurs in their home country). Chef-propriétaire Olvera and chef de cuisine Daniela Soto-Innes have created New York — and America — with triumphs like lush, cinnamon duck carnitas for two and their genius, tofino dessert, cornhusk meringue with silky corn pictured above). 35 East 21st St., New York, 559, cosmenyc.com Read more about Cosme →

**Mexican Restaurant, San Antonio** | Singling out one restaurant above all others in the Lone Star State? If I could give would be fighting words. But let’s at Garcia’s, while we scarf down a Deluxe Mexican plate (it includes two cheese enchiladas, a pork tamale, essential web of yellow cheese, for starters) and two of the restaurant’s unorthodox, awesome tacos: one with brisket, oldeled around a bone-in pork chop. 842 Fredericksburg Rd., San Antonio, 210.735.5686, no website Read more about Mexican Restaurant →

**S Bar and Grill, Birmingham** | Decades before the city turned to its latest round of having paroxysms of ‘er Southern food, Frank Stitt returned to his native Alabama, cooking stints in California and France and the Midwest, the flagship of his three Birmingham restaurants, a national destination, and his elegant interpretation of regional cuisine is as vital as ever. The restaurant’s hospitality has long been equally distinguished as his cooking. 1001 20th St. S., Birmingham, 205.322.5685, sbarandgrill.com Read more about S Bar and Grill →

**Saison, San Francisco** | First, the sticker shock: Saison’s prix-fixe menu costs $398 per person, not including an optional wine pairing of $298. But what you get is one of the country’s most remarkable dining experiences: Joshua Skenes’s brillia cooking is at once surgically precise and disarmingly comforting. Before a meal veers into sea urchin, abalone, and an hairy pig, for example, you might be served a mound of paired with biscuits fresh from the oven. 178 Townsend St, San Francisco, 415.828.7990, saisonsf.com Read more about Saison →

**Sarma, Somerville, MA** | Inspired by the mezze spread at meyhane (Turkish taverns), Cassie Piuma serves an exhilarating survey of the herbaceous, sun-baked flavors of the Middle East. Her recipes meld with the local seascapes assisted by produce from the farm of co-owner Ana Sotomayor. 249 Pearl St., Somerville, 617.764.4464, sarmarestaurant.com Read more about Sarma →

**Spoon and Stable** | Gavin Kaysen returned from New York, his home state, to open a restaurant that’s modern American cooking at its most fully realized. His menu is a tour de force of cuisines from around the globe for inspiration, but always links his menu back to the upper Midwest with splendors like bison tartare and whimsies like fried curds over creamed spinach. 211 North First St., 612.224.7400, spoonandstable.com Read more about Spoon and Stable →

**Sqirl, Los Angeles** | If Jessica Koslow’s tiny storefront in Silver Lake neighborhood wasn’t already a phenomenon...
Due to Stitt’s secret weapon: his gracious wife (and house maven) Pardis Stitt. 2011 11th Ave. South, m 205.939.1400, highlandsbarandgrill.com

Houston | The enduring crown jewel among the four ts that chef Hugo Ortega owns with his wife, Tracy lugo’s recounts Ortega’s culinary travels, research, ories through his native Mexico — gastronomic ld via dishes that are complex, but always balanced. erly of chiles and meats and maize (truly, don’t miss n with habanero salsa and tortillas) stands out even in with excellent Mexican restaurants. 1600 Westheimer 524.7744, hugosrestaurant.net

Eat Club, San Francisco | In the dishes that make o’s menu, Ravi Kapur weaves flavors that reflect his , Indian, and Chinese heritages; the result is a self-assured style of cooking that joyfully transcends ls. After a meal of tuna poke, fried oyster and beef in lettuce wraps, and twice-cooked pork, don’t miss d Hawaii," a torch-bronzed beehive meringue filled melized pineapple ice cream. 871 Sutter St., San 415.440.5446, liholihoyachtclub.com

Indianapolis | Jonathan Brooks is at the vanguard killed chef-disruptors changing how America thinks tme eating. His dishes — like savory puffed Dutch cakes with roasted broccoli, aged cheddar, beer and pickled fennel — have the kind of punchy, favors you’d expect at dinnertime, but the restaurant as customers for breakfast and lunch. 534 Virginia

