

FOOD & WINE

GLOBAL TASTEMAKERS 2026

THE TRAVEL ISSUE

THE WORLD'S MOST
DELICIOUS DESTINATIONS

APERITIVO HOUR AT
THE ORIENT EXPRESS
LA MINERVA HOTEL
IN ROME, ONE OF OUR
TOP HOTELS OF 2026
P. 77

The stunning rooftop restaurant Gigi Rigolatto Roma at the Orient Express La Minerva hotel in Rome, one of our top 10 global hotels



GLOBAL TASTEMAKERS

2026

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE to experience the world food—first—we’re looking at you, *Food & Wine* reader—it’s a thrilling time to be a traveler, as restaurants, bars, hotels, and cruise lines vie to outdo one another with world-class culinary offerings. Where to begin? Start with the expert-vetted, road warrior-tested winners of our fourth-annual awards for the best food-forward destinations on the planet, and get ready to book your next delicious adventure. (To read more about the winners, visit foodandwine.com/globaltastemakers.)

The jetty at Belmond's Hotel Cipriani in Venice makes for a charming arrival. OPPOSITE: Modena's Casa Maria Luigia has the dreamiest hotel breakfast.



BEST CULINARY HOTELS

THREE OF THE WORLD'S TOP HOTELS FOR FOOD ARE IN ITALY—HERE'S WHY.

by Federico De Cesare Viola

PHOTOGRAPHY (OPPOSITE): COURTESY OF BELMOND
PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE): COURTESY OF CASA MARIA LUGIA

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: Casa Maria Luigia is an intimate 18th-century residence in the Emilian countryside; aperitivo hour in the lobby bar at Orient Express La Minerva in Rome is a must; Hotel Cipriani in Venice has a private pool tucked away in the gardens.



ONE EVENING ALMOST 20 YEARS AGO, I left Rome to make the roughly two-hour drive north to Hotel Il Pellicano in Porto Ercole, a seaside resort in Tuscany. It was a long journey for a dinner reservation, but I was eager to try the cuisine of Antonio Guida, a chef generating a lot of buzz at the time. I was mesmerized—the food was deep in flavor, comforting, and technically impeccable. I remember thinking: “Wow, you can eat this well in a hotel restaurant!” Back then, that was far from guaranteed.

In 2014, Guida moved to the Mandarin Oriental in Milan. Its restaurant, Seta, was designed and positioned to express a unique identity and ambition rather than to be an efficient yet predictable hotel amenity. Mission accomplished: Today, with its two Michelin stars, Seta is a destination within a destination, drawing mostly outside diners (Milanese in particular) alongside hotel guests. And it’s hardly an isolated case: Italian hotels currently rank as some of the best in the world when it comes to their culinary offerings, snagging three of the top 10 spots in the 2026 Global Tastemakers Awards.

Why do our hotels excel in this space? The short answer: They don’t imitate international standards—they do what Italy does best, which is to remain true to itself. Of course, there’s more to it. Many high-end properties hire chefs with strong identities and give them space, resources, and creative autonomy. These hotels become cultural laboratories where fine dining, nostalgia, craftsmanship, and a sense of place intersect. Italy’s obsession with provenance—a defining trait of its cuisine—now lives inside hotel walls, too, and in recent years, attention to where ingredients come from has intensified. Kitchen gardens and collaborations with small producers, fishmongers, and independent winemakers are common now, where once they were rare.

The best Italian hotel restaurants have nothing in common with the anonymous, airport terminal–esque places found in many parts of the world. They embody what the ancient Romans called *genius loci*—the spirit of the place. They offer experiences that can’t be replicated, shaped by the hunger for authenticity that increasingly drives high-end culinary travel.

Take Casa Maria Luigia, the boutique hotel founded by Lara Gilmore and chef Massimo Bottura in the Modenese countryside. Here, breakfast is a genuinely unique experience, even by Italian standards. Where else can you start your morning with cotechino (a slow-cooked pork sausage), zabaglione, and sbrisolona (a rustic Lombard cornmeal-almond crumb cake)? The property is what the Germans call a *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a total work of art—blending culinary ambition, contemporary art, and cultivated hospitality. Guests are not simply fed; they’re initiated into Bottura’s avant-garde universe.

