

# YAHOO! SHINE

## Top Underestimated Food Cities

By [The Daily Meal](#) | [Shine Food](#) – Fri, Jun 7, 2013 11:41 AM EDT

These cities will surprise your taste buds and travel itinerary. THE DAILY MEAL



Food Network star Paula Deen's landmark restaurant, The Lady & Sons

We all know where to find good food in this country, with culinary hot spots continuously popping up in cities like [New York City](#), Los Angeles, [New Orleans](#), and Chicago; the bar is set high for good eats. But what about the cities and towns in between the big time culinary hubs?

If you love quaint small towns, tropical islands, student-run establishments, or are just looking to indulge your palate while in town on business, there is plenty of good food to be found in places where you'd least expect it.

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The places on this list represent the underdogs of America's culinary scene, each bringing something special to the table, be it local art for ambiance, farm-to-table fare, Neapolitan pizza, or Southern staples served with historic charm. We've ranked our choices based on critical

acclaim as well as the town's number of restaurants per capita. We've also highlighted at least one restaurant in each spot that showcases the best of the town's culinary offerings.

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Whether you find yourself traveling for business, for pleasure, or just happen to be passing through, these cities are sure to surprise you both for their food and their local attractions.

**Gualala, Calif.**

You've probably never heard of the small town of Gualala, but it is truly one of California's best-kept secrets. Gualala is located in Northern California's Mendocino County, north of The Sea Ranch on the Pacific coast at the mouth of the Gualala River. While the whales linger for lunch during their yearly migrations, food lovers should visit Surf Market, where owner Steve May's passion for sustainable fish is only matched by his enthusiasm for sailing. Buy the cedar planked verlasso salmon; chef Rich Fesler seasons it with lemon and rosemary and grills it to pure perfection.

Stay at the Sea Ranch Lodge or the rustic cabins at St. Orres, where you can dine on California cuisine like garlic flan with locally foraged black chanterelles or rack of venison with wild huckleberries.

### **Savannah, Ga.**

Savannah, Ga. has a charm that extends from the plates into the streets, and anyone who has seen the movie *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* won't be disappointed when visiting the real setting. Take a walk through the four open squares laid out in 1769 and originally intended to provide colonists with space for military exercises, then make your way over to The Lady and Sons. [Food Network](#) star Paula Deen's landmark restaurant, The Lady & Sons, began back in June 1989, when Deen started The Bag Lady out of her home, and since then it has grown into a world-renowned restaurant and full-service catering venue. No one does fried green tomatoes like the South, and Deen's cornmeal-crust and fried version is unbelievable.

### **Santa Fe, N.M.**

If you're an art lover, you won't want to miss a trip to [Georgia O'Keeffe's](#) home in Abiquiu, N.M. Now owned by the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, her Abiquiu home is open for tours to the public daily. Try to take a tour on a Thursday; you'll get the chance to be guided by the Historic Properties manager, who spent more than 10 years working with O'Keeffe. You'll get insights into her daily life unlike any other.

Before you embark on the journey to Abiquiu, though, make a food fueling stop at the famous Coyote Café. The restaurant was founded by Mark Miller; the chef and iconic restaurateur who brought Southwestern cuisine to the forefront. You cannot go wrong ordering on this menu, with a house margarita in hand, but don't miss the chance to order the tamales. Whether you order a smoked duck, mushroom, or a more conventional chicken green chile, you will think you are in heaven.

### **Hyde Park, N.Y.**

Just a short train ride from New York City, Hyde Park is a beautiful, quaint town dotted with interesting sites like the home of [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#)

and the CIA - no, not that CIA, the main campus of the Culinary Institute of America. If you love food, you cannot miss American Bounty Restaurant. This restaurant, run by CIA students, features mouthwatering, traditional American foods made with only the best local ingredients. Make sure to try the Hudson Valley Moulard duck breast with creamy sweet potatoes; it will leave you craving more. If you're in the mood for something sweet, make sure you stop at another CIA favorite, the Apple Pie Bakery Café, to try the apple pie; it is, after all, the reason the bakery exists.

## **Reno, Nevada**

Tucked away near the Truckee River is an unexpected culinary hot spot. Yes, believe it or not, a renowned, award-winning chef calls "The Biggest Little City in the World" home. Mark Estee and his neighborhood restaurant Campo have taken the town by storm. Campo is a place where locals mix and mingle while feasting on dishes, like house-made Napoletana pizzas, pastas, and salumi. For some of the best bites in the city, try their kale salad or caramel budino for dessert. And we're not the only ones singing this local spot's praises; Campo was named one of the Best New Restaurants of 2012 by Esquire magazine. Before Campo, Estee started a casual burger joint, Burger Me, in nearby Truckee, Calif., which then expanded to Reno, and recently launched a food truck. Burger Me turns the American staple into an art form without pretension or complication, simply by working with fresh, natural ingredients. The burgers start with local, all-natural ground chuck, and are finished however the customer likes it (if you're feeling ambitious, try the Train Wreck, a burger topped with an onion ring, chili, Cheddar, and a fried egg). For another delicious food truck bite, stop by GourMelt, from grilled cheese goddesses Jessie Watnes and Haley Wood. We like The Bumble Brie (sliced green apples, ham, honey, and melted Brie on cinnamon-apple bread).

And of course, no trip to Reno would be complete without popping into one of the city's many casinos for a shot of tequila. Hussong's Cantina-Taqueria recently opened in the Silver Legacy and boasts authentic, fresh Baja street fare. Quench your thirst by trying the original margarita or spice things up with the El Pepino variation (made with muddled jalapeños).

To round out your trip to Reno, be sure to snap a picture under the famous arch and cruise by the National Automobile Museum, featuring more than 220 antique, vintage, classic, and special interest cars. And don't miss the 45-minute drive to Lake Tahoe to hit the slopes or take a dip in the lake. Reno as a food lover's destination - who knew?

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- **Jennifer Bushman**, [The Daily Meal](#)