



PUTTING THE “U.S.” IN COLUMBUS

Columbus, Ohio is poised to be America’s next must-discover food destination thanks to the can-do attitude of purveyors, bakers and ice cream makers.

BY ELYSE GLICKMAN

Portland. Seattle. Santa Fe. Austin. All are cities that recently generated excitement for their distinctive food cultures and inventive chefs. However, for every food destination now joining the mainstream, there is another poised to have its moment. Columbus, Ohio just may be that city.

High profile endeavors which have already put Columbus on the national foodie radar include James Beard award winner Jeni Britton Bauer’s unexpected ice cream creations, Cameron Mitchell’s up-market restaurant concepts, and Cara “Vegetable Butcher” Mangini, who has gotten even the staunchest carnivores to eat their greens. It also speaks volumes that New York celebrity baker Sarah Black set down roots in Columbus to help grow Flowers & Bread, a “slow flowers and bread studio” with like-minded partners Sarah Lagrotteria and Tricia Wheeler.

Genteel residential areas like German Village and Grandview Heights and eclectic industrial zones like

Franklinton and the Brewery District are blank canvases that have come alive in recent years, thanks to restaurateurs and entrepreneurs seeking out untapped markets and a slightly lower cost of doing business. Strip malls in the suburban reaches of town, meanwhile, are gold mines for new ethnic dining experiences spanning the Middle East and Central America to Tibet, Nepal and Somalia.

Having It “Made” In Columbus

Hotel LeVeque, opened in 2017 and located on the site of the former Deschler Hotel, is a choice place to set up a base camp to explore this new food frontier. The 1927 Art Deco building features stellar interiors that view the period’s aesthetic through a present-day lens. It is home to **The Keep**, a Prohibition-inspired bar featuring definitively modern spins on favorite cocktails.

It is appropriate that local food historian Doug Motz chose The Keep as

a place to tell the story of Columbus’ enduring spirit of culinary adventure. He hints that although the city’s new guard of restaurants and food purveyors appeal to 21st century diners, many of the restaurant concepts are informed by the way people shopped, dined, and cooked a century ago.

“Because I was interested in local history, I started writing a column for a website called ‘Columbus Underground,’ run by my friends, Walker and Anne Evans,” says Motz. “After Anne joined the board of the Columbus Historical Society, she asked me to write about newer businesses through a historical perspective. One of my early columns was about a new restaurant called **The Grass Skirt**. It followed in the footsteps of a historic restaurant in Columbus called the **Kahiki Supper Club**, a legend in the realm of Polynesian restaurants, which later evolved into an Asian frozen foods company.”

The influence of that story, driving customers to The Grass Skirt, prompted more columns, the founding

OPPOSITE: Rockville Tavern, in the city’s Brewery District; ABOVE: Baker Sarah Black holds court and classes at Flowers & Bread.

of The Historic Supper Club (which meets quarterly) and, eventually, a book, “The Lost Restaurants of Columbus.” Researching locations for the club and book, meanwhile, led to a buffet of discoveries and the revelation that food innovation in Columbus has long been a part of its DNA.

“When Anne and I started the Historical Supper Club, we encountered chef Alana Shock, who once a month reconstructed a menu from a long-lost Columbus restaurant that was hugely popular in its day,” Motz continues. “This led to my writing about these restaurants from the past to serve as a written companion for diners. We found people were interested in finding out what restaurants and people contributed to Columbus growing into a true foodie’s city.”

Many of the roots Motz and his colleagues unearthed traced back to female entrepreneurs, especially around of the turn of the 19th to 20th century.

“In those days, being in the restaurant industry was probably one of the few acceptable industries for women to run a business in,” he details.

“There was Mary Love McGuckin who founded The Maramor (one of restaurant critic Duncan Hines’ favorites in the 1940s) and Teresa Marzetti, who operated several restaurants which gave rise to Marzetti’s salad dressings. Those women and others, in turn, inspired Betty Rosbottom, who started her own cooking school, Alana Shock, Jeni Britton Bauer, and Liz Lessner, co-founder and co-owner of the Columbus Food League family of restaurants.”