Winning over Italians—notoriously discerning diners—becomes a fast track to credibility. When a hotel restaurant attracts locals rather than just travelers, it becomes a genuine “place to be.” The hotel stops feeling like a tourist bubble and becomes a social and identity-driven space. That’s certainly the case at Orient Express La Minerva and its restaurant, Gigi Rigolatto Roma, a refined Roman salon that honors tradition through a contemporary lens and on any given night is packed with chic locals and guests alike.

Today’s travelers want to understand where they are, know the origin of ingredients, and recognize cultural references that haven’t been diluted. In Italian hotel restaurants, storytelling isn’t a marketing gimmick: It’s the natural outcome of the country’s cultural biodiversity. Chef Vania Ghedini of Oro at Hotel Cipriani, A Belmond Hotel, in Venice demonstrates this beautifully with a deeply personal menu that leans into the produce of Venice and the surrounding region, as well as its historic position as a city of traders. It speaks to the real pride Italian chefs find in bringing to life the country’s diverse regional cuisines.

Italian culinary hotels are among the best because they have something that can’t be bought: a deep-seated, warmly welcoming culture of hospitality, a reliance on local food artisans and farmers, and a focus on human connection—qualities that bring to the table the reasons why so many people travel to Italy.

PHOTOGRAPHY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): COURTESY OF CASA MARIA LUIGIA, DIVIND HAUG, COURTESY OF BELMOND



GLOBAL TASTEMAKERS 2026

BEST GLOBAL HOTELS FOR FOOD & DRINK

1. **Capella**
BANGKOK
A winner thanks to its five restaurants, including a sharply executed outpost from chef Mauro Colagreco
2. **Orient Express La Minerva**
ROME
3. **Babylonstoren**
SIMONDIUM, SOUTH AFRICA
4. **Casa Maria Luigia**
MODENA, ITALY
5. **Aman**
TOKYO
6. **Hotel Cipriani, A Belmond Hotel**
VENICE
7. **Aliée**
ISTANBUL
8. **Mandarin Oriental**
HONG KONG
9. **Atlantis the Royal**
DUBAI
10. **The Grand National Hotel by Saint Peter**
SYDNEY

BEST U.S. HOTELS FOR FOOD & DRINK

1. **Aragosta at Goose Cove**
DEER ISLE, MAINE
Its serene cottages are set in the rhythm of Maine’s Deer Isle.
2. **Blackberry Farm**
WALLAND, TENNESSEE
3. **Four Seasons Hotel at The Surf Club**
SURFSIDE, FLORIDA
4. **Alila Ventana**
BIG SUR, CALIFORNIA
5. **SingleThread Farm**
HEADSBURG, CALIFORNIA
6. **The Fifth Avenue Hotel**
NEW YORK CITY
7. **Twin Farms**
BARNARD, VERMONT
8. **Hotel Emma**
SAN ANTONIO
9. **The Line**
WASHINGTON, D.C.
10. **Camptown**
LEEDS, NEW YORK

RUNNER-UP BEST LARGE U.S. CITY

LOOK OUT, NEW YORK CITY—THE WINDY CITY IS COMING FOR YOUR FOOD CROWN.

Ximena N. Beltran Quan Kiu

Chicago

IF ALL THAT COMES TO MIND when you think of Chicago's food scene is pizza smothered in an inch of cheese, hot dogs loaded with pickles and tomatoes, and Italian beef sandwiches à la *The Bear*, then, delicious though these things may be, you're seriously missing out. The Windy City is in the midst of a delicious transformation, and it has become a serious contender for the title of Best Large U.S. City for Food & Drink (a distinction New York held on to this year—but just barely).

