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Maduros and yuca a fries make it a natural choice for a hearty post-lake loop meal, quick dinner for a family, or group gathering. 6501 Aurora Ave N 206-420-8548 Google Maps Apple Maps Vegetarian, Vegan, American/New American Madison Valley cafe/lora.com The city's vegetarian standard-bearer since 1991, Cafe Flora has also mastered the art of vegan and gluten-free indulgence. Brunchers linger over veg scrambles, rosemary biscuits obscured by savory vegan gravy and the famed cinnamon rolls (also vegan). Even devout carnivores appreciate the artful ingredient interplay in hearty lunch and dinner plates, not to mention the plant-filled atrium and a handsome year-round patio. Flora's impressive pastry program is also on display at Flora Bakehouse on Beacon Hill and the Floret spinoff at Sea-Tac, an essential pre-flight destination. 2901 E Madison St 206-325-9100 Google Maps Apple Maps Middle Eastern Ballard instagram.com Seattle used to be full of neighborly restaurants that were by no means fancy, but delivered vivid, personal fare worth a drive across town. Rajah Gargour's lively Middle Eastern spot in Loyal Heights opened in 2012 and feels like a souvenir from that glorious era. Striking hummus plates (try the one topped with lamb and pine nuts) share tabletops with mezza dips and spreads, meat and vegetable kebabs, and family-style platters, all served in an intimate room with arched doorways, white tablecloths, and pretty filigree light pendants. 2408 NW 80th St 206-783-4190 Google Maps Apple Maps Northwest Queen Anne canlis.com More than seven decades of history, hospitality, and cliff-hanging views from atop Queen Anne Hill cemented Canlis's icon status long ago. But 2025 was a year of turnover: Chef James Huffman took over the kitchen and Alexandra Loucaou as wine director—both internal hires. Third-generation owner Mark Canlis stayed in place, while co-ownership swapped from his brother, Brian, to his wife, Anne Marie. The food and presentation on the five-course prix fixe menu skew more classic than under the previous two chefs, keeping Northwest ingredients in the spotlight with the occasional nod to the restaurant's Hawaiian roots. As Canlis settles into its new groove, the kitchen struggles with consistent execution, though the view, wine, and ambience remain as impressive as ever. 2576 Aurora Ave N 206-283-3313 Google Maps Apple Maps Mexican Beacon Hill facebook.com It's the tortillas that make this family-run restaurant on Beacon Avenue so marvelous—spry masa pressed into delicate rounds. No, actually, it's the mezzat: charred carne asada, or an al pastor that melts pork, spices, and pineapple sweetness on an almost molecular level. Carnitas are traditional to Michoacán, the version here delivers on rich flavor and just enough crispy bits. This busy kitchen puts out food that surpasses the stuff at way fancier (and more expensive) places. 2500 Beacon St S 206-323-3688 Google Maps Apple Maps Italian Capitol Hill spinasse.com The rustic Italian farmstead with the trestle tables and wrought-iron chandeliers serves the best pasta in Pike/Pine, maybe even Seattle: rich hand-cut Piedmontese egg-yolk noodles, buttery delicate strands of tajarin. Smaller dishes pulled from the seasons and hearty meat dishes, from rabbit to roast trout, can also be extraordinary. Chef Stuart Lane carries on the legacy and the quality of one of the city's most impressive Italian restaurants. 1531 14th Ave 206-251-7673 Google Maps Apple Maps Filipino Greenwood thechickensupply.com Filipino fried chicken restaurants like Jollibee inspired Paolo Campbell and Donnie Adams, but the counter service spot they created is very much their own: Chicken crackles—literally via its gluten-free crust, but also with marinated flavors of tamar, ginger, and lemon. Sides veer away from American South staples to embrace Philippine flavors, and the butter knocki inspires as much bare-knuckled desire as the chicken. Preorder online, before the day's cache is gone. 7410 Greenwood Ave N 206-257-4460 Google Maps Apple Maps Northwest Central