Today’s Specials

Although **The Avenue Steak & Tavern** in Grandview Heights won “Best New Restaurant” accolades from Columbus magazine, it also provides a glimpse into the fashionable Columbus dining milieu of the mid-20th century that



ABOVE: A server from the flagship “scoop shop” of Jeni’s Splendid Ice Creams.

Motz brings back to life in his writing. Amber lighting, dark woods, and red upholstered booths and banquettes beautifully frame timeless steakhouse fare as does its brass-accented bar and attentive, traditionally attired waiters.

Under the direction of Executive Chef Jeff Lindemeyer, the menu is streamlined with solid steakhouse favorites whose recipes are true to the traditions of the Midwestern steakhouses that came before it. Whether it’s oysters Rockefeller or shrimp *De Jonghe*, New York Sirloin steak grilled to order, or Atlantic salmon—what you see is what you get. This is how Duncan Hines and taste-making diners of

the era liked their big nights out, and one can be sure the familiar favorites will be presented in top form.

By the same token, **The Sycamore** in German Village takes an equally comforting approach to its food and ambiance. It’s owner is Chris Crader, whose imprint on Columbus dining began with the opening of Harvest Pizzeria a few years ago after gaining inspiration from Mario Batali’s Pizzeria Mozza, with some ideas on how to reinvent the concept for Columbus.

“We have to balance consistency and inventiveness, as Columbus diners prefer a more honest experience,” Crader says. “The chefs at The Sycamore do a



ABOVE: Harvest Pizzeria's uniquely Columbus take on artisanal pizza and kale salad.

great job keeping the menus balanced and creating dishes that are comforting yet slightly irreverent in terms of mixing our city's different ethnic culinary trends. While we don't have the numbers as larger cities like New York and San Francisco, we have more intimate connections with our neighbors and colleagues. Rather than having 300 people coming through the doors every night, we prefer having 70 people come in, which gives us the space to put out consistently good food and drink."

Sarah Lagrotteria, co-owner of **Flowers & Bread**, says what differentiates Columbus from other regional food destinations is the balance of a

Midwestern values: strong work ethic, integrity, neighborliness and worldliness, which makes for a friendly and potent combination. She also notes that not many urban centers have an abundance of farms a short distance away, making collaborations easier. It's also one of the few places that gives one the space to bring dreams to life.

"I have lived and worked in larger cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles, and each city offers unique opportunities," affirms Lagrotteria. "However, one has a little more creative freedom here when overhead is lower and we have the support of her neighbors. Staying seasonal has

been much easier than I would have expected! We have beautiful fall produce and great farms that produce out of hoop houses, so there isn't a terrible dearth of off-season ingredients. We also focus on dry goods, as many of our bread flours, honey, and maple syrup are all local. Our coffee is also roasted locally. We're excited to can as many summer jams as possible to have a little taste of the Ohio sun all winter long."

Other restaurants such as the **Watershed Kitchen & Bar**, **Katalina's**, **Rockmill Tavern** and **Hubbard Grille** in their own way have accomplished the challenging balancing act of staying true to Columbus roots and tastes but adding modern flair to their flavor profiles, presentations and settings to push their diners in new directions of culinary adventure.

"We have a lot going for us here in Ohio, but many people who are not from here may not see it that way," says **Watershed Kitchen & Bar** chef Jack Moore. "While Columbus has so much to offer, we seem to get overlooked when it comes to what's edgy with food and drink. However, the agricultural and farming community here is one of the strongest in the nation. The fact that I live in Columbus allows me to work with some of the best farmers out here and source the majority of my food from right in our neck of the woods. We are passionate about not just knowing that something tastes good, but why it tastes good, where it comes from, and who made it.