Chicago has long been a destination for immigrants from all over the world, and many of the city's most dynamic restaurants cook from a worldwide pantry. At **Mirra** (mirrachicago.com), chefs Zubair Mohajir and Rishi Kumar fuse Indian and Mexican flavors in culture-melding dishes like chaas aguachile, where translucent slices of hamachi are served in a pool of cumin-scented buttermilk and lime juice. **Urbanbelly** (urbanbelly.com) offers crispy fried chicken and juicy dumplings that mingle chef Bill Kim's South Korean roots with inspiration from his wife's



Puerto Rican background. At **Khmai** (khmai-fine-dining.com), an ever-evolving fine-dining menu celebrates Cambodian cuisine and heritage through dishes like pork belly served with bok kapi, a sauce of shrimp paste, toasted rice, and tamarind, for dipping.

The first five lines of Carl Sandburg's "Chicago," a poem on the city's grit, working class, and potential, are tattooed on *Top Chef* alum Joe Flamm's left forearm. At his latest venture, **Bar Tutto** (bartuttochicago.com), an all-day menu of pastas, oysters, and creative sides like a carrot salad with orzo, sliced burrata, and a date vinaigrette offers a stylish homage to Italian wine bars.

Chicago is also where immigrant Carlos Gaytán became the first Mexican-born chef to receive a Michelin star. At **Tzucu** (tzucu.com), his current endeavor, order the cochinita pibil, a pork shank served with a black bean puree, habanero salsa, and tortillas—it's Gaytán's specialty.

It's also where 1999 F&W Best New Chef Paul Kahan once paid \$1,000 to fly in the proper cookware from France for a cassoulet dinner at his butcher shop **Publican Quality Meats** (publicanqualitymeats.com). Kahan's One Off Hospitality group includes city hot spots like honky-tonk **Big Star** (bigstarchicago.com); gastropub **The Publican** (thepublicanrestaurant.com); and **Avec** (avecrestaurant.com), home of one of the city's most talked-about dishes, chorizo-stuffed dates wrapped in bacon.

In a town so full of options, it seems wrong to wait in line for anything. The only exception is 2022 F&W Best New Chefs Tim Flores and Genie Kwon's **Kasama** (kasamachicago.com), a café-bakery by day and tasting-menu restaurant by night—and the world's first Filipino establishment to earn a Michelin star. By the time it opens at 9 a.m., the line usually stretches two blocks from the entrance. One bite into the buttery ube and huckleberry Basque cake, the flaky black truffle croissant filled with decadent French cream cheese and drizzled with honey, or the hearty mushroom adobo (served with soy-braised mushrooms and a fried egg), and you will understand why.

Chicago has always had a kind of underdog status, and that's OK. We're a place where our work speaks louder than any hype.



PHOTOGRAPHY (FROM LEFT): TIM FLORES, SOFIA BARROSO

BEST LARGE U.S. CITIES FOR FOOD & DRINK

1. **New York City**
New York City came back for its second year at the top of the list—but Chicago is hot on its heels.
2. **Chicago**
3. **Los Angeles**
4. **New Orleans**
5. **San Francisco**
6. **Houston**
7. **Austin**
8. **Philadelphia**
9. **Charleston**
10. **Miami**

BEST SMALL U.S. CITIES FOR FOOD & DRINK

1. **Portland, Maine**
World-class seafood, a tight-knit hospitality community, and tiny-city charm let Portland take the top spot.
2. **Healdsburg, California**
3. **Asheville, North Carolina**
4. **Hudson, New York**
5. **Santa Fe, New Mexico**
6. **Greenville, South Carolina**
7. **Burlington, Vermont**
8. **Ojai, California**
9. **Kingston, New York**
10. **Traverse City, Michigan**

At Tzucu in Chicago, high-end Mexican French cuisine for dinner sits alongside hearty brunch offerings like the burger with pickled yellow beets, serrano chiles, and truffle. OPPOSITE: Kasama's pastry selection includes chic savory Danishes.

BEST GLOBAL CITY

REINVENTION, RESILIENCE, AND AN ASTONISHING ARRAY OF GLOBAL FLAVORS MAKE THIS CITY A MUST-VISIT DESTINATION FOR FOOD LOVERS.

By Janice Leung Hayes

Hong Kong

YOU MIGHT THINK THAT to eat well in Hong Kong is to start your morning with dim sum, punctuate the day with a succession of milk teas and wontons, and round it off with a medley of stir-fries at a *dai pai dong* (street hawker stall). You wouldn't be wrong, but it could just as easily start with a jolt of excellent espresso, followed by a croissant, an Aussie sausage roll, Thai boat noodles, a Michelin-starred Italian dinner, and a world-class nightcap. After living here for 20 years, I have to admit that the "East meets West" cliché is somewhat true.

