

Boston
**BEST OF
BOSTON
2015**

283
WINNERS
INSIDE



BEST BOST 2015

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IN THIS TOWN, WE ALL KNOW how easy it is to go from first to worst. Take the Red Sox. (Please.) Point being, it's tough to get to the top, and even tougher to stay there. That's why this guide to our ultra-competitive city is such a blast to compile: From French restaurants to personal stylists, from beer bars to kiddie party spots, there's always a frenzy of contenders. How do we do it? In a word: anonymously. Our staff, plus a veritable army of insiders, reserve tables under spouses' names, book appointments with untraceable email addresses, and show up at shops unannounced. Then, like true Bostonians, we argue until we have a winner. So dig in, then join the conversation year round at bestofboston.com to enjoy the best that Boston has to offer, every day.

LETTERING BY JOHN MACNEILL

BOSTONMAGAZINE.COM 117



Diners toast the evening with a few pristine bivalves at Select Oyster Bar's prime windowfront table. See page 202.



LETTERING BY JOHN MACNELL; ILLUSTRATION BY HOLLY WALES

PHOTOGRAPH BY JARED KUZIA



DINING

TOP-NOTCH TASTING MENUS, SIZZLING SOUTH AMERICAN, AND A FOOD TRUCK THAT'S ALL ABOUT BACON.

AL FRESCO

Oleana

134 Hampshire St., Cambridge, 617-661-0505, oleanarestaurant.com.

Oleana could serve its lush menu from the back of a pickup truck in a parking lot and the place would still draw crowds. Fortunately, Ana Sortun's ode to all things Turkish and Mediterranean has a patio oasis, complete with a bubbling fountain, fragrant herb garden, shady fig tree, and heat lamps for chilly summer nights, all lit by strands of overhead lights. During stormy weather, the glassed-in porch makes an equally fine perch.

BAR MENU

Erbaluce

69 Church St., Boston, 617-426-6969, erbaluce-boston.com.

With its dim lighting, convenient Bay Village locale, and peerless carbonara pasta, Erbaluce has been a destination for occasion Italian dining since it opened in 2008. Perhaps less appreciated, however, is chef Charles Draghi's separate, weeknight-friendly bar

menu, where saucy boar meatballs topped with plumes of herbs, and thick prosciutto-and-fontina paninis pair well with an endless flow of lambrusco by the glass.

BAR PROGRAM

Alden & Harlow

40 Brattle St., Cambridge, 617-864-2100, aldenharlow.com.

Chef Michael Scelfo's first solo outing was an instant success thanks to its vegetable-forward fare and ungodly rich, smoky burger. But Scelfo also deserves a pat on the back for his staffing skills. In particular, bar manager Seth Freidus has assembled a cocktail list that rivals the dinner menu in creativity and ambition, with drinks incorporating vegetables like squash; a house-made amaro on draft; and, come winter, a boozy take on hot chocolate

topped with absinthe-and-orange whipped cream.

BARBECUE

Sweet Cheeks

1381 Boylston St., Boston, 617-266-1300, sweetcheeksq.com.

Tiffani Faison's barbecue temple has taken the smoky crown in this town four years running, and justifiably so. Those fussing over the heftier prices should note—her fall-apart ribs, crackly-skinned sausages, and mammoth slabs of brisket are sourced from the highest-quality purveyors. Meat aside, Sweet Cheeks is also the rare barbecue spot that welcomes vegetarian diners with sublime biscuits and one of the finest salads in town—a crunchy mash-up of farro, candied hazelnuts, Brussels sprouts, grapes, and arugula.



READERS' POLL → BEST PIZZA

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Regina Pizzeria | 46% |
| 2. Santarpio's Pizza | 31% |
| 3. A4 Pizza | 12% |

For the full list, go to bestofboston.com/results.

Best of Boston: Dining

SOUTH AMERICAN

Orinoco

477 Shawmut Ave., Boston, 617-369-7075;
22 Harvard St., Brookline, 617-232-9505;
56 JFK St., Cambridge, 617-354-6900;
orinocokitchen.com.

Orinoco has churned out irresistible *arepas* and empanadas for nearly 10 years—the only difference is that now you can enjoy the restaurant's slow-cooked baby-back ribs with guava barbecue sauce, juicy adobo-criollo chicken with *malanga* gnocchi, and gut-busting plates of shredded beef, rice, beans, and plantains in three neighborhoods. Whether you're in Boston, Cambridge, or Brookline, there's a killer empanada within walking distance.

SOUTHERN

Tupelo

1193 Cambridge St., Cambridge,
617-868-0004,
tupelo02139.com.

The reserved atmosphere may be more Cambridge than New Orleans, but Tupelo's south-

ern flavors are right on. Owners Mike Walker and Renee McLeod serve authentic comfort-food classics like creamy pimiento cheese (the caviar of the South), hearty gumbo, and crunchy fried crawfish tails. The crown jewel? Alligator prepped the way God intended: coated in buttermilk batter, hot sauce, and Cajun spices, and piled on a bed of creamy cheddar grits.

STEAKHOUSE

Boston Chops

1375 Washington St.,
Boston, 617-227-5011,
bostonchops.com.

This venture from Deuxave's Chris Coombs and Brian Piccini is billed as an "urban steak bistro"—shorthand for "not your grandparents' steakhouse." Start with daring small plates like oxtail croquets with red pepper *mostarda*, then tuck into an order of steak *frites*, which combines your favorite cut with a house-made sauce and heaping piles of greens, as well as fries served tableside from large copper bowls.

SUSHI

Café Sushi

1105 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, 617-492-0434,
cafesushicambridge.com.

Here, you can have it all: delicate nigiri crafted from local and Japanese seafood; imaginative *omakase* with treats like raw octopus and monkfish-liver *torchon*; and, last but not least, plenty of reasonably priced maki (including a solid spicy tuna). Best of all, you won't part with a week's paycheck in the process.

TACOS

Lone Star Taco Bar

479 Cambridge St., Allston, 617-782-8226;
635 Cambridge St., Cambridge; lonestar-boston.com.

The magic here is in the tortillas—hand-pressed in the kitchen to provide a sturdy foundation for toppings like smoky *barbacoa* and rich Dallas spicy beef. (For an afternoon hangover, there's the breakfast taco topped with scrambled eggs, cheese, avocado *crema*, and roasted salsa.) And thanks to a soon-to-open (at press time) location in East Cambridge, you can finally enjoy quality tacos on both sides of the river.

<http://www.bestofboston.com/winners/award-best-steakhouse/>