

Global Meals of a Lifetime

Although it's impossible to pinpoint the world's 'best' meals, this global round-up brings you destination dining that best evokes time and place. Words by Karyn Noble.

✦ karynnoble.com; ✕ @karyn_noble

A COUNTRY'S FOOD is with you long after you've unpacked from your trip. It's reverentially filed away into your sensory memory bank. Those first-time tastes, the trepidation of trying, curiosity about the correct culinary technique, ordering in a different tongue... it's not just THAT dish but also everything else that came with it: the setting, the sounds, the smells, the people, the connections. Here's a list to take you and your taste buds places, with a little help from some celebrity chefs.

Comfort Food

Lobster soup from Heimahumar at Jökulsárlón, Iceland

Listen to the chink and splash of icebergs calving while your hands are warmed by local lobster soup from Heimahumar food truck, parked at this famous blue glacier lake: a picturesque (but chilly) natural wonder, with seals bobbing about the drifting icebergs.

Rigatoni alla carbonara, Santo Palato, Rome, Italy

A life-changing bowl of pasta is the calling card of many Italian restaurants, but the most famous dish in Rome is this gooey carbonara from chef Sarah Cicolini, made with five egg yolks, guanciale and pecorino.

Bisque of wild Faroe langoustines, Barents, Riga, Latvia

Often made with langoustines fresh off the boat from the Faroe Islands, this bisque is best enjoyed at the shared bench overlooking the kitchen, where chef Dzintars Kristovskis rules supreme.



Arzak, San Sebastián

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Fine-Dining Classics

Chaud-froid d'oeuf (hot-cold egg), L'Arpège, Paris, France

This signature creation from three-Michelin-starred chef Alain Passard has spawned many imitations. It's a cunningly concocted blend of warm, poached runny egg yolk, maple syrup, four-spice, sherry vinegar-infused whipped cream and chives.

Tasting menu at Arzak, San Sebastián, Spain

There's a reason the late, great Anthony Bourdain visited this Basque bastion of culinary delight three times. The set menu of impeccable laboratory-with-love creations (the Red Space Egg caused much fuss for years and is now the Marbled Egg under fourth-generation chef Elena Arzak's watch) is constantly evolving.

'Oysters and Pearls', French Laundry, Yountville, California

Chef Thomas Keller's signature dish of two butter-poached oysters served with a sabayon of tapioca pearls and white sturgeon caviar is among many delectable offerings at the three-Michelin-starred French Laundry, if you're lucky enough to score a reservation at this stone farmhouse in the Napa Valley.

Tasting menu at Cozinha das Flores, Porto, Portugal

Acclaimed chef Nuno Mendes' new outlet offers the best of Portugal on the dining table with his usual creative flair, from the turnip *natas* (a riff on the country's addictive *pastel de nata*) to the 'milk' dessert inspired by his father's Alentejo dairy farm.

Tasting menu at Glenturret Lalique, Crieff, Scotland

From the crispy glazed, sweet-crustured barley and sourdough loaf to the 'Choctimus Prime' (aka the most excitement you'll ever have with a box of petit fours), the world's first Michelin-starred restaurant located within a distillery does not disappoint. Chef Mark Donald's clever menu thrives on wordplay and wild inventions.

Destination Dining/Time Travel

Sushi Sugita, Tokyo, Japan and Mil, Peru

'I have just been asked to be a part of a near-space expedition in 2025 to create an immersive dining experience inside a space capsule rising to the stratosphere 30km above Earth. If we are sticking to food on Earth, I would recommend Japan or Peru for a culinary pilgrimage. I would especially recommend going to Sushi Sugita in Tokyo and Mil in the Andean mountains.'

Rasmus Munk, chef & co-owner Alchemist, Copenhagen, Denmark

Time-travel to El Bulli, Roses, Spain

'It could be via a time machine to around 2000 or even a bit earlier, to when El Bulli was rearranging everyone's view of what professional cooking was. Perhaps Ferran and Albert Adrià could just present ideas, dishes and techniques not yet seen by the world cooked by them to a small group of us at the beach on the Costa Brava in Roses, Catalonia.'

Dan Hunter, chef-owner of three-hatted (Australia's equivalent to Michelin stars) Brae restaurant in Birregurra, Victoria, Australia

Simply Memorable

Slow-cooked lobster, L'Oustau de Baumanière, Baux-de-Provence, France

'I dream of returning to L'Oustau de Baumanière in Baux-de-Provence. Chef Glenn Viel is an absolute genius and his menus are always creative beyond compare. I once had the luxury to have Glenn cook a dish for me on the pass; it was a dish of lobster that he was experimenting with and I was the lucky guinea pig. The lobster was slow cooked in hot clam and mussel shells covered with seaweed, accompanied with a little dressing made from the coral and



El Bulli, Roses

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natural juices. That dish made it on the menu and will forever be engraved in my mind and taste buds.'