Founded nearly two centuries ago as a trading port, the "fragrant harbor" (the literal translation of Hong Kong in Chinese) has long been a crossroads for goods, people, and ideas. From the early "fusion" of *bing sutts* and *cha chaan tengs* (both local-style diners) showcasing then-exciting imports of butter, canned milk, and soft drinks, to the abundance of international cuisines today and the evolution of Cantonese and other regional Chinese cuisines, multiculturalism, especially in the culinary context, is simply part of Hong Kong's DNA.

As a result, fluidity and reinvention are as baked into the city as the custard in our egg tarts. In recent years, those qualities have really been put to the test, as protests and the pandemic all but shut the city down. Yet this hard reset has propelled the Hong Kong food and beverage scene to new heights.

The likes of Wing and The Chairman are flying the flag globally for Chinese food. The former is the second restaurant of French-trained chef Vicky Cheng of the highly acclaimed French-meets-Chinese Vea. The latter, helmed by owner Danny Yip and chef Kwok Keung Tung, started out as a little locavore joint loved by Cantonese-food enthusiasts, known for sourcing fresh seasonal seafood directly from fishing boats.

Stalwarts of Hong Kong's international cuisine, like Michelin three-star Amber at the Mandarin Oriental hotel, have become legends. These are joined by newer contenders such as the ultraglam Cristal Room by Anne-Sophie Pic; Ando, where Japanese kappo meets Argentinean flair; contemporary Italian Estro, led by Naples native Antimo Maria Merone; Mosu Hong Kong, by South Korean superstar Sung Anh; and Roganic, the British farm-to-table pioneers interpreting Hong Kong terroir.

Beyond the trendsetters, you can find the century-old Lin Heung Tea House and London Restaurant, the three-story behemoth amid Kowloon's Nathan Road, for that porcelain-clinking, trolley-rattling dim sum experience. And few Hong Kongers can imagine life without the breakfast sandwiches at Yue Hing and beef offal noodles at Shui Kee, both *dai pai dongs* in the Central district. This blend of old and new and an endless capacity for transformation is what makes eating and drinking here extraordinarily exciting right now.



PHOTOGRAPHY (FROM TOP); COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS HOTEL HONG KONG; COURTESY OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL, HONG KONG

GLOBAL TASTEMAKERS 2026

BEST GLOBAL CITIES FOR FOOD & DRINK

1. Hong Kong
Global flavors, reinvention, and innovation brought Hong Kong its first appearance in the top spot.
2. London
3. Tokyo
4. Mexico City
5. Bangkok
6. Lima, Peru
7. Barcelona
8. Paris
9. Copenhagen
10. Istanbul

BEST GLOBAL RESTAURANTS

1. Ikoyi
LONDON
Ikoyi's West African-inspired tasting menu captured diners' imaginations—and their votes.
2. Maido
LIMA, PERU
3. Ciel
HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM
4. Arami
LA PAZ, BOLIVIA
5. Potong
BANGKOK
6. Naar
KASAU, INDIA
7. Botánico
MEXICO CITY
8. Salumeria Roscioli
ROME
9. Lunch Lady
VANCOUVER
10. Saint Peter
SYDNEY

FROM TOP: The innovative cocktail program (as impressive as the floor-to-ceiling bar) at Argo in Hong Kong's Four Seasons hotel helped it win a spot in the top 10 Global Hotel Bars category; the city's Mandarin Oriental was also voted one of the best for its culinary offerings.



Chef Paul Carmichael carves marinated and roasted chuleta can can (a Puerto Rican pork chop) that he serves with the loin, rib, and crisp skin at Kabawa.

BEST U.S. RESTAURANT

THIS HOT SPOT IN NEW YORK CITY'S EAST VILLAGE TURNS FINE DINING INTO A JOYFUL ODE TO THE CARIBBEAN.