District communionseattle.com Kristi Brown practices her own brand of Soul food, tethering a menu of grilled pork chops and fried catfish to Seattle and its crossroads of Asian flavors. Chinatown-International District influence delivers dishes like a po'boy-banh mi hybrid, pho-inspired gumbo, even maki rolls with cornmeal-cruste catfish. After years of catering, Brown created a neighborhood beacon in the Liberty Bank Building, the dining room's modern edges softened with tufted booths, copper ceiling panels, and a vintage back bar where Damon Bomar presides over drinks. Seattle Met's 2021 Restaurant of the Year. 2350 E Union St 206-391-8140 Google Maps Apple Maps Breakfast/Brunch Rainier Beach facebook.com This unassuming spot keeps limited hours and eschews delivery apps or even a website. Word of mouth is what propels Andrae Israel and Sharron Anderson's unrivaled retro comfort food, from fried pork chop sandwiches to the Montana potatoes, an egg-topped skillet of cheese, burger, and breakfast meat. It's not hard to make food this decadent taste good; it takes real attention to make it this great. Anderson's family once ran a chicken and waffle restaurant up on MLK, so any order that involves fried bird feels like a sure bet. 9261 57th Ave S 206-722-9464 Google Maps Apple Maps Northwest Alki driftwoodseattle.com A near-religious commitment to Washington ingredients means no citrus at the bar, but it also yields dishes that look like maximalist art and almost never taste like overkill. Chef Dan Mallahan's creations—a lavish pork chop, complex beef tartare, countless vegetable dishes—stand out in the crowded field of seasonal Northwest restaurants in Seattle. Throw in the memorable bar program, the subtle views of Alki Beach across the street, and some of the best restaurant desserts in town: Few places are this well-rounded, and less inclined to brag about it. 2722 Alki Avenue SW 206-420-7381 Google Maps Apple Maps Filipino Beacon Hill instagram.com There's only a single, barely visible sign marking this Beacon Hill restaurant and bar specializing in Guamanian food, part of owner Elmer Dulla's effort to build a low-key neighborhood spot. When the pickle-packed smashburger and crisp, thin french fries went viral shortly after it opened, visiting tourists and camera-toting TikTokkers trampled all over that idea. But things have calmed down, making room on the shady back patio and in the pale pistachio booths of the small dining room, and giving regulars space to branch out to the foods that track Dulla's personal history. The menu nods to his Filipino heritage with chicken adobo tacos, his childhood on Guam with the thick, silky corn soup, and his life as a Seattle service industry stalwart at places such as Bar Sajor and Musang. Which is great, because the flaky empanadas stuffed with beef deserve a viral moment at least as big as the burger. 3315 Beacon Ave S Google Maps Apple Maps Mediterranean Beacon Hill restauranthomer.com Logan Cox is the sort of chef who can make lamb ribs craveable, redefine roast chicken as something new and exciting, and recognize most of the neighborhood dogs (and their owners) by name. His original restaurant puts big, broadly Mediterranean flavors in crunchily context but also runs a soft-serve window, just because. It's hard to narrow down your options here, but the meatballs and lamb ribs remain perennial standouts, along with just about anything from the section of the menu dedicated to things one might spread on saucer-size pits. These arrive at the table almost too hot to touch, soft interior still puffed up from the wood oven. Seattle Met's 2019 Restaurant of the Year. 3013 Beacon Ave S 206-785-6099 Google Maps Apple Maps Japanese, French Mount Baker icomigoseattle.net Toshiyuki Kawai grew up in Osaka, then cooked in some of Seattle's most impressive European-leaning kitchens: Luc, RN74, Book Bindery, the Harvest Vine. He threads those experiences together with the sort of self-assured elegance you don't expect to find in an understated Mt. Baker dining room: Iberico shabu shabu, Neah Bay sole meuniere with escargot. A