World’s Best Bites

Hot right now: New York mini scenes

New York sets the food fashions for the rest of the world. But what’s trendiest right now in the city that never sleeps (but eats, eats, eats)?

Burgers

Like the Little black Dress of the food world, Burgers are hip. For a taste of the action, try Shake Shack (shakeshack.com; around £4.50), boho bar – style at Minetta Tavern (minettabarandgrill.com; £7), where the ‘black Label’ is grilled in butter and served with caramelised onions.

Bagels

Russ & Daughters (rubysanddaughters.com) has been doing it for those with a more traditional taste. The bagels are made with the best flour and thickly sliced. The fish and chive bread bagel is a popular choice.

Soul food

NYC & 2,000 miles north of New Orleans, but that hasn’t stopped the city slavering for Southern soul food. King of the scene is chef Marcus Samuelsson. Try his ‘dirty rice and shrimp’ (ageben editor) and the fattest prawns, with curry sauce (at Red Rooster in Harlem; redroosternyc.com; mains around £16). Fans include Barack Obama.

Puddings

Focus on Manhattan for a cross-section of the best. At the latest and greatest are hip, Momofuku Milk Bar (milkbar.com; salt n’ crackle pop tarts, £3.30 a skew); Bouchon Bakery’s TKN – a grown-up take on Oreos (bouchonbakery.com; £2); and the now-globally renowned cronut (a crossaint-doughnut hybrid from Dominique Ansel Bakery; dominiqueansel.com; £4.60).

For afters, cinnamon wafers & Dinges (wafelsanddinges.com) in Brooklyn – a taste of the nearby woods (wildboar.org.uk; prices vary).

The best UK food festivals

- Allesburgh: The ready banks of Snape Maltings in Suffolk become foodie HQ each September, with talks from writers such as Lucian Holway. Radio 4-hosted debates and doozies of local producers (allesburghfoodanddrink.co.uk; £8).
- Abbergavenry: Food stalls and top chefs transform this Black Mountains market town during its September knees-up. Make a weekend of it with talks, walks, wild food, and dancing at the castle (abbergavenryfoodfestivals.com; from £7).
- Dalemain Marmalade Festival: Yes, a festival dedicated to Paddington’s favourite condiment. Such as Lucas Hollweg, radio 4-hosted chef, with talks and banquets at local restaurants, and hunts in the nearby woods (festivalmarmalade.co.uk; prices vary).

Sun-faded Aldeburgh market town

Mansion every March. Pop in for thoughtful cakes and marmalade awards (marmaladeawards.co.uk; £4.50).

Taste of London

Graze your way around the capital’s top restaurants at this regent’s park shindig each June, as hot-right-now restaurants (Duck & Waffle and Lima) say offer bargain samplers of signature dishes (tastefestivals.com; £26).

Wild Boar Week

The Medieval Sussex town of Foye is perfect weekend break territory, especially in late October, when it goes all Dark Ages, with boar, pheasant and venison feasts at local restaurants, and hunts in the nearby woods (tiptreelavant.co.uk; prices vary).

The secret restaurants in Florence

- Trattoria Mario (Via Rosa 2; trattoria-mario.com). There’s no menu displayed outside this lunch-only trattoria, steps from Florence’s market square, but the inevitable queue of people tells of the delights within. Seating is communal. No bookings or credit cards are taken, and popular dishes on the felt-tipped menu sell out fast – try rosemary-infused tagliatelle (oiled rine sirloin), or the jacy-tombati di vitello (veal chop). For around £25, you’ll get three courses of fabulous Tuscan home cooking with wine.
- Caffe La Terrazze (Piazza della Repubblica 1). Take the lift to the fourth floor of the decidedly unremarkable La Renaissance department store, then climb the stairs to the rooftop café. Italian dishes are justified by spectacular views of the duomo (picturesque). It’s open until 9pm – perfect for a sunset cocktail. Mains around £17.
- Cibo Trattoria (Via de’ Maci 122; ristorantecibo.it). Ristorante Cibo is one of the city’s most upscale eateries, with prices to match. Head next door to the no-reservations trattoria, known locally as Cibrèo, and you’ll be rewarded with flavour-packed seasonal dishes from the same kitchen for a third of the price. The baccaletamancato (Venetian dried cod) is not to be missed. Mains around £11.
- Le Calainga (vialegresselmani.com) flies from Heathrow to Florence from £99 return. Doubles at Casa Howard Guest House (casahoward.com) start from £135, room only.

Best pizza

Naples? Pah. NYC’s ‘SoHo Square’, from Prince St Pizza in NoLiTa, has flawless tomato sauce and an airy crust (pricetipzoo.com; £2.50slide). Its famed margherita’s so good, it’s trademarked.

