

Food Writers and Experts on Their Favorite New Restaurants of 2013

Thursday, December 19, 2013, by [Amy McKeever](#)



[Illustration: [Eric Lebofsky](http://ericlebofsky.com/) <<http://ericlebofsky.com/>>]

As per tradition, Eater is closing out 2013 with a series of posts in which industry experts, seasoned diners, and friends of the site answer several questions about the year in food. These posts will run until the end of the year, and they kick off today with a crucial first question: **What was your favorite new restaurant of 2013?** These restaurants could be located anywhere in the world, meaning that not only was there considerable love for New York City restaurants such as **Estela**, **Charlie Bird**, and **Mission Cantina**, but also **Amass** in Copenhagen, **Clove Club** in London, **Trois Mec** in LA, **Saison** in San Francisco, and more. Not to mention restaurants in Hong Kong; Bentonville, Arkansas; San Antonio; Barcelona; St. Louis; and beyond.

Here now, more than 30 excellent food writers and experts representing cities across the world weigh in on their favorite new restaurants of 2013:

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Ben Leventhal, Eater Co-Founder:

Bones, The Ordinary, Glasserie, Charlie Bird, Estela.

Charlotte Druckman, Senior Editor at Medium

<<https://medium.com/@cattedrucks>> and *Skirt Steak*

<<http://theskirtsteakfiles.tumblr.com/>> author:

In NYC (home): **ESTELA** (I want to pick something less obvious, but God help me, I really like eating there). I liked Glasserie a lot, too, if there's a runner-up slot. In San Francisco: b. Patisserie and **Tosca Cafe**. In NOLA: Peche.

Matt Buchanan, *The New Yorker*

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/bios/matt_buchanan/search?contributorName=Matt%20Buchanan> :

I liked so many places! My single most excellent experience was at **Paper Plane** in Atlanta. My friends and I ordered essentially everything on the menu — every cocktail, everything edible — and basically every bite, every sip was fantastic. That's hard. Of the new joints that I went to the most, it was **Alder**; it felt like it had more to give, every single time. It was deeply comforting and enjoyable, but also genuinely novel at the same time. Also difficult.

Alyssa Shelasky, writer and author of *Apron Anxiety*

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0307952142/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0307952142&linkCode=as2&tag=curbedcom06-20> :

Toro - Massholes represent. Marco's - of course! Mission Cantina - mmm...



Estela, New York City. [Photo: [Daniel Krieger <http://nycfoodphotographer.com/#/Portfolio/Table/1/>](http://nycfoodphotographer.com/#/Portfolio/Table/1/)]

James Casey, Founder of *Swallow Magazine*:

Estela for sure. It's perfect in so many ways. The food is excellent, the wine list superb too. The dining room is comfortable and hasn't been inundated with annoying so-and-sos. It also helps that it's in my neighborhood. I really like going to **Somtum Der** for easy spicy meals. Their raw shrimp is bananas good. And the **Clove Club** in London was a great meal too. I expect great things.

Elizabeth Auerbach, food writer and blogger behind [ElizabethOnFood <http://elizabethonfood.com/>](http://elizabethonfood.com/) :

Berners Tavern in London. A fabulous new brasserie by Jason Atherton at the London Edition Hotel. Awesome dining room.

Ron Gastrobar in Amsterdam. In April 2013, Dutch chef Ron Blaauw relaunched his 2-star fine-dining restaurant as a gastrobar. My favorite new spot in Amsterdam.

Kat Odell, Editor of [Eater LA <http://la.eater.com/>](http://la.eater.com/) :

Uncle Boons, Somtum Der, and ZZ's Clam Bar in NYC. On the West Coast, **Chengdu Taste** in Alhambra.

Paula Forbes, Deputy Editor of *Eater National*:

Estela (NYC), **Qui** (Austin), Arcade Midtown Kitchen (San Antonio), Charlie Bird (New York City), General Muir (Atlanta), and probably a ton more I am forgetting. **Odd Duck** in Austin just opened last week, so it's too soon to say, but I'm expecting big things.

Marie-Claude Lortie, Columnist at *La Presse*:

Vin Papillon in Montreal and Rochelle Canteen in London.