Michel Roux, English-French chef, author, television presenter and former owner of two-Michelin-starred Le Gavroche in London

**Pastrami on rye bread,
Katz's Delicatessen, New York City, US**

The hottest restaurant in NYC can turn on a dime, as they say, so why not head to Manhattan's Lower East Side to its oldest deli, which is famous for its mile-high sandwiches and for being the location for 'that' scene in 1980s film *When Harry Met Sally* (yes, there's a sign pointing out the booth where they 'hope you had what she had'). More importantly, the pastrami here is legendary.

**Fish tacos, Barracuda Cantina,
Todos Santos, Mexico**

This is *the* place for classic beachside Baja-style fish tacos: firm white fish fresh from the Pacific Coast, beer-battered and deep fried then served in warm corn tortillas



Katz's Delicatessen, New York City

THOMAS BLAND/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO ©

topped with coleslaw, *pico de gallo*, guacamole, habanero salsa and fresh lime.

**Gan mian, Hill Street Tai Hwa
Pork Noodle, Singapore**

Are Michelin-starred pork noodles worth hours in a queue at a hawker stall? Quite frankly, yes. Noodles with minced pork, pork dumplings, pork liver, pork meatballs and crispy fish for maximum textural contrast.

**Premium steak, Cabaña Las Lilas,
Buenos Aires, Argentina**

This steakhouse will give you paralysis of choice in terms of cut of meat and a range of sides, but relax with a view over the Río Dique with Malbec and know you're in safe hands.

**Sea urchin salad, Psaros,
Almyrida, Crete, Greece**

'A stunning sea urchin salad eaten with olive oil and lemon in Crete at Psaros, owned by a friend of mine. For me, memorable meals are based on the produce almost more than the cooking. Localized fresh food, cooked simply in their native environment is what does it for me.'

Sophie Michell, chef and owner of The Local, Barbados

Chef Nostalgia

**Thali, Verma Dhaba,
Himachal Pradesh, India**

'My feast of choice would be the legendary thali comprising *khadi*, a tantalizing yoghurt-based curry; hearty *rajma* (kidney beans); soul-soothing dal; and the crispy tandoori roti accompanied with pickle, finely chopped slices of onions and spicy chilli.'

Romy Gill, MBE, chef, food writer, author, broadcaster

Pitu Caleyá stew, Arriondas, Asturias, Spain

‘My “meal of a lifetime” would undoubtedly be the Pitu Caleyá stew prepared by my mother. This stew embodies the very essence of Asturian cuisine that she taught my sister Esther and me. If I had to choose, I would eat it in Arriondas, my hometown in Asturias.’

Nacho Manzano, chef at two-Michelin-starred Casa Marcial in Arriondas and one-Michelin-starred Restaurant La Salgar in Gijón, Spain



Turkish delight

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Ekuru, Ikire, Western Nigeria

‘In the rolling hills of Ikire, western Nigeria, I’d be eating *ekuru* (a savoury bean cake made with wild watermelon seeds) with my great-uncle, the rascal of my family. Our family homestead has been there for centuries and I’d feel my heritage running through my veins.’

Adejoké (Joké) Bakare, founder and head chef of Chishuru, a Michelin-starred West African restaurant concept in Fitzrovia, London

Sweet Treats

Rose Turkish delight, Sufra, Amman, Jordan

Amman’s best restaurant celebrates clay-pot cooking with Bedouin and Levantine dishes, but the best bit is lingering over dessert when the pretty pink platter of pistachio-topped rose Turkish delight arrives with biscuits. Slip a wedge between two biscuits for a delightful sandwich paired with a strong, bitter Turkish coffee roasted with cardamom as the mesmerizing call to prayer echoes in the distance.

Mrs Allen’s Carrageen Moss Pudding, Ballymaloe House Hotel, Cork, Ireland

The dessert trolley at the famous Ballymaloe House has been a tradition since 1964. Spawning various creations from the hotel’s organic farm and generating its own book (*Ballymaloe Desserts*), the trolley will always carry Carrageen Moss Pudding from Darina Allen, the queen of foraging and chef and founder of the Ballymaloe Cook-

ery School. Made with seaweed-set milk, it’s a must-try.

A Bit Out There

Black ant lamington, Attica, Melbourne, Australia

One of the more out-there creations on chef Ben Shewry’s three-hour multi-course extravaganza looks everything like an Australian lamington (a square of chocolate-coated sponge cake sprinkled with desiccated coconut) but reveals itself as a rainforest lychee sorbet and pepperry milk sorbet rolled in spicy black ants.

Immersive Moments

Chicken pho at Ho Chi Minh Cooking Class, Cu Chi, Vietnam

Learn to make simple Vietnamese dishes, but particularly the classic pho, at this 100% organic farm and cookery school established by chef Luong Viet Tan just outside Ho Chi Minh City.

Kitchen Party, Badrutt’s Palace Hotel, St Moritz Gourmet Festival, Switzerland

At one of the hottest food festivals in one of the coolest spa-resort towns in the Swiss Alps for more than 30 years, tickets to the Kitchen Party at Badrutt’s Palace Hotel always sell out. All the resort chefs (along with international Michelin-starred guest chefs) prepare the ultimate smorgasbord of treats, as 250 guests sashay around the pass to live music.