"Columbus is not trying to be the Portland of the East, though we welcome the comparisons," concurs co-founder Dave Rigo. "We have always sort of done our own thing. We're a little bit stubborn, and like many Midwesterners, we're allergic to anything pretentious."

Greg Lehman, the other co-founder, notes that Watershed is producing a

dinner/forum series, “I’ll Have What I’m Having,” where the owners chat with some of Columbus’s best creators and entrepreneurs out there forging their own path. “It’s been incredible to see and hear their vision of Columbus,” he adds. “The one thing they all seem to share is that Columbus is a community that supports each other. That’s why we left our corporate jobs to start a distillery here and build Watershed Kitchen & Bar.”

Chris Crader, in contrast, points out that the presence of many universities and Fortune 500 companies means many customers are not exclusively bound to a Midwestern palate. “We have creative license, as many of our regular customers are world travelers and like pushing the envelope with their food experiences,” he says. “This helps open the doors for chefs and restaurateurs creatively, with the food and other things.”

Kathleen Day, who devised and operates **Katalina’s Café** (juxtaposing an artsy setting and interesting riffs on all-American comfort food), feels Columbus has the right mix of Midwest values, cultural sophistication, and a cost of living and doing business that has allowed her to create her comfort food haven playing by her own rules. Her business model is designed to not only keep the crowds packing her small place for breakfast and lunch, but also bring customers to her purveyors.

“For example, Shagbark Seed & Mill created snack-size bags of its corn chips to go with my sandwiches and soups, so that I could have a locally sourced, organic product that reflected my brand values,” she says. “They are a small company and took a chance that the demand for that product would be there. I also use and sell Cooper’s Mill Pumpkin and Apple Butters and Peach Habanero Jam, North Market Spices’ seasonings and sea salts, Thunderkiss Coffee, Tehku teas, Skinny Piggy



Katalina’s Café owner Kathleen Day.

Kombucha, Fowler’s Mill flour, and Matija Breads bread.”

The Great American Melting Pot

According to Motz, Columbus was also particularly welcoming to various immigrant groups that became instrumental in growing the various industries that made it an important player in the U.S. economy over the course of the 20th century. The crossroads of cultures, in turn, helped give rise to the city’s colorful and diverse ethnic dining scene, which today includes Tibetan, Middle Eastern, Somalian, and Salvadoran eateries.

A surviving legacy of this mindset is **North Market**, the city’s last remaining public market. The original market (opened in 1876) and its siblings enabled local producers to sell everyday provisions to the surrounding communities. Its 21st century incarnation features prepared meals with cuisines from around the globe (including Vietnamese, Polish, and Belgian), spices, condiments, an impeccably merchandised cheese shop, fish and butcher shops, celebrity chef outposts (Cara Mangini’s **Little Eater** and **Produce & Provisions**); and compact outlets of **Jeni’s Splendid Ice Creams** and award-winning bakery **Pistacia Vera**.



Momo Ghar owner Phuntso Lama brings the flavors of Tibet and Nepal to Columbus' backyard.

Columbus Food Adventures, meanwhile, offers visitors the opportunity to get outside the city center to find the hidden gems residents swear by when they have a taste for something other than American food, be it old school or “New American.”

A tour highlight is **Momo Ghar** (operated by wife and husband team Phuntso and Pramod Lama), which does a big business from its supermarket stall with a selection of variations of the Tibetan/Nepalese dish. **Hoyo's Kitchen** has introduced locals to mildly spicy and savory Somali cuisine in buffet and menu formats. **Salam Market & Bakery** brings a succulent

variety of pan-Middle Eastern to-go bites and breads to Columbus, while **Panaderia Guadalupana** serves up Salvadoran pastries that can sell out by the end of lunch hour.

If You Go...