Zach Brooks, founder of [Midtown Lunch <http://midtownlunch.com/los-angeles/>](http://midtownlunch.com/los-angeles/) and co-host of the *Food is the New Rock* podcast [<http://www.foodisthenewrock.com/>](http://www.foodisthenewrock.com/) :

I saw Josh Ozersky say that [<http://observer.com/2013/12/grub-match-predictions-for-2014/>](http://observer.com/2013/12/grub-match-predictions-for-2014/) meateries featuring "boutique meats cooked artfully over live fires in chef-driven restaurants" will be the next big thing in 2014. Well, I'm excited to say the future is now in Los Angeles at **Chi Spacca**, the newest cog in the growing Mozza empire. I'd put Chad Colby's charcuterie up against anybody in the country, and his bone marrow pie is probably the most worthwhile life shortener I ate all year long.

Kyle Nabilcy, *Isthmus* food writer:

One of the greatest meals I've ever experienced was at the original Mission Chinese in San Francisco; I'd love to get out to the new Mission Cantina to see what Danny Bowien does with Mexican flavors and ingredients. I'm looking forward to my first road-trip to Eataly Chicago, as well. North of those borders, I think I'm most excited about **Grampa's Pizzeria**, which stands to become a Madison destination off of the Capitol Square.

Sharlee Gibb, Melbourne-based writer and restaurant expert

<<https://twitter.com/sharleegibb>> :

Lee Ho Fook, Valentino, and Pope Joan Dinners in Melbourne. Estela in New York.



Amass, Copenhagen. [Photo: [Martin Kaufmann <http://www.martinkauffmann.dk/>](http://www.martinkauffmann.dk/)]

Robbie Swinnerton, Japan Times restaurant reviewer

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/author/int-robbie_swinnerton/> and Tokyo Food File <<http://foodfile.typepad.com/blog/>> blogger:

A slew of new restaurants opened in Tokyo this year, but none have nailed it for me quite like **Anis**. Chef Susumu Shimizu proves that, as long as you have superb ingredients and technique (his was honed at Arpege), it doesn't matter how far you are from the bright lights of the city center.

Outside of Japan, two new places that hit all the right notes for me: Clove Club in London; and **Amass** in Copenhagen. I'm looking forward to repeat visits.

Peter Meehan, Lucky Peach <<http://lky.ph/>> :

I really, really, really didn't make it out to a lot of new restaurants in 2013. And sometimes when I got to them all the seats were full and I had to go

somewhere else. I know **Mission Cantina** opened in 2013, so I'll go with them. The food is very good!

Helen Rosner, Executive Digital Editor of *Saveur*:

I'm pretty enamored with **Charlie Bird** — the food, when it's good, is very good, the wine is off-the-hook great, and the energy in the room is terrific (that's code for "it's loud as heck, but in a fun way").

Alexandra Forbes, Food Writer and Columnist of *Folha de São Paulo*:

Pakta, in Barcelona. My belief that Albert Adrià is the greatest genius of the culinary world grows stronger each time he opens something new.

Ian Froeb, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* Critic

[<http://www.stltoday.com/entertainment/dining/>](http://www.stltoday.com/entertainment/dining/) :

It was a very good year for restaurant openings in St. Louis. My favorite of the new places is probably **Mission Taco Joint**, a fun spot with great food — Adam and Jason Tilford, the sibling owners, are passionate about Mexican cuisine, and it shows — and a terrific drink menu. Any place where I'm not just willing but content to wait for a solo seat at the bar (at lunch!) must be doing something right.

Adam Goldberg, blogger behind *A Life Worth Eating*

[<http://www.alifewortheating.com/>](http://www.alifewortheating.com/) :

I've really been enjoying **ZZ's Clam Bar**. There just aren't many non-Japanese places in New York to get raw fish dishes and a cocktail. ZZ's is just right, particularly late-night. Also by the Torrisi guys is **Carbone**, their second tribute to New York-Italian food. This is the kind of Italian food most New Yorkers are used to: penne alla vodka, caesar salads, and linguini with white clam sauce. These are the dishes that one struggles to find even in Italy. They're the same dishes as served in Long Island staples like Don Pepe, with an emphasis on the highest quality ingredients.

There's also a single-product restaurant that opened up around the corner from me called **Grk** (short for "Greek kitchen") whose focus is the horiatiki peasant salad. It's technically fast food, but hear me out: this place is good. The pita bread is baked in-house — always served out of the oven — and all vegetables cut to order. The thick blocks of mild sheep's milk feta crowning the salad make this indistinguishable from eating in Athens. I eat here several times a week. It's only a matter of time before this becomes a chain and starts expanding throughout the city.