IN CALABRIA

Best airport food

LA’s finest Mexican, Border Grill, just opened at LAX: expect exemplary Margaritas and piquet pork tortillas (bordergrill.com; around £9).>
Best midnight feast I Just try beating (or even eating) Le Sandwich Américain – a hot baguette of steak, frites and Gruyère, with mayo and ketchup, served to Niçois clubbers at Le Maxi (4 Rue de l’Opéra, Nice; £3.40).

The secret Belgian hotspots

The other country for rail getaways isn’t just about chocolate and chips. Here are the highlights from the home of Poirot...

- Tucked away among the wholesale butchers and publishers, a dead-end street behind Brussels’ central Grand Place – La Chalet Robinson, a mini-American Alpine chalet and cafe. It’s the kind of place Sunday lunch was invented for, with well-executed Belgian comfort food, and a delicious subtly-spiced apple crumble (Sintert van houtenbrandappel). www.chaletrobinson.be; mains around £22.
- The undiscovered, discreet charm of ancient Namur, an hour from Brussels by train, is exemplified by simple, intimate restaurant L’Agathopède, which takes its name from a 19th-century fraternity. Chef Carl Gillaen serves clever and assured, but never fiddly, food. Expect the surprising delectable local pig snits as feature (Ave de la Plante 23; then gillaen.com; three-course menu £45; pictured).
- The crêpe stall at Brussels-Midi food-and-flowers market has no name or address. It’s on the Avenue Fonny side of the Brussels railway station, but follow the crowds and you’ll discover a chaotic, jolly outfit serving freshly made, flaky pancakes (Moroccan pancakes stuffed with soft cheese and honey), to be taken with hot mint tea (Sunday only); £2-£4.
- Bistror (zoonstar.com). Has 3 Pianas (Belgian) buns, plus two nights at Hotel Bloom! Eurostar (eurostar.com) has just arrived. St Pancras-Brussels returns, minus two nights at Hotel Bloom! www.chaletrobinson.be.

The world’s best street food

- Pineapple on Mont Choisy beach, Mauritius Prepare to get messy – 2 bags of pineapple in chilli salt and tamarind syrup from Creole House bazaars or cycle carts pop up with every spicy bite, dripping juice onto the white sands via your fingers and fingers. Nothing a locals’ bag won’t sort out.
- Jerk chicken, Jamaica Drive-up (50cm or so) from Black River beach, then put over when you see smoke spilling across the road from All Seasons Jerk Centre (Four Tree Hill, Manchester). Juicy marinated chicken loaded with wood-smoke flavour and Scotch-bonnet heat, blasted in a scrunchy-edged foil for less than a fiver.
- Xiao long bao, Shanghai Take tangy-spicy sweet, savoury bao – a scoop of hearty pork and jelly wrapped in delicate dough – dip in vinegar and scallions in a single bite for risk spraying fellow diners with broth! Try hole-in-the-wall Luish Tanghui Guan (Sai 601 Nanjung Lu, 600). • Som tam papaya salad, Bangkok Thick salad for wimps? Pull up a plastic pew at Hai Somtam (24-5 Convert Rl; white-masked cooks pound papaya with garlic, chillies, lime and fish sauce into radioactive heat. Need soothing? The bill’s only £1.40.
- Pigeon breast, Scotland Hedgrows and farms provide the ingredients; Catherine Kipps and Rob Wright transform them into something delicious – flash fried pigeon, stilton burger, venison tagine – and serve it from a 1965 Land Rover at spots across Scotland’s Lothians (fieldtofork.com; mains around £60).
- Japadogs, Vancouver Set yourself up for Van’s outdoor pork wieners smeared with a gyro – a fusion beef or pork wiener with a red cabbage/horseradish slaw, smashed spud and wasabi mayo. They’re sold from stands and trailers city-wide (japadog.com; locations around £3).
- Aperaj, Salvador Exercise caution with Salvador’s favourite snack: a black-eyed pea fritter served with piquant prawn paste and hot chilli garnish. Buy it for pennies from women in white Candomblé voodoo robes, at stalls in the Baroque center or the barren Atlantic Bay beaches.
- Bifana, Lisbon This non-ordinary pork bun: it’s smoky paprika pork, marinated with a vinegar, dressed up in a pillow box to take away – sustenance for pounding Lisbon’s cobbled streets. Try Berri Gas (Rua 1 do Dezembro 116; around £1.80).
- Pan’ini, Chennai Pompalaya Beach, Mumbai Get this tangy, crispy beach snack in your mouth pronto. Once the vendor pours tamarind over the spicy-potato-and-chilli mix, he’s placed on a light chickpea flour shell – mere seconds stand between triumph and shirt-stained disaster around £10.
- Suckling pig, Bali No Frits, Old Jalan (Jalan Suvarna Tegal San 2) near the market in Ubud, Bali’s cultural heartland, serves the island’s best baby pork (or sucking pig) £5 gets you a take-out paper cone filled with pork, shards of cracking, rice and spicy veg.
- Souvlaki, Athens McDonald’s poor Greek performance must be down to souvlia – tender, charcoal-grilled lamb wrapped tightly in warm pita breaded with onion, tomato and tzatziki. Try the stalls on Monastiraki (Square, or Thanasis) (Mitropoleos St; £7). • Squidgy steamed buns, London Spudly steamed buns, stuffed with tender Blythebourne pork, hoisin sauce and spring onions: meet the dirty, Cantonese-inspired yum buns. Follow the scent of roasted pork to Kerb market at King’s Cross (yum buns.co.uk; £5-£8).
- Suki, Bangkok No Futs, Old Jalan (Jalan Suvarna Tegal San 2) near the market in Ubud, Bali’s cultural heartland, serves the island’s best baby pork (or sucking pig) £5 gets you a take-out paper cone filled with pork, shards of cracking, rice and spicy veg.
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CHEF’S TIP

