

INNOVATION: 10 Great Connecticut Biotech Advances

Hartford

100 DISHES

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CONNECTICUT BUCKET LIST

100 DISHES

Sweet and savory, these guilty pleasures and culinary chefs-d'oeuvre top our list. Connecticut may be a small state, but it's a foodie's paradise.

These 100 items should lead true foodies to nirvana.

By **FRANK COHEN**

Greater Hartford

Paella de la casa at Costa del Sol, Hartford — Teeming with clams, mussels, shrimp, chicken and chorizo, this Galician-owned restaurant's paella de la casa sets the Connecticut standard.

Fresh tomato summer pie at Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, multiple locations — Pepe's lovers can't wait for summer for this pizza made with fresh Mozzarella and fresh tomatoes marinated in olive oil, garlic and herbs that tastes like a vegetable garden exploded in one's mouth.

Burnt ends at Bear's Smokehouse, multiple locations — Although Bear's sauces are great, you may forget about them while eating his tender, fatty, flavorful burnt ends with their delicious bark.

Mustard BBQ salmon at Restaurant Bricco, West Hartford — The highly caramelized, mustard BBQ, cedar-planked organic salmon melts in your mouth.

West Coast burger at b Restaurants, multiple locations — While many burger joints lack imagination, Plan B's West Coast burger with a fried egg, avocado and kalamata olive mayonnaise is an inspired combination.

Pike quenelles at A'Vert, West Hartford — At this wonderful French brasserie, try its pike quenelles in a sumptuous, crayfish-based sauce Nantua.

Konkan crab at INDIA, West Hartford — Prasad Chirnomula's delicate Konkan crab, served in a

coconut-lemon sauce over beet patties, is inspired Indian cooking.

Bar bites at Wood-n-Tap, multiple locations — These perfect sliders are made with Black Angus ground beef, American cheese, pickle and honey mustard.

Tablesideside Caesar at Carbone's Ristorante, Hartford — Carbone's still makes the extra effort to connect with its customers by doing a delicious tableside Caesar.

Tomatillo gazpacho at Artisan, multiple locations — The tomatillo gazpacho at Artisan in West Hartford features a moat of green chilled soup surrounding an island of delicious Maine crabmeat topped with avocado sorbet.

Offal at Belvedere, New Britain — The offal at Belvedere is anything but awful, especially its perfectly perfumed beef tripe soup, rich blood sausage and beautifully seasoned chicken livers.

What Great Dishes Are On Your Own CT Bucket List?

Take pictures as you give our choices — or your own — a try (and don't just yelp if we've missed your favorites). Then share your Bucket List picks on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook with the hashtag **#CTBucketList**. We'll publish the best pictures in our May issue.

Top row: Tomatillo gazpacho at Artisan; Burnt ends at Bear's Smokehouse; Paella de la casa at Costa del Sol; heirloom tomato pie at Dish. **Second row:** Casuela de mariscos at El Pulpo; "Dirt" wings at J. Timothy's Tavern; cheeseburger at Shady Glen; feijoada at West Side Tavern. **Third row:** Roasted cauliflower at Zohara; Clams DeMayo at Biagetti's; Lithuanian coffee cake at Claire's Corner Copia; Jack Daniels' wasabi wings at Dew Drop Inn. **Fourth row:** Falafel at Mamoun's; lobster roll at the Lobster Shack; trout at Kala; Bufalina pizza at Bufalina. **Fifth row:** Bar bites at Wood-n-Tap; risotto and scallops at Bin 300 World Bistro; doughnuts at Dottie's Diner, and Lobster Bomb at Ford's Lobster

The Dogfather at Woody's, Hartford — Who can resist this mutt of a dog that, with marinara sauce, roasted peppers and Mozzarella, fuses two culinary traditions, tastes delicious and makes you laugh—it's the dog you can't refuse.

Orange ravioli at Peppercorn's Grill, Hartford — These housemade ravioli filled with ricotta, spinach and orange rind in a sauce of fresh orange, butter, sage and Parmigiano-Reggiano are utterly lovely.

Bacon flight at Cure, Unionville — Housemade bacon is an art form at Cure, where flavors include honey applewood, pastrami, roasted garlic and black peppercorn, and Frank's red hot.

Margherita pizza at Harry's Bishops Corner, West Hartford — Arguably the best capital-area pizzeria that doesn't have Elm City origins, Harry's serves a classic margherita — a red pie with extra sauce, fresh Mozzarella, fresh basil, Asiago and EVOO.

