

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK IN AUSTIN

OVERVIEW BUDGET FAMILY FOODIE LUXURY ROMANCE

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by Becca Hensley



(Photo: Larry Olmsted)

For foodies and Austin diners (visitors and locals alike), the city's delicious food scene lays out a diverse buffet where rock-star chefs garner as much attention these days as the city's long-established music icons. What defines this city's gourmet vibe is an unflagging ability to resist categorization. Not to be corralled, the Lone Star State's capital thrives on creativity and an affinity for experimentation when it comes to food and wine. Here, chefs, winemakers and brewers turn kitchens and bars into virtual art studios, even when they're making Indian *dosa* in the back of a truck.

Brick-and-mortar strongholds shine with sleek contemporary design, while funky food trailers deliver surprisingly good meals on wheels. On the East Side, Mamas cook with generation-old recipes as their parents did before them. Hipster barbecue gurus command lines that last for hours for melt-in-your-mouth brisket. James Beard winners and nominees support each other's experimentation and success, while reconfigured favorites evolve with the times.

Mexican food remains king – no matter what the food magazines tell you. Locals pay allegiance to salsa and know where to find their favorite fiery version. At most Mexican eateries, tortillas are made from scratch using recipes brought from the chef's homeland. Both authentic regional Mexican cuisine and Tex-Mex (that amalgam of Mexican flavors and American comfort-food ingredients) have their fans. Most residents have a favorite spot for each, depending on their mood.

Try [Fonda San Miguel](#) for authentic Mexican fare and neighborhood hangout [Maudie's](#) for a Tex-Mex nosh. Barbecue is big in this Southwestern town, and you'll find nationally touted smoked brisket at [Franklin Barbecue](#). Meanwhile, ribs are prepared from a recipe that has its roots in mid-19th-century campfire cooking at the family-owned, ranch-style haven [Salt Lick](#).

James Beard Award-winner and sushi master Tyson Cole has two Japanese restaurants in Austin: [Uchi](#) and [Uchiko](#). Born in the Philippines, *Top Chef* winner Paul Qui serves progressive cuisine such as *kare kare* (Filippino peanut curry) at his eponymous restaurant, Qui, which opened in summer 2013. At the Warehouse District restaurant [Congress](#), Chef David Bull offers three- and seven-course menu options highlighting inspired contemporary American fare.

Many local restaurants feature noteworthy wine lists. Trio at the [Four Seasons Austin](#) boasts sommelier Mark Sayre, who uncovers treasured vintages from around the world as manager of the restaurant's celebrated 260-bottle wine list. LaV raises eyebrows with its storied wine library, and bistro-like Arro plays it sexy with an all-French wine menu.

You'll want to hire a driver and meander out of town to explore the Texas Wine Trail. Of the 11 wine routes around Texas, the best-known is less than an hour away from Austin in the Hill Country. Head out in spring when the wildflowers will stun you with their beauty. Go in summer, and you can stop and pick fresh peaches from orchards along the way.

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