Shorthand for the California breakfast and the ascent of grain bowl — then the publication of her cookbook seas: There are reasons for her victory: The combined flavor famous sorrel rice bowl suggest how sunshine on a ler might taste, and the ricotta toast painted with three ja (upon request) resembles a flag to which I’d gladly ple allegiance. 720 North Virgil Ave., Los Angeles, 323.284.8 sqirl.com

Read more about Sqirl →

Szechuan Impression | In seeking out Sichuan restaur coast to coast, none have impressed me more than Ly and Kelly Xiao’s bright corner perch in a San Gabriel V strip mall. Dishes like lamb on toothpicks and hot pots dozen different animal cuts bubbling in red oil show ol exceptional clarity of flavor and an alchemical approac spicing, a take on the cuisine that’s famously fiery but incredibly nuanced. 1900 Valley Blvd., Alhambra, CA, 626.283.4622, szechuanimpressioninc.com

Read more about Szechuan Impression →

Willows Inn, Lummi Island, WA | On a tiny island in tl Northwest, two hours north of Seattle, Blaine Wetzel orchestrates four-hour dinners that double as manifes the area’s unparalleled bounty. Stay the night to fully r the spectacular setting; sitting down to the array of lo at breakfast is a waking dream. 2579 West Shore Drive, Island, 360.758.2620, willows-inn.com

Read more about The Willows Inn →

Zuni Cafe, San Francisco | Zuni Cafe is the nation’s neighborhood restaurant. Judy Rodgers, who died thr ago, built the place into a guidepost of physical and cu
Comfort. Owner Gilbert Pilgram and head chef Rebecca maintain her legacy triumphantly. Menus evolve daily season, but there’s no escaping the Zuni classics: the i roast chicken for two, the trend-igniting burger, the pe Caesar salad, and the bowl of polenta that is surely m than corn. 1658 Market St., San Francisco, 415.552.2522, zunicafe.com
Read more about Zuni Cafe →

Returning Greats

★ = an Eater Hall of Fame restaurant, on this list for three consecutive years

★ Alinea, Chicago | This year’s renovation made America’s most audacious fine-dining restaurant more interactive and more luxurious — which is to say, better than ever. 1723 N. Halstead, Chicago, IL, 312.867.0110, alinearestaurant.com
Read more about Alinea →

★ Benu, San Francisco, CA | Corey Lee’s unique, eloquent, and lavish bridging of East and West cuisines is in itself a reason to visit the Bay Area. 22 Hawthorne St, San Francisco, CA, 415.685.4860, benusf.com
Read more about Benu →

★ Eventide Oyster Co., Portland, ME | The oyster bar of everyone’s dreams also sneaks in surprises like dashi chowder and green curry lobster stew. 86 Middle St, Portland, ME, 207.774.8538, eventideoysterco.com
Read more about Eventide Oyster Co. →
⭐ FIG, Charleston, SC | Only one meal in Charleston? Make it Mike Lata and Jason Stanhope’s paragon, which takes its cues from the Lowcountry’s abundant waters. 232 Meeting St, Charleston, SC, 843.805.5900, eatatfig.com
Read more about FIG ↪

⭐ Frasca Food & Wine, Boulder, CO | Bobby Stuckey leads the most attentive service team in America; thrilling Italian cooking and an astounding wine list send the meal over the moon. 1738 Pearl St, Boulder, CO, 303.442.6966, frascafoodandwine.com
Read more about Frasca Food & Wine ↪

⭐ Franklin Barbecue, Austin, TX | Like seeing the Grand Canyon or the Statue of Liberty, everyone should experience the long waits and ample rewards of Franklin Barbecue at least once. 900 E 11th St, Austin, TX 512.653.1187, franklinbarbecue.com
Read more about Franklin Barbecue ↪

Herbsaint, New Orleans, LA | Nola’s myriad cultures assimilate on Donald Link and Rebecca Wilcomb’s graceful menu. 701 St Charles Ave, New Orleans, LA, 504.524.4114, herbsaint.com
Read more about Herbsaint ↪