Mike Thelin, *Feast Portland* [<https://www.feastportland.com/>](https://www.feastportland.com/) Co-Organizer:

I cannot get enough of **Ava Gene's** in Portland. It is not only one of best new restaurants to open in Portland in a long time, it's one of the best new restaurants in America. Go there and order everything.

The Gurgling Cod <<http://thegurglingcod.typepad.com/>> :

The Worthy Burger, South Royalton, VT — like a super sincere In-n-Out in buffalo flannel and with really good beer.

Ari Bendersky, Director of Content/Editor-in-Chief of AbesMarket.com
<<http://abesmarket.com/>> :

Gather opened with more of a whisper than a bang, but word spread quickly. When a former Charlie Trotter's sous chef teams with a veteran of NoMi and they open an approachable "downtown" type restaurant in the much quieter Lincoln Square neighborhood, you know you're in for a winner. While everyone else in Chicago was freaking out about all the goodness happening in Logan Square, I stuck to my North Side haunts and dove in to Gather. I've had casual dinners and date nights and was blown away each time. Even though the larger plates like the diver scallop with couscous and cauliflower puree or the seared and fried chicken were fantastic, it was chef Ken Carter's burger with white cheddar and perfectly crispy house-smoked bacon that had me salivating. Pair that with a great bottle of rose on the covered back patio in summer or a fantastic bourbon Manhattan in winter and I'm happy not traveling far from home.

Amanda Kludt, Eater Editorial Director:

Estela, Charlie Bird, **The Ordinary**.



Arcade Midtown Kitchen, San Antonio. [Photo: Jennifer Whitney
<http://jennwhitney.com/#/portfolios/good%20eats/1/>]

Edmund Tijerina, *San Antonio Express-News* Restaurant Critic

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/food/> :

Last year I called **Arcade Midtown Kitchen** one of the most anticipated openings of 2013, and it lived up to the hype. The skill of chef Jesse Perez and barrel-aged cocktails from Chris Ware combine with a casual and stylish atmosphere that dresses up or down.

Although it opened in late 2012, I'd still call **The Granary 'Cue and Brew** an important restaurant of 2013. Tim Rattray may be the country's only modernist barbecue chef. Food writer Josh Ozersky raved about The Granary in the *Wall Street Journal* and an *Esquire* magazine blog.

I know other people will mention Trois Mec, and I wish I had first-hand knowledge but I couldn't get a reservation there when I visited Los Angeles. And I still haven't had a chance to get over to Qui in Austin.

Ali Kurshat Altinsoy, *MAD Symposium* <http://madfood.co/> Director:

Copenhagen is going through a renaissance right now with many exciting new openings, amongst these, **BROR** and Amass have already cemented themselves as must-visits whilst the charming café/wineshop, Atelier September, has become the city's latest hotspot — and rightly so.

Greg Morabito, Editor of *Eater NY* <http://ny.eater.com/> :

The Elm, Lafayette, and Mission Cantina, all in New York City. They all exceeded my very high expectations. Charlie Bird also came out of nowhere and took off like a rocket.

Kat Kinsman, Managing Editor of CNN Eatocracy

[<http://eatocracy.cnn.com/tag/kat-kinsman-eatocracy-managing-editor/>](http://eatocracy.cnn.com/tag/kat-kinsman-eatocracy-managing-editor/)

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I traveled a LOT this year, both for work and for fun, and there were stunning starts for Marti's, Cane & Table and Peche (NOLA), **The General Muir** (Atlanta), Velveteen Rabbit (Las Vegas — booze only) and Husk (Nashville), among others. But I have a horse I didn't even know was going to be in the race — and it won.

My favorite restaurant of all time was Alex & Ika in Cherry Valley, New York. It was a small, maybe 30-seat restaurant in a former bowling alley, open just a few nights a week, and chef **Alex Webster** would just cook whatever the heck he felt like, foraged from the woods that week, or managed to grow. Every dish had what seemed like 30+ ingredients, and they all sang in harmony. If pressed, I'd say creative American fare (though he's actually British) with smart use of a global spice palette, but really, it was just food that made my knees weak. This place became home.

