

8 of the best restaurants in New Orleans

Carly Fisher, CNN

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Family Meal: Four chefs, one extraordinary city

17:34 - Source: [CNN](#)

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(CNN) — New Orleans is a city that shares a storied multigenerational love of food, family and community that transcends spur-of-the-moment trends.

Blending Creole and Cajun traditions with contemporary French, Italian, Caribbean and soul food, the Crescent City is a true melting pot.



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It's also the birthplace of the muffaletta, the po'boy, gumbo, jambalaya and étouffée.

A place where tourists can be found waiting in lines for beignets at all hours. And where Mondays are reserved for red beans and rice, and the simple bell pepper, onion and celery are upheld as the Holy Trinity of all delicious things.

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The come-as-you-are attitude is a rare, charming specialty of this coastal byway that continues to romance travelers and lure new residents every day.

Four chefs – Leah Chase, Emeril Lagasse, Donald Link and Nina Compton – sat down in 2018 for an intimate CNN family meal to talk about their deep ties to New Orleans and its tight-knit culinary community. (Watch their chat in the video above. Leah Chase died in June 2019, but her family restaurant and its traditions carry on).

It would be impossible to take in everything the city has to offer in one visit, but for those looking to dig into a plate of New Orleans' best, start with these restaurants from Chase, Lagasse, Link and Compton when you [travel](#) here:

Dooky Chase's Restaurant

What began as a humble sandwich and lottery corner shop transformed into the local fixture of organization for the civil rights movement.

After owners Leah Chase and her husband, Dooky, took over his father's Treme storefront, Dooky Chase's became one of the first African-American owned fine dining restaurants in America.

It was among the few meeting places that allowed mixed races during the Jim Crow era, serving as a longtime institution for social justice reform.

Beyond the legacy that has drawn visits from Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama and a long list of high-level celebrities, this is where you'll find some of the best Creole food in NOLA, earning Leah Chase the everlasting moniker "Queen of Creole Cuisine."

Dooky Chase's Restaurant, 2301 Orleans Avenue, New Orleans 70119; +1 504 821 0600



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This 95-year-old chef fed Freedom Riders fried chicken (2018)

01:19 - Source: [CNN](#)

Emeril's New Orleans

For first timers to New Orleans, a stop at the eponymous flagship location of the father of "New New Orleans" cuisine is a must.

You won't find "Mr. Bam" working in the kitchen (give a wave to chef de cuisine Douglas Braselman), but the boundary-pushing flavors that define famed restaurateur Emeril Lagasse's cooking style are always on the menu.

Try dishes such as andouille-crusted Gulf drum with local vegetables or crawfish-stuffed top neck clams and top your meal off with Emeril's banana cream pie.

Can't make it to the Big Easy? Lagasse has seven restaurants outside of New Orleans in Las Vegas; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; and Miramar Beach, Florida.

Emeril's New Orleans, 800 Tchoupitoulas St., New Orleans 70130; +1 504 528 9393

Herbsaint

Chef-owner Donald Link's rustic French-Southern flagship concept is still going strong since its opening in 2000.

Seasonally driven with the freshest locally sourced ingredients, Herbsaint was among the pioneers of NOLA's modern farm-to-table movement.

Expect elegant catch-of-the-day dishes with a decidedly Cajun-Creole spin, such as Muscovy duck leg confit with dirty rice and citrus gastrique or Louisiana jumbo shrimp with braised fennel, Yukon Gold potato and rouille.

Possess a demanding sweet tooth? How does coconut custard pie with buttermilk chantilly and orange caramel sound?

Herbsaint, 701 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans 70130; +1 504 524 4114

Compère Lapin

Not all local traditions start at the source. Born and raised between St. Lucia and London, chef Nina Compton is a relatively recent New Orleans transplant.

Yet the former "Top Chef" contestant is shaking things up as one of the most exciting faces in the New Orleans food scene.

Drawing from her Caribbean roots and fine dining background, she seamlessly merges tropical flavors with classic Creole for an entirely inventive category that stands on its own and earned her the 2018 James Beard Award for best chef in the South.

Compère Lapin, 535 Tchoupitoulas, New Orleans 70130; +1 504 599 2119



Cochon

Until Chef Paul Prudhomme elevated and popularized the cuisine in the 1970s, Cajun foods were considered country cooking.

As a native of western Louisiana's Cajun Country, chef-owner Donald Link continues to push the conversation about the bounty of the bayou using white tablecloth techniques for dishes such as fried alligator with chili garlic mayonnaise, pork belly confit with sweet apple relish, and catfish courtbouillon. And oh the mac 'n' cheese!

For something a little more casual, stop into Link's sister spot, [Cochon Butcher](#): a sandwich and butchery featuring a killer muffaletta that will send you straight into a food coma.

[Cochon](#), 930 Tchoupitoulas, New Orleans 70130; +1 504 588 2123

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Emeril's Delmonico

Opened in 1999, celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse's Creole steakhouse has a long and layered legacy as it's the restoration of a century-old establishment dating back to 1895.

A classic fine dining steakhouse with local leanings, you can order artisan cheeses, turtle soup, collard greens, filet mignon, quail and bourbon pecan pie all under one roof.

The restaurant is so popular that Lagasse expanded the concept to Las Vegas, plus a similar chophouse in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

[Emeril's Delmonico](#), 1300 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans 70130; +1 504 525 4937

Pêche Seafood Restaurant

NOLA is all about the seafood, and here you'll find some of the freshest in town.

Another instant hit from The Link Group restaurant empire, chef Ryan Prewitt culls the bounty of local seafood and transforms it into sophisticated Southern-inspired dishes, rightfully earning him a James Beard Foundation Award for best chef in the South in 2014.

[Pêche](#), 800 Magazine St., New Orleans 70130; +1 504 522 1744

Meril

Named after Emeril Lagasse's daughter, Meril is the latest addition to his arsenal of concepts.

Chef de cuisine Darren Chabert serves up an interesting mix of dishes merging local and international flavors such as

...the cuisine. Meril's chef served up an interesting mix of dishes merging local and international flavors such as crispy crab-boiled turkey necks, Tuscan lettuce mix salad, Brazilian-style Gulf shrimp, char-grilled Korean short ribs, curried cauliflower and banana pudding ice cream cake.

Meril, 424 Girod St., New Orleans 70130, +1 504 526 3745

Carly Fisher is an award-winning journalist and author whose work has been featured in publications like GQ, CNN, Fodors Travel, Bon Appetit, Food & Wine, Brides, Saveur, Edible and NBC.

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