glorious peach melba dessert. If you see anything that involves risotto, order it. 1421 31st Ave S 206-568-7715 Google Maps Apple Maps Italian West Seattle ilnidoseattle.com The Alki Homestead, a landmark century-old log cabin, is a special sort of restaurant space. Just as special: the labor-intensive pasta and double-cut rib eyes served inside. In 2022, Mike Easton left his restaurant in the capable hands of manager Cameron Williams and executive chef Katie Gallego. As owners, they've piloted a smooth transition for both the Tuscan-inspired menu and the warm service. Getting a reservation can be certifiably bananas, but the bar and rear patio take walk-ins. 2717 61st Ave SW 206-466-6265 Google Maps Apple Maps Indian Northgate indiannepalikitchen.com This Aurora charmer (now farther north, after a 2025 relocation) fills up quickly, especially on weekends, when co-owner Baburam Panday estimates the kitchen makes and serves somewhere between 700 and 8000 momos. The six-page menu lists vegetarian and chicken versions of the dumplings in 10 different styles (order the combo plate to try a few), plus a full slate of vegetarian options, and a subcontinent's worth of bread. The Nepali Dal Bhat makes a good starting place: The thali serves as a sampler plate of traditional foods, and Panday says it is the closest thing to what you would get for dinner at someone's home in Nepal. 13754 Aurora Ave N, Ste D 206-397-3211 Google Maps Apple Maps Japanese Fremont kamonegiseattle.com Committed artisan. Classically trained chef. Practitioner of madcap drinking snacks. Pick your preferred descriptor for Mutsuko Soma, a woman who can cut her own soba noodles by hand, but also make a mean TikTok video starring a maple bar, hot dog, and panini press. Both sides of her brain come together on Kamonegi's menu of stunning soba bowls, seasonal tempura, and Japanese-centered snacks (looking, longingly, at you foie gras tofu). Seattle Met's 2018 Restaurant of the Year. 1054 N 39th St 206-632-0185 Google Maps Apple Maps In a city with endless options for above-average pad Thai, Kin Len demonstrates how much higher we should set our expectations for Thai food. The meandering series of elegantly dim spaces sets the expectation of chic neighborhood bar, while the creative and precise dishes insinuate that neighborhood could as easily be Song Wat as Fremont. The wide-ranging menu shows off the full extent of Thai cuisine with dishes like spicy octopus carpaccio, banana blossom fries, and durian tiramisu. The drinks follow suit, as in the Ying Yang Jar, with mezal-infused coffee, Bailey's, and sesame oil. (They do still have pad Thai, but it comes draped in oversize river prawns.) 3517 Fremont Ave N 206-582-1825 Google Maps Apple Maps French Central District loursinseattle.com It's a Parisian bistro by way of Northwest ingredients—reason enough to love Zac Overman and JJ Proville's wainscoted hangout. Proville recasts classic French dishes with spot prawns, dungeness crab, and arctic char, while Overman runs the marquee-lit bar filled with surprising cocktails. But wry wit bubbles behind all that formidable talent—this is a place unafraid to describe a wine as “the purple nurple of pet-nat.” (Oh yeah, the wine program is largely natural, mostly French, and wholly great.) 1315 E Jefferson St 206-485-7173 Google Maps Apple Maps American/New American Capitol Hill larkseattle.com We won't call him “elder” just yet, but John Sundstrom is absolutely a culinary statesman in Seattle. The proof lies in his stunning restaurant, where starry lights twinkle above soft banquettes and the kitchen does elegant things with very local ingredients. Business partner Kelly Roman carries those same high expectations to Lark's hospitality. The current four-course tasting menu format gives diners multiple options for each round, a setup flexible enough to suit people who don't usually love tasting menus. 