HOTEL LeVEQUE
hotellevequecolumbus.com

Sit-Down Dining
ROCKMILL TAVERN
Rockmilltavern.com

HUBBARD GRILLE
hubbardgrille.com

THE SYCAMORE
thesycamoregv.com

KATALINA'S
katalinascafe.com

THE AVENUE STEAK & TAVERN
theavenuesteaktavern.com

HARVEST PIZZERIA
harvestpizzeria.com

FLOWERS & BREAD
flowersandbread.com

WATERSHED DISTILLERY
watersheddistillery.com

Casual Dining
NORTH MARKET
NorthMarket.com

SALAM BAKERY
 (614) 899-0952

MOMO GHAR AT SAGARA MARKET
 (614) 749-2901

HOYO'S KITCHEN
 (614) 899-8800

PANADERIA GUADALUPANA
 (614) 547-7117

JENI'S SPLENDID ICE CREAMS
jenis.com

Food Tours
COLUMBUS FOOD ADVENTURES
columbusfoodadventures.com

For more information,
[visit experiencecolumbus.com](http://visitexperiencecolumbus.com)

Recipes From the Buckeye State

BUTTERMILK BRINED SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN

Kathleen Day, Katalina's,
German Village

SERVES 4

Soak the chicken in buttermilk for 12 to 24 hours before frying.

- 4 cage-free organic chicken breasts
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/2 cup organic corn chips
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons quality Bloody Mary spice blend, such as North Market Spices Bloody Buddy Mix

- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- Vegetable oil, for frying

1. Soak chicken breasts in buttermilk for 12 to 24 hours in refrigerator in covered container.
2. Process chips in food processor until crushed but not mealy. Transfer to medium bowl; add flour, Bloody Mary spice blend, salt and pepper.
3. Coat chicken breasts one at a time in flour mixture, shaking off extra; set on plate.
4. Fill frying pan half full of vegetable oil.

Heat oil to 350°F.

5. Fry each chicken breast to an internal temperature of 165°F.
6. Drain on a large flat paper bag or paper towels. Serve immediately.

TOMATO BREAD PUDDING

Tricia Wheeler, Flowers & Bread

SERVES 6

- 2 1/2 pounds ripe red heirloom tomatoes
- 1/2 cup Zinfandel or Pinot Noir (chicken stock may be substituted)
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves
- 3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce



ABOVE: Katalina Café's Fried Chicken Sammy.

OPPOSITE: Corned Sweetbreads with pickled cabbage from Watershed Kitchen & Bar



- 6 cups day-old bread, crusts included, cut into cubes
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 4 ounces shredded Swiss cheese
- Pinch cayenne pepper

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease an 8-inch square baking dish.
2. In a small saucepan, combine tomatoes, wine, raisins, basil, thyme, Worcestershire sauce and cayenne. Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce to a simmer for ten minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Prepare tomatoes. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Cut a small “x” in the bottom of each tomato; plunge into boiling water for 30 seconds, then remove with a slotted spoon. When cool enough to handle, slip tomato skins off, then scoop out stems; core. Cut each tomato in half sideways; hold over a bowl and squeeze gently to remove seeds, then dice.
4. In a large bowl, toss bread cubes with butter and cheese. Add tomato mixture and toss again.
5. Spread mixture into prepared baking dish in an even layer, pressing down to compact.
6. Bake until a golden brown crust forms, at least 30 minutes, or until center of pudding puffs up.

Intermezzo

7. Let rest for at least 15 minutes before serving.

CORNED SWEETBREADS WITH PICKLED CABBAGE AND WHOLE GRAIN MUSTARD AIOLI

Jack Moore, Watershed Kitchen & Bar

SERVES 4

Start this recipe five days before you plan to serve it.

For the sweetbreads

- 10 ounces veal sweetbreads
- 1 cup thinly-sliced red cabbage
- 1 small carrot, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup whole grain mustard
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup cornstarch
- 1 quart corning brine, chilled (recipe below)

For the brine

- 8 quarts water
- 1 1/4 cup table or sea salt

- 1/2 cup curing salt #1
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 onion

1. In a large saucepan, combine all ingredients.
2. Bring to a boil, then remove from heat, strain and chill.

For the pickled cabbage

1. Combine red cabbage and carrots in a glass bowl.
2. Bring sugar and vinegar to a hard boil; pour over cabbage/carrot mixture.
3. Cover and cool to room temperature.