Find Majda’s culinary hints by wandering its alleys, following cooking smells and stopping wherever you see a crowd. Restaurant-wise, Racemo (11, Rue des Jardins; 02 579 73 70, open Wed Sat), in the Jewish tribu Antipasti and mezze are served from Michal and Tzvika’s village home – worth the cab taking Highway 1 from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and on to Ein Kafa. Follow directions to the village, then read lots of Hebrew signs to Majda.

Night walk in the Maison du Roi and Brussels Grand Place, thanks to the Museums of the City
The best French food city

If even Parisians admit Lyon is the go-to town for gourmets, it’s France’s crème de la crème. Try its...

Best posh dinner: Stunning city-wide views – including both the Rhône and Saône rivers – accompany technically brilliant dishes such as apero of suckling pig at Tetedoie (tetedoie.com; mains around £36), on Fourvière hill.

Best bistro lunch: Order the superb pâti en croûte at Daniel et Denise (daniel-et-denise.fr; mains around £15) and eat it with red-and-white checked tablecloths and bentwood chairs.

Best market: Join the boho locals on tree-lined Boulevard de la Croix-Rousse as they shop for regional specialities. Soft and creamy St-Marcellin cheese or garlicky Jésus de Lyon sausage. Not as smart as the more famous Les Halles, but much cheaper.

Best dish: Landlocked Lyon’s signature recipe is quenelles de brochet, feather-light pike dumplings in rich crayfish sauce. Try them at top bouchon Café des Fédérations (cafedesfederations.ly; set menu £21).

Eurostar (eurostar.com) has St Pancras-Lyon returns from £109. Doubles at Cour des Loges (courdesloges.com) from £169, room only.

Girona boasts El Celler de Can Roca, the planet’s best and hedonistic, hogging restaurant – sadly, that leaves the sensational modern Catalan cuisine by Pere Massana (restaurantmassana.com) for those in the know. Order the nine-course gourmet menu (£104, with wine) for its seductive liquid mushroom fritter and lacquered Iberian pork. It’s just one Michelin star but it’s a supernova. And you won’t wait a year for a table.

Ryanair (ryanair.com) has flights from £63 return. Doubles at Un Pétit Duc de Girona (lindsay.com) from £81, room only.

Hot right now: London

The capital’s food scene is on fire at the moment; here’s this year’s standouts and where best to find them

The food scene adopts then adapts, turning dishes from Japan or the Deep South into something uniquely London. The new wave of lively, affordable ramen restaurants, such as Bone Daddies (right; bonedaddiesramen.com; £10 per bowl), pimp up its wheat-noodle soups with richer, stronger flavours than its counterparts in Japan. Its sibling, Flesh & Buns (fleshandbuns.com; mains around £15) serves this season’s fashionable dish – Chinese-style steamed hirata buns packed with meaty fillings.

The renegade vibe at these two hipster hangouts is in tune with many of the capital’s ‘dude food’ canteens, epitomised by Pitt Cue Co (pittcue.co.uk; mains around £9; top). Here, ribs are barbecued and smoked, and served in huge portions. The drink of choice? London-brewed craft beer, of course. Try the best of these artisan-made ales at one of three branches of the Craft Beer Company (thecraftbeerco.com). And to see regeneration in progress, head to Granary Square, north of King’s Cross station. On weekdays, King’s Boulevard is home to excellent lunchtime street-food vans. Or, for something more refined, head for The Grain Store (thegrainstore.com; mains around £15).

The best French food city

The secret best restaurant in the world, Girona

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WORLD’S BEST BITES

Best buffet