Heart attack burger at Republic, multiple locations — This burger fashioned from domestic Kobe beef, foie gras, black truffles, a brioche bun and a truffle demi-glace dipping sauce is worth its stratospheric price tag.

Spaghetti alla chitarra at Osa, Middletown — Great sourcing, skill and imagination are revealed in the spaghetti alla chitarra with smoked tomato sauce, roasted eggplant, olive crumbs, Tapping Reeve cheese and marjoram.

Filet of beef Wellington at Present Company, Tariffville — It's hard to resist the retro pleasure of filet with truffled mushroom duxelles in puff pastry finished with a classic bordelaise sauce.

Rotisserie chicken at The Rockin Chicken, Hartford — The rotisserie chicken served at The Rockin Chicken is wonderful, especially with the three pastel-colored sauces in squeeze bottles.

Tapioca custard at Millwright's, Simsbury — The whimsical tapioca custard reveals all the flavors of clam chowder, but in counterintuitive form.

Whole roasted cauliflower at Zohara Mediterranean Kitchen, West Hartford — Order the whole roasted cauliflower with pine nuts, pomegranate, tahini and schug for its flavor, enjoyability and sheer audacity.

Pork rillettes appetizer at The Cook & the Bear, West Hartford — The crispy pork rillettes, served over fried green tomatoes and drenched in sauce choron and chopped scallion, represent the best of this restaurant's highbrow-lowbrow fusion.



STEPHEN DUNN

The Baja fish taco at bartaco in West Hartford, left, along with pork belly and chicken tacos.

Squirrel fish at Shu, West Hartford — This crunchy, deep-fried, mostly boneless fish preparation with pine nuts, pork, green beans, corn and carrots in a fruity housemade sauce offers brief respite from Shu's mostly hot and mouth-numbing flavors.

Shaved Brussels sprouts salad at Harvest Wine Bar, multiple locations — This salad of shaved Brussels sprouts mounted on a Parmesan risotto cake and dressed in a truffle vinaigrette has inspired a number of imitators.

Smoked wings at Taino Smokehouse, Middletown — Taino Smokehouse's marinated, smoked and deep-fried wings could easily make you forget that city south of Niagara Falls.

Dirt wings at J. Timothy's Taverne, Plainville — J. Timothy's is justifiably famous for originating "dirt wings," which are fried and sauced, then fried and sauced again, making them more caramelized and crispy but still juicy.

Jamón Mangalica at Barcelona, multiple locations — Chewy, fatty, teeth-tingling jamón Mangalica, an Ibérico ham thinly sliced from the leg of a wooly breed of Hungarian pig, is a true bucket list item.

Crispy chicken biscuit sliders at Park & Oak, West Hartford — Park & Oak has fun interpreting Southern cooking, with its crispy chicken biscuit sliders topped with pickles and pepper jam a perfect snack.

Prime rib at Max Downtown, Hartford—Max is now offering slow-roasted prime rib with pastrami-spiced, bone-in short rib, a hellaciously good combination.

Sunday buffet at River's Edge Bistro, Unionville—A bucket list activity, not item, Connecticut's best (and least known) Middle Eastern restaurant makes it possible to experience most of its astonishing menu in one fell (or full) swoop.

Baja fish taco at bartaco, West Hartford—Many of the taco combinations are winners, but especially the spicy, tempura-battered cod with chipotle slaw and cilantro.

Wagyu Maximus at Max Burger, West Hartford—The Wagyu Maximus features an eight-ounce American Wagyu patty with Twain cheese, mushroom, caramelized onion, lettuce, tomato and zesty mayo on an artisan roll.

Feijoada at West Side Tavern, New Britain—West Side Tavern's version of feijoada, the national dish of Brazil, a stew of black beans, smoked pork, smoked beef and sausage, is terrific.

Pork in pipián sauce at El Nuevo Sarape, Hartford—This Frog Hollow gem offers tender chunks of pork in a flavorful pipián sauce accompanied by rice, beans and salad.

Brussels sprouts at Firebox, Hartford—Firebox's Brussels sprouts are charred in a soy caramel sauce and finished with Marcona almonds and chili oil.

White Sicilian Pizza at Jerry's Pizza, Middletown—You have to call ahead because the special dough needs time to rise, but Jerry's White Sicilian pie with just spices, oil and anchovy is delicious and different.

Cazuela de mariscos at El Pulpo, multiple locations—The cazuela de mariscos is a seafood stew abundant with fish, scallops, calamari, mussels and potato in a rich seafood broth.

Sfogliatelle at Mozzicato de Pasquale Bakery & Pastry Shop, multiple locations—Mozzicato's sfogliatelle are crunchy, shell-shaped treats filled with mandarin orange-flavored ricotta filling.