952 E Seneca St 206-323-5275 Google Maps Apple Maps Barbecue Columbia City ilireddtakeout.com Trasto Jackson combines exacting barbecue with soul food staples and Jamaica's tradition of seafood and jerked meats. (The latter honors his wife, Lieth, and her heritage.) It's high impossible to choose when a single menu might offer jerk spareribs, curry goat, smothered pork chops, plantains, spot-on brisket, a whole snapper, and seriously piquant mac and cheese. Jackson puts in long hours smoking meat, cooking, and mixing his own rubs—and it shows. 4225 Rainier Ave S 206-760-2931 Google Maps Apple Maps Seattle has startlingly few restaurants centered on Northwest seafood. This counter-service spot sources from a network of local fisheries, a labor-intensive process often reserved for higher-end spots. But owner Victor Steinbrueck turns the results into the best takeout lunch ever: rockfish banh mi, upgraded salmon teriyaki, home fries tossed with bacon bits and chunks of smoked cod. Then, of course, there's the weekend-only crab roll, on a buttery split-top bun. Steinbrueck shares a name with his famous grandfather, but this place is indisputably his own. 401 N 36th St 206-420-4685 Google Maps Apple Maps American/New American White Center lorettasnorthwesterner.com The burger at South Park's stalwart watering hole has been a legend for years, and rightfully so. It tastes like fond memories from a midcentury, small-town drive-in—fat slice of cheese melted over a slender chargrilled patty, squishy bun, sprinkle of onion, and coins of dill pickle. The tavern's been-here-forever vibe is just a bonus. 8617 14th Ave S 206-327-9649 Google Maps Apple Maps Sushi Capitol Hill ltrdeditiosushi.com What makes an omakase stand out so much that diners emerge in a jubilant daze, perhaps muttering admiring curse words under their breath? Start with chef Keiji Tsukasaki, a Sushi Kashiba alum with both joyful magnetism and surgeon-level fish skills. He also brings a sense of fun you don't always find with skill levels this serious (and ingredients this expensive). Diner at the eight-seat chef's counter might include sea bass aged like beef, or side-by-side tastes of uni from Hokkaido and Santa Barbara. 1641 Nagai Pl Google Maps Apple Maps Japanese Chinatown-International District manekiseatant.com The crowd at this International District restaurant and bar often skews young, but in fact, it does not get more old-school in Seattle than the century-old Maneki, a honey-hunt of homely delights kept in line by a couple of no-nonsense aunts and traditional Japanese cooks. This legend could easily coast on lore alone, from surviving war and internment to the motherly order imposed by longtime stewards Jean Nakayama and Fusae “Mom” Yokoyama. It's the food, however, driving the inevitable wait for a table. Regulars know to look to the whiteboard for exceptional daily specials, but then there are much-adorred mainstays, like monkfish liver, sliced sashimi-style over shredded daikon with ponzu sauce. 304 Sixth Ave S 206-622-2631 Google Maps Apple Maps Northwest, Hawaii Alki marinationmobile.com If you're coming from downtown, there's no better capsule of Seattle than a trip on the West Seattle water taxi for kalbi beef tacos or kalua pork sliders. The cheerful Korean-Hawaii flavors that defined Seattle's earliest food truck scene now hold down Marination's most memorable brick-and-mortar, a former fish and chips shack by the water taxi station. The waterside location inspires an extra dash of Hawaii on the menu, like plate lunches and shave ice. The expansive beer garden patio offers umbrellas, striking views, and a host of summery drinks. 1660 Harbor Ave SW 206-328-8226 Google Maps Apple Maps Spanish Capitol Hill maripili-tapas-bar.com In the space that once held the beloved Cafe Presse, Grayson Pilar presents an equally understated and excellent ode to Galicia. MarPili plays with the seafood-focused cuisine of Spain's northwest as it translates to the Pacific Northwest, taking careful but fun steps away from traditional paella-ish rices, and gin cocktails with dishes like octopus folded into a broche crust and eggplant-stuffed canelones with oat milk bechamel. Pilar's pastry background means saving room for sweets is a requirement, and tarta de Santiago (Galician almond cake) goes nicely