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Eat and Run



Three Delicious Destinations

By Becca Hensley



One of the true joys of traveling the world is the delicious discoveries made along the way. Chef Tyson Cole's new restaurant, Uchiko, in Austin (pictured) offers a Japanese-themed menu, serving some of the state's best sushi. It's one of our must-see and can't-miss dining destinations of the summer. Read on for a Lowcountry gem, slathered in Southern charm and the ultimate Italian food spot.

AUSTIN

Hip food scene heats up in the Texas Capital

You can't swing a cat by the tail in Austin without hitting a musician with a dream, who was discovered at his corner perch and delivered into global stardom. The city's reputation for launching music trends and careers has drawn dreamers and groovers alike to its hipster-friendly streets. And when they pour out of the bars and concert halls, they join the city's other rising stars—an army of innovative cooks and chefs who are redefining the Live Music Capital as a pinnacle of cutting-edge cuisine.



This is the home of Chef Tyson Cole, a four-time James Beard nominee, Food & Wine Magazine's Top Young Chef of the Year (2005) and recent cookbook creator. His newest eatery, contemporary Japanese-themed Uchiko, opened to accolades in 2010. The philosophy leans heavily on achieving sustainability and multiculturalism—and great sushi (uchiaustin.com/uchiko).

In less impressive kitchens throughout town, equally laudable cuisine is created. Full-fledged menus from the environs of cramped trailers are giving Austin a new claim to fame. Find mobile food trucks dotting the city in profusion and offering cuisine as varied as Vietnamese, Cajun, Cuban and German. The dilemma for mobile food fans is where to eat first.

Here's a perfect food crawl in Austin: After sushi and tempura at Uchiko, where Cole's craftsmanship turns noshing to a mind-altering, sense-gratifying adventure, plan to take the rest of your meal to the streets. At Odd Duck Farm Trailer, pick any variety of pork belly slider, ideally with a side of baby Brussels sprouts. Make like Aladdin at Flying Carpet and indulge in a Moroccan burger. Wake up with a café latte and an almond croissant at La Boite Café, or if savory calls, fire up with a taco at Torchys.

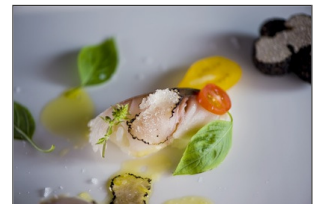
Sweet tooth—types can file over to Hey Cupcake! or Holy Cacao for cake balls.

And the umami crowd will moan over kimchi fries at Chi'lantro. You should be full by then. Come back next time for Lulu B's Vietnamese sandwiches, Antojitos Hondureños and Texas Cuban. It could take a year to try every trailer and by then, there would just be more to discover. Better get started (austintexas.org).

CHARLESTON, S.C.

New South cuisine hits new heights in Carolina Lowcountry

Charleston is as Southern as sweet tea on the front porch swing. Visualizing it conjures images of horse-drawn buggies, magnolia blossoms and Doric-columned white plantation houses. Think antique shops and walks along the beach. Any of those would be reason enough to visit this centuries-old harbor city for the first time, but what brings us back is something entirely different: the food—a rich, hearty, locally derived cuisine known as Lowcountry.



Like a record of Charleston’s colorful history, Lowcountry is a fusion of the region’s myriad influences: West African, Caribbean and European. Drawing its foundation from the sea, it relies on seasonal ingredients grown on the area’s farms. Shrimp, crab and oyster are the star ingredients. Creative cooks partner them with regional staples—rice, okra, tomatoes and beans.

Sunday brunch at town favorite Poogan’s Porch, where locals can wait hours for a table, offers light-as-air buttermilk biscuits to sop up spicy sausage gravy. Crunchy fried green tomatoes top a bacon-and-egg Benedict. Fried oysters fill fat omelets and shrimp border a white mountain of grits made gooey with blue crab gravy.

For a Lowcountry crash course, visit City Market. One of the oldest public markets in the nation, it is a rambling warren of sheds filled with produce and product vendors hawking their wares. Find grits, rice, flowers and vegetables. Discover homemade mustards and vinegar and meet bakers, butchers and chocolatiers. Roam through on your own or go behind the scenes with Culinary Tours of Charleston’s “Savor the Flavor” guide to the market. Walk and taste your way through morsel after morsel of Charleston’s storied cuisine (culinarytoursofcharleston.com).

As evidence that food continues to evolve, some of Charleston’s youngest chefs have tweaked Lowcountry to take it to new heights, adopting a style some coin “New South” cuisine. This fresh take on a familiar theme has caught the world’s attention, helping Charleston chefs earn James Beard Best Southeast Chef Awards for three years. Worth the price of a plane ticket, these Sew South, Lowcountry bistros seal the deal (charlestoncvb.com/tourism).

IL SALVIATINO, FIESOLE, ITALY

Food for the soul in Italy’s Tuscan region



Hotelier Marcello Pigozzo says he bought Il Salviatino for the view. Indeed, from the cushioned throne of a white Chesterfield sofa, guests at the newly opened hotel can nibble sun-dried tomatoes and almonds between sips of bubbly Prosecco and channel the Medici clan. From inside the meticulously restored 15th-century villa above Florence, in the Tuscan hill town of Fiesole, the vista appears across the horizon like a bountiful feast set upon a well-laid table. Enhanced by Florence’s most famous landmark, the Brunelleschi’s Duomo, the sight quickens the senses and feeds the soul.

The view isn’t the only reason to check into Il Salviatino. Hidden among cypress trees straight from an Uffizi Gallery painting, the hotel offers a residential-style haven of a new order. Here, Pigozzo handpicks staff for the desire to serve, and they hover, discreetly, awaiting your command. Luxury unravels subtly, almost magically here. Beds don white Italian-sheets, crisp yet comfortable. A two-tiered suite, set in the tower, astounds with a stained-glass floor. Ancient oil paintings, original frescoes and mannerly gardens evoke elegance. A wood-paneled library, lined with books, awaits your rumination, and a spa that fuses Thai and Tuscan treatments invites repose. Tuscan food, borrowed from centuries of “grandmother’s recipes,” defines the day.

Join locals who have discovered the hotel’s savvy take on Florentine cuisine at the its two restaurants. Dishes suggest something Botticelli might have served—like the appetizer that honors both earth flavors (almonds, fennel and truffle) and tastes from the sea (glasswort, mussels, clams and oysters). Likewise, in harmony with Tuscany’s hunting tradition, find hearty plates, like Roe deer sirloin with sweet and sour mandarin or rack of suckling pig with corn puree. Many dishes come saddled with artichokes, eggplant or sweet red peppers, gifts from the Tuscan garden. And then there’s pasta—homemade, handcrafted and over the top.

Spend one day at Il Salviatino in the kitchen, where the chef conducts a bespoke cooking class. If you decide to leave the grounds, let the staff arrange for an outing in a Lamborghini or a sexy red Ferrari. Whatever you wish, they are only happy to oblige (salviatino.com).



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