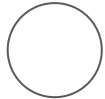


These Restaurants Are Serving Some of the U.S.'s Best Seafood—And They're Nowhere Near the Coast

By [Mary Tomlinson](#) | March 22, 2018



GREG RANNELLS

Not even hundreds of miles between them and the shore can keep these restaurants from cooking with the freshest catch. Thanks to crazy-fast shipping, a dedication to seasonality, and an astounding array of coastal culinary influences, these hot spots are putting exceptional seafood on the map, no matter their location.

1 of 10

ANDREW THOMAS LEE

Henrietta Red

Nashville, Tennessee

Don't let the marbled bar, whitewashed brick, and Mexican tile fool you—[this Germantown restaurant](#) offers so much more than a pretty façade. Chef Julia Sullivan stocks the raw bar 12-deep with oysters sourced from small family farms, and expertly infuses dishes with French and Middle Eastern influences, such as the Gulf Red Snapper with roasted turnips and a saffron aioli. An appetizer must for the table is the ever-popular Poppy's Caviar: a heaping portion of Tennessee paddlefish caviar burrowed into a swirl of sour cream drizzled with scallion vinaigrette.

ADVERTISEMENT

2 of 10

CHRISSY REED

Seabear Oyster Bar

Athens, Georgia

Located in a former Coca-Cola bottling plant—replete with an oyster-shell chandelier and bespoke water stand crafted from a piece of singer Cyprus (pulled from the marshes of coastal Georgia)—[Seabear](#) is an oyster hub that meshes Southern and Asian influences, like in their crispy scallion pancake dolloped with rock crab, sesame vinaigrette, and spicy mayo. Check out the chalkboard for the day's oysters, a list of six that's constantly changing. (Since opening in 2014, they've sourced over 300 varieties.) Watch their [Instagram](#) for the next "Late Night Pop," a series where Seabear kitchen talent replaces the normal menu with their own signature dishes, such as an octopus terrine with smoked oyster aioli and cured salmon fish n' chips.

3 of 10

COURTESY OF MMH

Perla's

Austin, Texas

For some of Austin's best people-watching, head to this [South Congress perch](#) that has a massive year round-patio, beach chairs, and exceptional line-caught seafood. Begin with a pozole verde brimming with bay scallops, then move on to the crispy Texas Gulf snapper for a lemony spinach, and enjoy sofrito topped masterpieces. While sitting

snapper for a lemony spinach- and spicy tomato-topped masterpiece. While sitting beneath the light-strung oak tree at the center of the patio, sip on a prickly pear frozen margarita or a chilled glass of rosé from the private label of Perla's master sommelier. After all, no patio meal is complete without a drink in hand.

ADVERTISEMENT

4 of 10

FRONT BURNER

The Keeper

Plano, Texas

Wild-caught and sustainable is the name of the game at [The Keeper](#). Think blackened redfish over orzo from the family-run Copper Shoals aquaculture operation in Texas and chili-glazed King Crab legs sourced from the world's only sustainable Red King Crab fishery in Dutch Harbor, Alaska. Beneath the botanical-topped bar, tropical classics such as the Painkiller, Singapore Sling, and Mai Tai are mixed with house-blended rums and served in a formidable array of Tiki glassware. If you snag a table on the right side of the restaurant, be sure to tip a hat to the pop art portraits of Steve Zissou, Captain Kirk, and Captain Quint—fiction's greatest sea captains.

5 of 10

ANDREW THOMAS LEE

The Optimist

Atlanta, Georgia

Sure, you can order a "plateaux" of oysters, king crab, and caviar, but with a three-hole mini golf course just outside, it's hard to feel anything but laidback at [The Optimist](#). Go all-out with duck fat poached swordfish or the "Whole GA" Shrimp a la Plancha, a "messy but worth it" platter of whole Gulf shrimp smothered in chili butter served over a hunk of

but worth it. Platter of whole Gulf shrimp smothered in chili butter served over a hunk of sourdough. Or just camp out at the Oyster Bar right off the main dining room and enjoy Happy Hour's \$12 Baker's Dozen of oysters and \$20 pitchers of Fish House Punch. With this spread, it's hard to be anything but an optimist.