By Korsha Wilson

KAWA



T KABAWA, chef Paul Carmichael's joyful East Village restaurant, a chilled tamarind pod is served simply, on ice. You break it open with your hands to devour the soft, tart-sweet fruit inside.

The palate cleanser is not only a playful take on a traditional tasting-menu course—an alternative to a scoop of sorbet, say—but a Bat Signal for anyone who grew up in the Caribbean, where tamarind is a treasured part of the cuisine.

The fun and the fidelity to Caribbean culture are both integral to Kabawa. Carmichael eschews the title “chef” in favor of “master of ceremonies,” which speaks to his freewheeling approach and technique-driven, soulful cooking. “The restaurant is fun because I’m fun,” he says. The music filling the space—soca, reggae, and bachata—is what people play in their homes, at events, or driving along the coast. It’s designed to “make people wiggle in their seats,” bringing lively energy to a fine-dining experience.

That energy is evident; the dining room and kitchen staff have the playful ease of an extended family. Even during a rush, the chefs, clad in tie-dyed aprons, chat with guests at the chef’s counter at the center of the room.

Carmichael’s upbringing in the Appleby Gardens neighborhood on the western coast of Barbados informs all parts of the restaurant. “It’s about where we come from, what we’ve been through, and where we’re going,” he says.

When he moved back to New York City in 2025 following a 10-year stint in Sydney, at the helm of Momofuku Seiobo (Kabawa is also part of David Chang’s hospitality group), Carmichael says he found “no reminders of home,” aside from small take-out places or gaudy approximations of Caribbean culture. He attributes this to the relatively recent arrival of Caribbean immigrants to the city, the vast majority of whom arrived after the 1960s. “Other cuisines and other cultures, like French or Italian, have had more time to seep into the fabric of this city,” he says.

Carmichael wanted to create something that felt true to what he remembered from Barbados and his travels through the Caribbean. Although they are relative newcomers, immigrants from the region now account for nearly 27% of New York City’s foreign-born population, and the foods they brought with them, like roti, patties, and jerk, have become part of the culinary lexicon not just in New York, but across the country.

At Kabawa, Carmichael dips his brush into those influences via a three-course tasting menu exploring the many influences in Caribbean cooking. West African, Indian, European, Indigenous, and American ingredients come together to paint his vivid, bird’s-eye picture of how the region lives and eats today.

“Dog sauce,” an allium-laced hot sauce not often seen outside of the French-speaking Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, accompanies roasted breadfruit as an appetizer. Roasted plantain is paired with luxuriously soft scrambled eggs, chunks of salted cod, and caviar.

The loving, immersive, and explorative experience continues next door at Bar Kabawa, where guests order ruby red shrimp served with Haitian pikliz (pickled cabbage), short rib and conch patties, and daiquiris while pulsing beats transport them to one of the many rum bars that dot the Caribbean. Carmichael is constantly tinkering with the 19-hour playlist, adding new songs to get the vibe just right. He plays me a tune he added that morning, Machel Montano’s “Encore,” making me shimmy in my seat.

Montano’s lyrics fill the space: “Showtime in five, so let we start it,” he sings. “Last year was good, but we chasing greatness.” Carmichael smiles. “It’s my theme song for this year.”


**BEST U.S.
RESTAURANTS**

- Kabawa**
NEW YORK CITY
The top restaurant in the U.S. is a fun and joyful love letter to the Caribbean in a fine-dining format.
- Alma Fonda Fina**
DENVER
- Canje**
AUSTIN
- Dögon**
WASHINGTON, D.C.
- Emeril's**
NEW ORLEANS
- Hayato**
LOS ANGELES
- Semra**
NEW YORK CITY
- Kalaya**
PHILADELPHIA
- Kann**
PORTLAND, OREGON
- Mister Jiu's**
SAN FRANCISCO

BEST U.S. BARS

- Schmuck**
NEW YORK CITY
The country's top bar, from Barcelona bar pros, channels a cool friend's house party.
- Anvil**
HOUSTON
- Best Intentions**
CHICAGO
- Bar Next Door**
WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA
- Bar Miriam**
SEATTLE
- La Factoría**
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO
- Owls Club**
TUCSON
- Yacht Club**
DENVER
- Sweet Liberty**
MIAMI BEACH
- Platypus**
ST. LOUIS

PHOTOGRAPHY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): CLAY WILLIAMS, ADRIANNA GLAVIANO, ANDREW BEZEK, ADRIANNA GLAVIANO

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A play on Jamaican pepper shrimp with pepper oil and puree, dusted with hibiscus and Scotch bonnet; guests can enjoy both cozy dining-room seating and counter seating; a spread including the chuleta can can (a Puerto Rican pork chop); the chef's counter and bar in Kabawa's dining room.