For the whole grain mustard aioli

1. Mix mayonnaise and whole grain mustard until well incorporated.

For the sweetbreads

1. Trim away all excess fat.
2. Place sweetbreads in brine in a glass bowl. Cover and refrigerate for five days.
3. Remove sweetbreads from brine; cut into bite-sized pieces. Discard brine.
4. Mix together flour and cornstarch. Toss sweetbreads in flour mixture until well coated.
5. In a skillet with high sides, heat oil to 350°F. Fry sweetbreads until light golden brown.
6. Spoon aioli onto plate; arrange sweetbreads on top.
7. Serve with pickled cabbage.

FRIED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH BLACK PEPPER HONEY, LEMON AND MINT

Jack Moore, Watershed Kitchen & Bar, Columbus

SERVES 2 TO 3

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 10 ounces Brussels sprouts, cut into quarters
- 2 ounces black pepper honey, or regular honey



- Juice of 2 lemons
- 4 mint leaves, chopped, for garnish
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. In a large skillet on high, heat oil.
2. Add Brussels sprouts; caramelize on all sides until golden brown.
3. With slotted spoon, move sprouts from pan to a mixing bowl, leaving oil behind in pan.
4. Toss sprouts with honey and lemon juice. Add pinch of salt to taste, and pepper as desired. Place in a serving bowl; top with mint.

BUTTERMILK FRIED CHICKEN WITH WHIPPED PIG BUTTER
Jack Moore, Watershed Kitchen & Bar

SERVES 4

Serve with a side of bread and butter pickles and your favorite hot sauce.

- 8 pieces chicken, legs and thighs

- 1 gallon chili brine (recipe follows)
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 3 cups flour, seasoned to taste with salt, pepper, cayenne
- 4 slices white bread
- 1 cup whipped pig butter (recipe follows)
- Lard or vegetable oil for frying
- Sliced white bread, for serving

For the brine

- 1 gallon water
- 2 fresno chilis
- 1 jalapeño chili
- 1 head garlic, peeled
- 1 cup salt
- 1/4 cup sugar

1. In a blender, combine all ingredients; blend until smooth.

For whipped pig butter

- 1 pound lardo (cured fatback), finely diced
- 1 tablespoon ground cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon hot sauce

- 1 tablespoon salt

1. Add all ingredients to a food processor. Process until mixture reaches a butter-like consistency.
2. Refrigerate until 30 minutes before using.

For the chicken

1. Place chicken in chili brine for 12 hours or overnight. Remove and pat dry, discard the remaining brine.
2. Toss chicken in a batter of seasoned flour and buttermilk.
3. In large high-sided skillet over medium heat, heat lard or oil.
4. Place chicken in hot fat, cover and reduce heat to low for 20-25 minutes or until chicken is golden brown. Fat should be lightly simmering.
5. Turn chicken over, increase heat to high and fry until golden brown and crispy.
6. Remove chicken from frying oil; drain on paper towels.
7. Place 2 pieces of chicken on a single piece of white bread. Top with whipped pig butter.

HUDSON 29 CHEESEBURGER

Hudson 29 Kitchen + Drink,
a Cameron Mitchell Restaurant

SERVES 1

- 2 four-ounce fresh ground beef patties
Burger seasoning, as needed
- 1 sesame seed bun
- 1 tablespoon red onion, sautéed
- 2 slices American cheese
- 1 slice tomato
- 1 tablespoon red onion, sautéed
Shredded lettuce
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickle mayonnaise
(recipe below)

For sweet pickle mayonnaise

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sweet pickle relish
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons yellow mustard

1. Combine ingredients in a bowl; mix well and chill.

For the beef

1. Season the beef patties to taste.
2. Heat griddle to high. Cook for two to four minutes on each side.
3. Add sautéed onions on top of burger patties.
4. Add cheese; heat until melted.
5. Spread sweet pickle mayonnaise on top of grilled sesame seed bun.
6. Add burger patties to bun; top with tomato and lettuce.