6 of 10

MARC PISCOTTY

Blue Island Oyster Bar

Denver, Colorado

New England roots come to landlocked Colorado by way of Blue Island Oyster Bar, the western outpost of the renowned Long Island shellfish farm of the same name. Spot the farm on the antique-style map of the Great South Bay lining the wall to see the home of the Blue Island No. 9 and Navy Point oysters sitting just over at the shucking station. To honor his New England upbringing, owner Sean Huggard serves the same bacon-heavy clam chowder he's made for 20 years, and "hires as many Patriots fans" as he can. The recently added Chokehold cocktail—an amalgam of English gin, ruby red grapefruit juice, and Italian liquor made from artichokes—boasts a delicately vegetal flavor just right for slurping East Coast oysters.

ADVERTISEMENT

7 of 10

LYNNE HARTY

The Lobster Trap

Asheville, North Carolina

What started from founder Amy Beard having her friend, a Maine lobsterman, fly down fresh catch thrice weekly has evolved into Western North Carolina's best seafood

fresh catch times weekly has evolved into Western North Carolina's best seafood restaurant winner for the last 13 years. The out-of-town crustacean plays a starring role in creamy lobster carbonara and a whole grilled version with charred corn, potatoes, and comeback sauce. When throwing back a few oysters—we recommend the briny yet balanced Island Creek bivalves from Duxbury, Massachusetts—try pairing with the Oyster House Brewing Company's signature stout brewed with five pounds of oysters. The local company got its start brewing at The Lobster Trap, and now the creamy stout is *the* preferred house beer at its former digs.

8 of 10

KYO H. NAM

Sea Level NC

Charlotte, North Carolina

From a briny house oyster farmed exclusively in Sea Level, North Carolina to black sturgeon caviar sourced from local Marshallberg Farms, this Charlotte hot spot is dedicated to showcasing the best of Carolina seafood. A daily rotating menu of line-caught fish—snapper, swordfish, flounder, to name a few—play the starring role in Southern-influenced dishes, such as fried North Carolina catfish with stone ground grits and a house pickled chow chow. Catfish also gets the pastramied treatment in their hit catfish Reuben, blackened and served with a strata of Gruyere, slaw, and remoulade.

9 of 10

801 FISH STL

801 Fish

St. Louis, Missouri

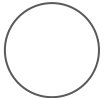
Tucked in the upscale Clayton neighborhood at the foot of the Ritz-Carlton, 801 Fish is upscale seafood dining at its finest. The blend of Pacific and Atlantic culinary traditions from chefs Michael Sullivan (a New Hampshire native) and Jeff Marsh (who hails from

Kauai) culminates in mash-ups like the lobster fried rice and a miso-glazed Chilean sea bass pan-roasted with fresh kimchi. But easily the most show-stopping dish comes in the guise of a roasted Mediterranean Branzino served guerdion-style with the mushroom- and potato-topped fillets carved tableside.

ADVERTISEMENT

10 of 10

GREG RANNELLS



Peacemaker Lobster & Crab Co.

St. Louis, Missouri

The sophomore restaurant from Kevin Nashan, a recent James Beard Award winner, celebrates chef-driven takes on Acadian and Louisiana classics. Seafood boils are generously loaded with potatoes, Brussels sprouts, and Andouille, while po'boys (in flavors such as buffalo crawfish) are served on soft baguettes from local Companion Bakery. Even the sides get in on the fun: Brussels sprouts are sprinkled with the shavings of dehydrated oysters, and a lobster Frito pie combines lobster chili, fried pork rinds, and “Frito” seasoning. Wash down your seafood feast with the Peacemaker Belgian White, a collaboration with local 4 Hands Brewing Company.

Share the Gallery