BEST GLOBAL BAR

INSIDE THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF MILAN'S LEGENDARY BAR, HOME OF THE NEGRONI SBAGLIATO

By Caroline Hatchett

Bar Basso

IT'S AN APERITIVO-HOUR BEACON in neon: "Bar Basso" written in bright white script on a background of Campari red. Walk toward it on Via Achille Maiocchi and through the door, past ladies in heels with dogs at their feet. Prepay for a cocktail at the till, and shimmy into an opening at the zinc-topped bar. There, you'll stand shoulder to shoulder, sipping drinks and snacking on potato chips and Castelvetro olives.

Bar Basso sits nearly two miles northeast of Milan's center, where the Duomo and Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, those dueling cathedrals to God and commerce, draw tourists by the millions. But this 79-year-old drinking institution is the heart of the city's cocktail culture. The design community claims it as its own; so do writers and artists and doctors from a nearby hospital. Visit once, and you'll be convinced it belongs to you, too.

Not much has changed since Mirko Stocchetto bought the bar from Giuseppe Basso in 1967—not the pink marble floors, thick velvet curtains, crystal chandeliers, or free-pouring barmen in their crisp white shirts and red ties. Stocchetto was born in Venice and worked in his hometown's hotels through World War II, serving guests through German occupation and Allied liberation. He befriended a bartender from Venice's legendary



RIGHT: Bar Basso owner Maurizio Stocchetto keeps his father's legacy alive, pouring Negronis and a Sbagliato served in a giant goblet. BELOW: The bar's iconic neon sign is a beacon for the cocktail crowd.

Harry's Bar and followed him to Cortina d'Ampezzo, a ski resort town that attracted American jet-setters and film crews.

"Americans brought optimism, cigarettes, and a lifestyle that Italians didn't have then," says Maurizio Stocchetto, Mirko's son and the current owner of Bar Basso. "Lots of young bartenders, my father included, started to follow the money. He learned how to make cocktails for a sophisticated international clientele."

After 20 years in Cortina, Mirko moved to Milan to take over Bar Basso and brought all the polish of a big hotel to a neighborhood bar. In 1972, he toyed with classic Negroni specs, subbing sparkling wine for gin. He named the lighter, easier-drinking cocktail the Sbagliato, which translates to "wrong" or "mistake." It's notably served in a glass of great proportions, ready-made for our Instagram era and a wink to the bigger-is-better Americana that helped shape Bar Basso's identity.

Over the decades, Maurizio has cultivated regulars in the fashion and design industries. Models stop in at Bar Basso to look for agents and vice versa. Journalists hunker down at tables to interview furniture makers and gallerists. Ordinary Milanese fall in love while pressed together at the bar. Students sit for hours at sidewalk tables. "We try to embrace as many people as possible," says Maurizio. "Otherwise, it becomes a little dull."



PHOTOGRAPHY (FROM LEFT): ANDREA ZANI FOR BAR BASSO, ALESSANDRO GRASSANI/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

BEST GLOBAL BARS

1. **Bar Basso**
MILAN
The world's top spot is an enduring Italian cocktail bar that has remained relevant for almost 80 years.
2. **Bar Orchard**
TOKYO
3. **Bramble Bar**
EDINBURGH
4. **Bar Bon Funk**
SINGAPORE
5. **Alfie's Soho**
LONDON
6. **Bar Pompette**
TORONTO
7. **Bar Vitrine**
COPENHAGEN
8. **Jerry Thomas Bar Room**
ROME
9. **Bar Leone**
HONG KONG
10. **Bar Trigona**
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