The original location closed a few years back and set up shop in Cooperstown, and while the food still felt like chef Webster's sometimes, the menu had to flatten out to appeal to a transient tourist population. I was bummed, but a chef/owner has to make a living (especially if they have a mortgage on the building). Then, out of nowhere, my husband got a call — the second floor of the restaurant was re-opening as "**Tatintarte** [<http://www.alexanderspicnic.com/#/19-photographs/>](http://www.alexanderspicnic.com/#/19-photographs/)," an 18-seat, two nights a week, \$75 12-course tasting menu, with Webster again cooking whatever the heck he felt like.

I approached with trepidation. What if he'd lost his edge, or memories had grown fonder with age, or...? Two courses in, and I started crying at the table with delight. He's back, he's better than ever, and I hope I can still get a table after telling everyone about it.

Adam Roberts, Amateur Gourmet [<http://www.amateurgourmet.com/>](http://www.amateurgourmet.com/)
blogger and cookbook author:

Chengdu Taste [<http://www.amateurgourmet.com/2013/09/my-hearts-aflame-for-chengdu-taste-my-mouth-too.html>](http://www.amateurgourmet.com/2013/09/my-hearts-aflame-for-chengdu-taste-my-mouth-too.html) in the San Gabriel Valley, here in Los Angeles, was a game-changing experience for me. Before going there, I compared every Sichuan meal to my favorite bastion of Sichuan cooking in New York: Grand Sichuan. But **Chengdu Taste** upped the ante considerably because of the quality ingredients they use (compare a Chengdu Taste green bean to a Grand Sichuan green bean) and the balance of flavors. It's not all mouth-numbing fireworks; there's subtlety too. I can't wait to go back.



Saison, San Francisco. [Photo: [Molly DeCoudreaux <http://www.mollydecoudreaux.com/>](http://www.mollydecoudreaux.com/)]

Bonjwing Lee, photographer and blogger behind the [Ulterior Epicure](http://ulteriorepicure.com/) <<http://ulteriorepicure.com/>> :

Saison. The new one. On Townsend Street. In San Francisco.

Janice Leung Hayes, blogger behind [e_ting in Hong Kong](http://www.e-tingfood.com/) <<http://www.e-tingfood.com/>> :

Little Bao in Hong Kong - making modern Asian baos relevant to a modern Asian audience. Too often Asian trends started overseas seem to be mere gimmicks to those of us in Asia. Chef May Chow is a flavor magician.

Andrew Zimmern, Host of [Bizarre Foods](http://www.travelchannel.com/tv-shows/bizarre-foods) <<http://www.travelchannel.com/tv-shows/bizarre-foods>> :

TIE...**Connie and Ted's** in LA and **Toro** NYC. Neither concept is new, no one broke new ground here, but in a restaurant world where so many chefs and owners are trying too hard, these restaurants simply excel at doing great food, in a convivial atmosphere that makes you want to return again and again and again.

Kate Krader, [Food & Wine Restaurant Editor](https://twitter.com/kkrader) <<https://twitter.com/kkrader>> :

This is hard because I'm NYC based and New York all the way, but the new restaurant that blew me away the hardest was **Trois Mec** in LA. I'd had Ludo's food before but this whole package — the inside-a-pizza-place-in-a-strip-mall situation, the terrific energy of the restaurant, the fun service, smart wine pairings, and especially the food. Ludo does things like treat potato pulp

(roasted fingerling potatoes that are riced and served with brown butter powder) like it's sushi, grating a mountain of cheese on top of the plate and then handing it to you.

Honorable mention to **Carbone**. Like I said, I'm from NY, and this celebrates my city's fancy-schmance Italian restaurants from years ago, with waiters in tuxedos, scampi alla scampi, halibut piccata, spicy rigatoni vodka. I. love. This. Restaurant.

This wasn't technically a restaurant, except for one night. But honorable mention also to the fab Thanksgiving dinner that Grant Achatz and Alex Stupak served at NYC's **Empellon Cocina** as part of Stupak's Push Project series. Completely brilliant. They came and previewed it at *F&W*; we got to hear about their thoughts on the wish bone (all important!) and eat pecan pie filling with Parker House rolls. It was flat out amazing.