BRAISED VEAL MEATBALLS

Marcella's, a Cameron Mitchell
Restaurant

YIELDS ABOUT 16 VERY LARGE MEATBALLS

Marcella's signature meatballs are made with veal, ricotta, seasonings and breadcrumbs and are braised in marinara sauce. The generously-sized meatballs are served in a crock as an appetizer, or paired with pasta. At home, you can make the meatballs any size you wish.

- 1 pound ground veal
- 3 pounds ground beef
- 1 pound bread crumbs made from brioche bread
- $\frac{3}{4}$ quart heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon Italian herb seasoning
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon red chili flakes
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds ricotta cheese
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup chunky marinara sauce, for meatballs, plus
- 3 cups marinara sauce for the pan
- Vegetable oil, for frying

1. Place bread crumbs in a large mixing bowl of food processor. Add meat.
2. Add dry ingredients, ricotta and sauce. Slowly add cream.
3. Blend together for five minutes. Cover, chill and let meat rest for several hours.
4. Portion to 9-ounce (or smaller) meatballs.



OPPOSITE: Watershed Kitchen & Bar's Fried Brussels Spouts with honey, lemon, and mint.
ABOVE: Watershed's Buttermilk Fried Chicken.

5. In a deep skillet with high sides, heat oil to 350°F. Deep-fry meatballs until golden brown.
6. Place meatballs in a 4-inch deep baking dish; cover with marinara sauce.
7. Cover with foil; bake at 325°F. for 60 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 180°F.

KALE CAESAR SALAD

Harvest Pizzeria

SERVES 1

- 3 ounces chopped Lacinato kale
- 1/2 ounces Caesar dressing (recipe below)
- 1/4 ounces feather-shredded Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
- 1/2 ounces crushed toasted hazelnuts

1. Toss all ingredients together and serve

For Caesar dressing

MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS

- 9 brown anchovies
- 1 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 3 cups soy oil
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3 pasteurized egg yolks
- Zest of one lemon

1. Combine all ingredients except egg yolks and lemon zest in a jar with tight-fitting lid. Shake to combine.
2. Just before tossing the salad, add yolks and zest, then shake again to combine.

BUTTERSCOTCH BUDINO

Harvest Pizzeria

SERVES 10 TO 12

- 2 1/4 quarts heavy cream
- 1 1/4 quarts whole milk
- 1/2 cup water
- 3 1/3 cups dark brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tablespoon kosher salt



ABOVE: "Splendid" ice cream entrepreneur Jeni Britton Bauer.

OPPOSITE: Harvest Pizzeria's Butterscotch Budino.

- 3 eggs
- 9 egg yolks
- 3/4 cup cornstarch
- 8 ounces unsalted butter, cut into medium cubes
- 3 ounces vanilla

1. In a large bowl, combine heavy cream and milk. Set aside.
2. In a medium heavy-bottomed pot on medium-high heat, combine brown sugar, salt and water.
3. Cook mixture to a smoking, dark caramel (300°F-310°F on a candy thermometer).
4. Immediately whisk cream mixture into the caramel. Whisk vigorously or mixture will seize.

5. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to medium.
6. In another large bowl, whisk the eggs and cornstarch until completely combined.
7. Temper the hot caramel cream into the egg mixture by slowly adding a quart of caramel at a time, whisking continuously.
8. Once about half of the caramel cream has been tempered, pour egg/caramel mixture back into pot; continue stirring until custard has stiffened.
9. Whisk in butter and vanilla.
10. Strain custard through a fine mesh sieve or cheesecloth into a large serving bowl.
11. Cover custard with two layers of plastic, with one directly on custard. Chill for at least 4 hours before serving.