BEST GLOBAL HOTEL BARS

1. **Claridge's Bar, Claridge's**
LONDON
This landmark Art Deco institution for martinis, fries, Champagne, and caviar is in the heart of London's Mayfair.
2. **The Aubrey, Mandarin Oriental**
HONG KONG
3. **The Bar, Casa Gangotena**
QUITO, ECUADOR
4. **The Collins Club, The Leinster**
DUBLIN
5. **BKK Social Club, Four Seasons**
BANGKOK
6. **Bar Timeo, Grand Hotel Timeo**
TAORMINA, ITALY
7. **Elephant Bar, Raffles Hotel Le Royal**
PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA
8. **Argo, Four Seasons**
HONG KONG
9. **Dukes Bar, Dukes Hotel**
LONDON
10. **The Lounge, Aman**
TOKYO



Sakura on board Explora Journeys' ships channels the aesthetic of a Kyoto tea room and serves contemporary Pan-Asian dishes using high-end ingredients.

BEST CULINARY Cruises

WHEN IT COMES TO CULINARY OFFERINGS, THESE 10 BRANDS STAND ABOVE THE REST.

By Janice Wald Henderson

MAYBE YOU'RE A CRUISER who wants a glass of Champagne in your hand the second you step aboard the ship. Or maybe you're the person who sails for the menus that reflect each new port of call and offer a taste of place. Perhaps you're on board for the multicourse meals paired with wines chosen by sommeliers who step out to share every nerdy detail about the wines' terroir. Whatever the case, there's good news for cruising in 2026: You don't have to choose just one of these culinary perks—our top cruise lines check all the boxes, offering memorable epicurean experiences worth booking a berth for.

1. EXPLORA JOURNEYS

Just five years old, Explora Journeys sailed to the top of our 2026 list thanks to a steady focus on culinary excellence across its nine dining experiences. Travelers who like to get closer to the action can sign up at the Chef's Kitchen for cooking classes that end with a shared meal. (explorajourneys.com)

2. THE RITZ-CARLTON YACHT COLLECTION

The RCYC embraces food-forward luxury across its three ships with private reserve wine lists, bespoke dining, and thoughtful collaborations with chefs like Sven Elverfeld of the Michelin

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF EXPLORA JOURNEYS

three-star Aqua, 2002 F&W Best New Chef Fabio Trabocchi, and the legendary Michael Mina. (ritzcarltonyachtcollection.com)

3. AQUA EXPEDITIONS

This small luxury expedition line considers great food as integral to its vessels as its 1-to-1 crew-to-guest ratio. Creative, sustainable dining curated by regional chefs comes to life on *Aqua Blu* in East Indonesia, where menus trace the spice trade route, while on the *Aria Amazon* in Peru, plates are created with 70% local Amazonian ingredients. (aqualexpeditions.com)

4. SILVERSEA

Silversea is rightly known for its S.A.L.T. (Sea and Land Taste) program, built around itinerary-driven food and wine experiences that connect what happens on board with what happens ashore through a restaurant, a bar, culinary classes, and excursions that shift with each regional route. (silversea.com)

5. CRYSTAL

Since its relaunch, Crystal has leaned into high-profile culinary partnerships. At Nobu Matsuhisa's Umi Uma, the kitchen executes the celebrated chef's exacting style. At Osteria d'Ovidio, brothers Massimiliano and Raffaele Alajmo make their mark with high-end Italian, while Beefbar, from restaurateur Riccardo Giraudi, turns out exceptional steak. (crystalcruises.com)

6. OCEANIA CRUISES

Oceania has always positioned itself for food devotees, and the line recently raised the bar with their new Allura Class. Every dining venue on the ships *Vista* and *Allura* received a glow-up. New wine-pairing lunches highlight biodynamic and sustainable labels, and a deep menu of shore excursions offers opportunities for culinary immersion. (oceaniacruises.com)

7. REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES

Seven showstopper restaurants rule Regent's six opulent ships, while Epicurean Explorer Tours take cruisers to local markets, wine tastings, and extravagant dinners ashore prepared by noted chefs. A seventh ship, *Seven Seas Prestige*, debuts in December with a new Mediterranean restaurant, Azure. (rssc.com)