with MarPili's many sherry choices. Seattle Met's 2022 Restaurant of the Year. 1117 12th Ave 425-520-9539 Google Maps Apple Maps Italian Georgetown mezzanoteseattle.com Restaurateur Marcus Lalario has a knack for finding talent, and that shows in the kitchen at this Georgetown restaurant, where planes descend overhead toward Boeing Field and the buttery tajarin pasta still blows your mind. The menu reflects Lalario's northern Italian heritage, but huckleberries lurk under the burrata and local mushrooms serenade the risotto. If you want to go big (and can book well in advance) Mezzanotte does its own version of an omakase at the chef's counter. 1210 S Bailey St 206-466-6033 Google Maps Apple Maps Latin Maple Leaf mojitosseattle.com The story of Luam Wersom working his way up from dishwasher to owner at this long-standing Latin American and Cuban restaurant is a great one. The food is just as remarkable. Dishes like vaca frita, tostones, and pescado en guiso—even the accompanying rice—bear the finesse of more than 20 years of experience. A 2025 move to a larger location has opened even more room for Wersom and his team's impressive hospitality, as warm as titular mojitos are cool. 8511 Roosevelt Way NE 206-525-3162 Google Maps Apple Maps Filipino Beacon Hill musangseattle.com Chef Melissa Miranda is a force on so many levels—an advocate within her culinary, cultural, and geographic communities. But it's all built on some serious cooking talent. Musang is an ode to the Filipino food of Miranda's Northwest youth, from kare kare to seasonal panicits, her grandmother's delicate lumpia recipe to squid adobo. It's food with soul, with seasons, and with lovely cocktails to go with it, all in a converted lavender Craftsman. Seattle Met's 2020 Restaurant of the Year. 2524 Beacon Ave S 206-708-6871 Google Maps Apple Maps Modern American Columbia City ofalleseyseattle.com Running a tiny 12-seat restaurant in a glorified brick corridor means chef Evan Leitching has a lot of freedom: to source nearly unsourceable treats like gooseneck barnacles. To serve snails on sourdough toast with bone marrow butter. Maybe churn foie gras into ice cream. Off Alley's daily chalkboard menu celebrates underappreciated organs and oft-overlooked tiny fish. But rather than headline, these often serve as punctuation on elegant plates of seasonal produce, usually described with breathless excitement by the staff. 4903 1/2 Rainier Ave S 206-488-6170 Google Maps Apple Maps Korean South Lake Union pajuresrestaurant.com A fine dining expat by way of New York and San Francisco composes jewel box tributes to Korean flavors: fried rice, black with squid ink, punchy with bacon and kimchi, topped with a confit quail egg yolk, or hand-rolled ricotta dumplings layered in pyrgo beosot, also known as shikate mushrooms. Bulgogi is gussied with truffles. Prices remain surprisingly casual given the special occasion caliber of these plates. 513 Westlake Ave N 206-829-8215 Google Maps Apple Maps Northwest, Mexican Ravenna panchtaseattle.com While the rest of Seattle just hoped for a slightly better taco, chef Janet Becerra skipped waiting for someone to make a decent tortilla in town and learned to grind and nixtamalize heirloom corn herself—which she and her team do daily at Pancita. They press that masa into other tortilla they serve, along with various other antojitos, including the memelas that are just with housemade hoja santa-wrapped queso fresco on the cheese plate. Using traditional Mexican techniques and her European fine-dining training, Becerra tops albacore tuna tostadas with morita Kewpie mayonnaise and burnt habanero oil, stuffs tacos with cauliflower prepared as al pastor, and blankets chicken with mission fig and stone fruit mole. 5501 30th Ave NE 206-526-7655 Google Maps Apple Maps Italian Pike Place Market pastacasalingseattle.com Turin, Italy-born Michela Tartaglia first taught pasta-making classes in the Pike Place Market Atrium's test kitchen. Now she runs a hidden-away pasta counter directly above; it serves four daily bowls that always include meat, seafood, and “from the garden” renditions. What this means: a different menu each time you visit, and memorable partnerships between seasonal ingredients and pasta shapes, like tortiglioni with speck and ricotta, or gemelli with caramelized pears, gorgonzola, and walnuts. 