Joshua David Stein, food writer and *New York Observer* restaurant critic

[<http://observer.com/author/joshua-david/>](http://observer.com/author/joshua-david/) :

I picked in the *Observer* [<http://observer.com/2013/12/grub-match-the-years-best-and-worst-food-and-restaurants/>](http://observer.com/2013/12/grub-match-the-years-best-and-worst-food-and-restaurants/) **Luksus** for expensive and **Bunker** for cheap, which I stand by. But for the best mid-priced resto, I'd say Estela. Inventive yet seemingly effortless. Delicious, of course. Refreshingly original, but not uselessly weird.

Douglas Trattner, *Cleveland Scene* Dining Editor

[<http://www.douglastrattner.com/>](http://www.douglastrattner.com/) :

The single most significant opening in Cleveland this year is **EDWINS** [<http://www.edwinsrestaurant.org>](http://www.edwinsrestaurant.org), a reentry program for formerly incarcerated adults disguised as a fine French bistro. It's one thing to train ex-cons to work the dining room of a meat-and-three cafeteria, or secret them away in the prep kitchen of a high-end establishment, but founder Brandon Chrostowski is steadfast about fully and unapologetically integrating his charges into all aspects of his fine French bistro. And, sure enough, he's done it, birthing one of Cleveland's best new restaurants on the backs of "un-hirable" ex-cons. Chef Gilbert Brenot, a native of France, is turning out fantastic food like lobster bisque, rabbit tart, frog legs, horseradish-crusted salmon medallions atop cool cucumbers in a tangy crème fraîche, braised leg of rabbit with sweet potato puree, crisp duck leg confit with mushroom risotto, and steak au poivre. For dessert, there's a wooden cart wobbling beneath the weight of so much ripe cheese, and a weightless soufflé.

Per-Anders and Lotta Jorgensen, Editors of *Fool Magazine*

[<http://fool.se/>](http://fool.se/) :

Saison at its new location in San Francisco and **Aska** in New York. Two great restaurants and yet very different. In our region, local restaurant

Saltimporten Canteen in Malmö finally moved into their space. Two great chefs went from fine dining to serving the most incredible lunches at unbeatable prices.

Amy McKeever, Features Editor of Eater National:

In DC, **The Red Hen** is the quintessential neighborhood restaurant, and I'm lucky that I happen to live in this particular neighborhood. And between the delicious pastas (such as braised duck creste de gallo at the moment) and the well-chosen wine and beer lists, it has also drawn in diners from the rest of the city. This restaurant just makes me feel good.

Outside of DC, I've mostly been catching up on older restaurants, but the **Clove Club** in London really hit it exactly right for me.

Adrian Moore, Paris-based food writer

<http://www.adrianmoore.blogspot.com/> and Mandarin Oriental concierge:

I'm going to go out on a limb and mention a restaurant that opened just days ago, but with a chef who has already proved himself when he made Agapé Substance the hottest place in Paris, **David Toutain**. Toutain cut his teeth with Alain Passard, Marc Veyrat, passing by Mugaritz and Corton and, during a year and a half tenure at Agapé Substance, carved out a niche as the chef's chef, turning the city upside down with delicious and inventive dishes with rare products, combinations and textures. At the height of his career, he dropped everything and travelled the world from Scandinavia to Singapore, looking for inspiration and cooking wherever he could. Now, in his own place in the tony seventh arrondissement, he'll be the master of his own culinary ship, turning out surprise menus concentrating on hyper-seasonal products, especially vegetables and seafood. The lofty dining room — designed by Caroline Tissier, who already did a great job at Michelin-starred Akrame — has a scattering of tables and a communal, no-reservation table for last-minute or reservation-less foodies. Mark my words, this one will make waves.

· [All Year in Eater 2013 Coverage](http://eater.com/tags/year-in-eater-2013) <http://eater.com/tags/year-in-eater-2013> [-E-]

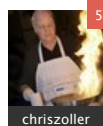


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@erindoli

Love that Worthy Burger in VT made this list. Also of note: they have an insane tap list. You can usually find some Lawson's, Hill Farmstead, maybe Alchemist ... stuff generally not available outside VT.

#1. 12/20/13 07:57 AM



5

chriszoller

Lippi, in Miami! An amazing assortment of American takes on world wide cuisine by local star chef Philippe Ruiz, formerly of The Palm d'Or.

#2. 12/20/13 09:46 AM