8. HX EXPEDITIONS

HX emphasizes itinerary-driven flavors on board and ashore, with culinary excursions that can be wonderfully uncommon: from sampling moonshine in the Galápagos to tasting Arctic char caviar in Norway. (travelhx.com)

9. PONANT

With menus guided by iconic chef Alain Ducasse and his culinary council, the line's Gallic dishes come with plenty of panache. On luxury icebreaker *Le Commandant Charcot*, passengers can dine at Le Nuna, Ducasse's only fine-dining restaurant at sea. (us.ponant.com)

10. CELEBRITY CRUISES

Shoreside-inspired dining experiences abound on board the new *Celebrity Xcel*, an unusual focus for an upper premium ship of this size. All venues highlight destination flavors, while at Chef's Studio, hands-on culinary classes invite cruisers to learn recipes inspired by the ship's itinerary. (celebritycruises.com)

GLOBAL ADVISORY BOARD MEET OUR 25 FOOD, DRINK, AND TRAVEL EXPERTS.

Brandon Berkson
Author, travel writer, and CEO of Hotels Above Par

Mari Campos
Award-winning São Paulo-based travel writer and hospitality consultant

Nina Caplan
Wine and travel writer based in London and Burgundy, France

Jay Cheshes
Food, travel, and culture writer with bylines in *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and *The Wall Street Journal*

Dan Q. Dao
Vietnam-based culture and travel writer and editor in chief of *Esquire Vietnam*

Federico De Cesare Viola
Rome-based writer, lecturer, and editor in chief of *Food & Wine Italia* and *Travel + Leisure Italia*

Chris Dong
Travel writer and editor contributing to *Food & Wine*, *Travel + Leisure*, *The Washington Post*, and more

Hillary Eaton
Los Angeles-based food and travel writer and communications strategist with bylines in *Food & Wine*, *Eater*, and *Los Angeles Times*

Adam Erace
Food and travel writer, critic, and cookbook author with bylines in *Food & Wine*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *The Wall Street Journal*

Yasmin Fahr
U.S.- and Menorca-based food writer, recipe developer, and cookbook author

Nicholas Gill
Food writer and cookbook author who splits his time between New York and Lima, Peru

Anthony Giglio
Longtime *Food & Wine* contributor, wine expert, educator, sommelier, and author

Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon
Caribbean travel expert, TV host, and contributor to *Food & Wine*, *Travel + Leisure*, and more

Sarah Khan
Award-winning freelance travel writer who has reported from seven continents for *The New York Times*, *Food & Wine*, and more

Stacey Leasca
Lisbon-based journalist, PhD candidate, and contributing travel editor to *Food & Wine*

Travis Levius
Travel journalist, content creator, and hospitality consultant with bylines in CNN Travel, Lonely Planet, and *Travel + Leisure*

Jen Murphy
Travel writer, academic, and editor contributing to *Food & Wine*, *Travel + Leisure*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and more

Lane Nieset
Paris-based writer covering travel, wine, and food for *Food & Wine*, *Vogue*, and *Travel + Leisure*

David Prior
Longtime travel writer and cofounder and CEO of Prior, an experiential travel company

Amy Rosen
Toronto-based award-winning journalist, food writer, and restaurant critic with bylines in *enRoute*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *Food & Wine*

Chris Schalkx
Bangkok- and Taiwan-based travel writer and photographer with bylines in *The New York Times*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *Food & Wine*

Regan Stephens
Travel writer with bylines in *Philadelphia* magazine, *The New York Times*, and *Food & Wine*

Veronica Stoddart
Longtime travel editor and writer formerly of *USA Today* who has visited over 100 countries

Lee Tulloch
Award-winning Australian fiction writer, columnist, and longtime luxury travel journalist

Anya von Bremzen
Cookbook author and James Beard Award-winning food and travel writer based in Istanbul and New York City

METHODOLOGY

F&W polled over 400 chefs, travel experts, food and travel writers, and wine pros from across the globe for their top culinary travel experiences. We then turned the results over to our Global Advisory Board, who ranked the top nominees in each category. For all winners, visit foodandwine.com/globaltastemakers.