93 Pike St #201 206-445-2987 Google Maps Apple Maps Vietnamese Chinatown-International District thephobac.com To be Seattle's first pho shop is notable enough, especially given our town's subsequent obsession with Vietnam's robust noodle soup. But second-generation owners Yenny and Quynh Pham have a talent for finding new, impressively on-trend ways to reinforce these traditions. Case in point: This tropically hip dining room where bowls of the same beautiful pho come with bar snacks and cocktails. The original shop, a boat-shaped structure across the parking lot, now serves garlic chicken and rice and was Seattle Met's 2023 Restaurant of the Year. 1240 S Jackson St 206-568-0882 Google Maps Apple Maps Vietnamese ramieseattle.com At Ba Sa on Bainbridge Island, siblings Trinh and Thai Nguyen make upscale renditions of Vietnamese favorites. Their spot on Capitol Hill takes an inverse approach. Ramie channels familiar Viet flavors into contemporary dishes that take notes from around the globe. Wagyu carpaccio and hamachi crudo burst with herbs and nuoc cham; risotto is dressed in a pesto that summons Southeast Asia rather than Italy, and trotters arrive with a ssan-like bevy of herbs and greens for wrapping. The cocktails alone are worth a trip, as is the bánh tét, or hollow bread with honey butter. 1529 14th Ave 206-566-5192 Google Maps Apple Maps Bakery/Pastry Shop University District saintbread.com Welcome to the church of food, where the fishes are broiled salmon on rice bowls, the loaves could be Japanese melonpan, yuzu polenta cake, or cardamom croissants, and nothing is sacred. With a blessed canal-side location in a former boat repair shop, this bakery-plus food restaurant Yasuaki Saito (Tivoli, Post Alley Pizza, and, previously, London Plane) starts with breakfast pastries that take inspiration from France, Scandinavia, and Japan. The rest of the menu is categorized by quantity of sliced bread: look under one for cinnamon-Okinawan sugar toast, two slices includes egg sandwiches and the impressive cheeseburger, and the “No Bread” section includes salads, fries, and okonomiyaki. 1421 NE Boat St 206-566-5195 Google Maps Apple Maps Modern American Ballard secret-congee.square.site Only in damp Seattle does a beach cafe serving only steaming hot, soul-comforting rice porridge make perfect sense. Secret Congee's version of the staple shines with the power of all the sunlight we rarely see, using the subtle, creamy base as a canvas for powerful flavors from around East and Southeast Asia: plump shrimp with a spicy sauce inspired by Thai tom yum soup, slow-cooked beef brisket with kimchi, and black cod paired with ginger, garlic, and goji berries. 6301 Seaview Ave NW Google Maps Apple Maps Cambodian Phinney Ridge sophonseattle.com Through woven kantael mats on the wall and plenty of the fermented fish paste called prahok, Sophon explodes with pride in founder Karuna Long's heritage and the flavors of Cambodia. Lemongrass kroeung spice paste marinates fried oyster mushrooms and fragrant tuk trey dresses: crunchy, punchy shredded salads as the food incorporates the flavors and techniques of traditional Khmer cuisine without getting bogged down in arguments over authenticity. The result is playful, intriguing, and unique, and sets the table for a better understanding of Khmer food and culture. The cocktails, impressively, follow suit with plenty of coconut and creativity, and just a little less fish sauce. 7314 Greenwood Ave N 206-644-7316 Google Maps Apple Maps Sushi, Japanese Capitol Hill tanadesateille.com Head down the beat-up passage of Broadway Alley to find a nine-seat sushi restaurant hidden behind a barber and a tobaccco shop. Here, chef Hideaki Tameda unlays some ornate seasonal traditions of kaiseki within a high-end sushi omakase. Nigiri, naked save a light sard and a swipe of the condensed soy sauce known as nikiri, bookend ritual-thick kaiseki courses like the hassu: assorted bites—from a morsel of rich wagyu to broiled eel wrapped in a tamago ribbon—on a single, eight-sided plate. This unusual alliance of two Japanese culinary traditions works, thanks to the meal's measured tempo—and some excellent sake pours. 