

# 50 Best New U.S. Restaurants 2009



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**From Atlanta to Seattle, T+L offers a definitive guide to the country's top dining experiences—big and small.**

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By Anya von Bremzen and Soren Larson

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You know the American restaurant paradigm is shifting when communal benches become more desirable than leather banquettes. When humble kimchi is suddenly chic, and the words *local* and *seasonal* are recited as routinely as *fried* or *sautéed*. At a time of economic difficulty and changing consumer tastes for both food and décor, we crisscrossed the country in search of outstanding new restaurants with a very different mind-set.

We gravitated toward spots that offered us warmth and a sense of human connection, and greeted the opening of a neighborhood noodle parlor or artisanal sandwich shop with an enthusiasm formerly reserved for high-concept eating destinations. In [Chicago](#), a delicious take on Korean street food is dished out at [Urbanbelly](#), an inexpensive joint with four communal tables that is generating enormous enthusiasm among dumpling lovers in the Windy City. At [San Francisco](#)'s [Sentinel](#), a tiny downtown sandwich spot, the once-tired standard of a quick lunch is being transformed into an aesthetic masterpiece.

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And yet, for all the populist gastropubs and wood-fired-pizza parlors, a world without culinary ambition would be a sad one indeed. That's why we're grateful for serious new restaurants like [Corton](#), in [New York City](#)'s Tribeca neighborhood, where legendary restaurateur Drew Nieporent and buzzed-about British chef Paul Liebrandt are creating special-occasion dinners for a new age. Old-school luxuries like foie gras and oysters are dressed up in fresh and innovative ways that make them seem more relevant than ever. And the room itself—elegantly lit and blessedly quiet—is an inviting retreat where you want to sit for hours (and you probably will).

Or take [L20](#) in [Chicago](#), a striking seafood mecca where chef Laurent Gras is working magic. The service is old-fashioned in its graciousness, but not stuffy; the wine list is smart; and the exquisite tasting menu melds French rigor and opulence with the inimitable raw-fish skills of the Japanese.

Will the current financial crisis turn us into wiser, gentler people? We hope so. Meanwhile, let's thank America's chefs for ensuring that in these uncertain times we are being more responsibly, affordably—and, yes, deliciously!—fed.



## Minneapolis: [Heidi's Minneapolis](#)

From the haute-homey menu to the quirky wine list, everything about this romantic and affordable 48-seat restaurant feels perfect and personal. A veteran of some of New York's fanciest kitchens, chef Stewart Woodman channels his skills into such ingenious fare as foie gras shaved over a mâche-and-pistachio salad—for just \$10. *Dinner for two \$68.*