⭐ Husk, Nashville, TN | Multidimensional tastes of the South coalesce onto gorgeous plates at Sean Brock’s genial tour de force. 37 Rutledge St, Nashville, TN, 615.256.6565, husknashville.com
Read more about Husk Nashville ↪

Kachka, Portland, OR | Bonnie and Israel Morales offer the most spirited introduction to Russian dining (and drinking!) in America. 720 SE Grand Ave, Portland, OR, 503.235.0059, kachkapdx.com
Read more about Kachka ↪

⭐ Momofuku Noodle Bar, New York, NY | Even with a global empire, David Chang’s East Village prototype still best exemplifies his radical, game-changing approach to casual counter dining. 171 1st Avenue, New York, NY, 212.777.7773, momofuku.com
Read more about Momofuku Noodle Bar ↪
Broccoli with ras el hanout and dates at Parachute in Chicago

Parachute, Chicago, IL | Korean flavors mark the starting point for Beverly Kim and Johnny Clark’s unexpected but always exceptional forays into global flavors. 3500 N Elston Ave, Chicago, IL, 773.654.1460, parachuterestaurant.com
Read more about Parachute →

Pizzeria Bianco, Phoenix, AZ | Smoky pies from the godfather of America’s pizza revolution can still rewire synapses with their greatness. 623 E Adams St, Phoenix, AZ, 602.258.8300, pizzeriabianco.com
Read more about Pizzeria Bianco →

Poole’s Downtown Diner, Raleigh, NC | Ashley Christensen’s flagship blends high-low dining and Southern-French sensibilities (oh, that macaroni au gratin!) in a singular ode to Americana. 426 S McDowell St, Raleigh, NC, 919.832.4477, ac-restaurants.com/pooles
Read more about Poole’s Downtown Diner →

★ Prince’s Hot Chicken, Nashville, TN | Trace the unending hot chicken craze right back to the long, long lines at Andre Prince Jeffries’ perennial must-vist. 123 Ewing Dr, Nashville, TN, 615.226.9442, princeshotchicken.com
Read more about Prince’s Hot Chicken →

The Publican, Chicago, IL | Paul Kahan defines the twenty-first century beer hall, serving a raucous excess of craft brews, oysters, and pork. 837 W Fulton Market, Chicago, IL, 312.733.9555, thepublicanrestaurant.com
Read more about The Publican →

Raku, Las Vegas, NV | Get off the Strip to find the true soul of Vegas dining at this Japanese robata grill specialist. 5030 W. Spring Mountain Rd. #2, Las Vegas, NV, 702.367.3511, raku-grill.com
Read more about Raku →

★ Roberta’s, Brooklyn, NY | Carlo Mirarchi takes a uniquely freethinking approach to composing a menu; his inventiveness begins with — but reaches far beyond — unbelievable pizza. 261 Moore St, Brooklyn, NY, 718.417.1118, robertaspizza.com
Read more about Roberta’s ➔

★ Rose’s Luxury, Washington, DC | Often-lengthy waits for a table end with calming hospitality and Aaron Silverman’s strikingly thrilling acts of culinary daring. 717 8th St SE, Washington, DC, 202.580.8889, rosesluxury.com
Read more about Rose’s Luxury ➔

★ Woodberry Kitchen, Baltimore, MD | The kitchen at Spike and Amy Gjerde’s always-thronged flagship mines the Chesapeake region’s under-rated culinary treasures, which reach far beyond blue crab. 2010 Clipper Park Rd, Baltimore, MD, 410.464.8000, woodberrykitchen.com
Read more about Woodberry Kitchen ➔

★ Zahav, Philadelphia, PA | To best appreciate Mike Solomonov’s passionate, exuberant distillation of his Israeli heritage, bring a group, and prepare to feast on mezze and smoked lamb. 237 St James Pl, Philadelphia, PA, 237 St James Pl, Philadelphia, PA, zahavrestaurant.com
Read more about Zahav ➔

The Best New Restaurants 2016 | The Best Restaurants in America 2015 | The Best Restaurants in America 2014

Bill Addison is Eater’s restaurant editor, roving the country uncovering America’s essential restaurants. Read all his columns in the archive.

All photos by Bill Addison, except Blue Hill at Stone Barns and Cosme (Daniel Krieger), and Sqirl (Julia Stotz)

Editor: Helen Rosner
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