219 Broadway E, Ste 14 Google Maps Apple Maps Lotian Capitol Hill tauroos.com Demand for its striking Laotian food propelled this casual spot out of its tiny counter quarters on Madison and into a real dining room, complete with atmosphere and way more seating. Dishes, mercifully, remain the same, like the khao poon noodle soup and co-owner Khampaeng Panyathong's mom's sausage recipe, all texture and lemongrass. None of which prepares you for this: Taurus Ox makes, indisputably, one of the best burgers in town, with a pair of proper smash patties, two versions of the condiment jeaw, and house-cured pork jowl in place of bacon. It's cross-culturally clever and drive-across-town good. 903 19th Ave E 206-972-0075 Google Maps Apple Maps Asian Fusion White Center tomoseattle.com In 2025, former Canlis chef Brady Ishiwata Williams saw the writing on the wall and switched from fine dining-caliber tasting menus to a more accessible à la carte format (with a family-style option for those who really hate choices). The vibe shift suited the food, which the staff shirts describe as “Japanese-ish.” The plank of sweet potato caramelized with buckwheat honey and slowly soaked-up seaweed butter and the chawanmushi, whose savory custard comes crowned with brown rice vinegar, are, fundamentally, comfort food—at least as much as the cacio e pepe rice cakes, dry-aged steam burgers, and fried chicken. The setting remains modern and elegant, with a stylish darkness, and the wine list as adventurous and exciting as ever—the four-glass, \$40 diner-paced flight is a departure from traditional pairings, but a terrific deal and easy way into a complex list. Tomo's culinary edginess and mixing of fine-dining and casual elements mean it's never been a restaurant everyone falls in love with, but its latest evolutions make it much easier to do so. 9811 16th Ave SW Google Maps Apple Maps Small Plates, Oyster Bar Ballard thewarusbar.com No mortal restaurant can really live up to that national hype...right? Well, Renee Erickson's merrily jostling oyster bar on Ballard Ave remains the gold standard for showing visitors (the kind who don't mind a line) what Seattle is capable of. Not that you need a houseguest to justify a night of meticulously sourced oysters, octopus carpaccio, and food-simpatico cocktails beneath the glow of an enormous coral reef of a chandelier. The tile-clad watering hole Barnacle next door makes the best waiting room in town. 4743 Ballard Avenue NW 206-395-9227 Google Maps Apple Maps Chinese Downtown viviennebistro.com In an upscale dining room marked by wooden lanterns and a preponderance of colorful cocktails, chef Danna Hwang's menu starts with Cantonese flavors, then moves in unexpected directions, like a surf-and-turf kung pao and lobster rangoon. The menu and ambience at the Seattle location, within the Sheraton, are a little more conservative than at the original Mercer Island spot, but the showstopper remains the Forbidden Roast Duck platter, a five-spiced bird with crackling skin that arrives with monogrammed bao buns. 600 Union St 206-693-3190 Google Maps Apple Maps Chinese University District xiannoodles.com Seattle has a few more destinations than it used to for biang biang noodles, named for the sound that happens when a chef slip long strands of dough against a counter, creating the fissures that lead to those wide, perfectly chewy ribbons. But Lily Wu's remain the standard-bearer, whether they're dressed in cumin lamb or tingly beef, or just some chile-infused oil. Her upgraded dining room on the Ave now has sibling spots: a second restaurant in Bellevue and a chefs hidden in Westlake Center, plus two locations of seafood-centric Happy Crab. 5259 University Way NE 206-522-8888 Google Maps Apple Maps

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