Guacamole at Agave Grill, Hartford—Agave Grill's tableside preparation includes avocado, serrano chile, pico de gallo, cilantro, lime and optional corn-and-black-bean salsa or fresh mango.

Pasta primavera at Primavera Pub, Hartford—Pasta primavera usually means vegetables, but at this welcoming Portuguese eatery it denotes its signature dish, which is loaded with flavor and good fresh



LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

Konkan Crab is made with jumbo lump crab in a coconut lemon sauce at INDIA in West Hartford.

seafood.

Cheeseburger at Shady Glen Dairy Stores, two Manchester locations—The burger meat isn't special, but the hat-sized piece of fried American cheese is so popular that some people order it by itself.

Nacho changuito at Chango Rosa, Hartford—Tex-Mex and barbecue combine in the nacho changuito with chips, guacamole, jalapeños, Bear's bbq sauce, salsa verde, muchos quesos and optional choice of brisket, pulled chicken, pulled pork or burnt ends.

Heirloom tomato pie at Dish, Hartford—A Dish standard, the heirloom tomato pie is a slice of pastry crust filled with slow-roasted tomato, Mozzarella, basil pesto and Liuzzi ricotta.

Pork egg rolls at Lan Chi's Vietnamese, Middletown—Crispy egg rolls stuffed with ground pork, onion and carrot are delightful in house dipping sauce with fresh chopped peanut.

Sweet potato scallion cakes at 21 Oak, Manchester—Flavors found in this customer favorite include sweet potato, scallion, ginger, lemon, avocado, cashew crema, brown rice and sautéed vegetables.

Sweet Piggy sriracha-and-maple-glazed bacon at 75 Center, Southington—A sweet-and-spicy soy glaze coats thick bacon strips, served hanging like laundry.

Dipper sundae at A.C. Petersen Farms, multiple

Locations—The formula is simple: your favorite ice cream flavor, your choice of gourmet topping, fresh hand-whipped heavy cream and a cherry.

Pork gyro platter at Ambrosia Mediterranean Cuisine, Cromwell—Pork chops broiled slowly on the donner apparatus are served with tzatziki sauce, two pita breads, French fries and Greek salad.

Double Trouble burger at Artisanal Burger Company, Manchester—Twin 5-ounce beef patties with American cheese, bacon, lettuce and tomato are squeezed between two grilled cheese sandwiches.

Ravioli at Arugula Bistro, West Hartford—The ravioli may vary at Arugula, but they're always worth seeking out.

Yuki tuna, salmon and yellowtail salad at Asahi Japanese, Rocky Hill—This terrific sushi salad is actually included in Asahi's all-you-can-eat sushi deal.

Vegan BBQ boneless ribs at Black Bamboo, West Hartford—Here's a vegan alternative that will please most carnivores, too.

Fonduta at Bin 228 Panini & Wine Bar, Hartford—The fonduta, simple perfection for the lactose-tolerant, is melted Fontina and truffle essence.

Louisiana gumbo at Black Eyed Sally's, Hartford—This authentic gumbo will stick to your ribs and have you singing "Polk Salad Annie."

Greater New Haven

Cheeseburger at Louis' Lunch, New Haven—Louis' iconic burger is ground fresh daily from a proprietary five-meat blend, cooked to personal temperature on the original cast-iron grills and served sans condiments on toast. For a medium-rare burger with cheese, tomato and onion on toast, order "one cheese works."

Plain Italian tomato pie at Sally's Apizza, New Haven—Because no one's red sauce is better than Sally's, go with this simple classic; hold the Mozz, but fresh garlic and grated Parmesan are appropriate additions.

Duck cassoulet at Le Petit Café, Branford—This exceptionally meat-focused cassoulet with roasted duck breast, Armagnac duck sausage, applewood smoked bacon and flageolet beans will knock your socks off.

Two-way rabbit at Olea, New Haven—Experience two rabbit preparations in one: a confit leg and bacon-wrapped loin in a Rioja red wine sauce.

Bufalina pizza at Bufalina, Guilford—Score a seat



STEPHEN DUNN

The Filet Cognac is topped with lobster and Gorgonzola cream sauce at Goodfellas Restaurant in New Haven.

at Bufalina's popular counter and order the bufalina pie with buffalo Mozzarella, San Marzano tomatoes and basil.

Crystal roll at Wasabi, Orange—At this "poor man's Nobu," enjoy a crystal roll with tuna, salmon, yellowtail and avocado on the inside, white tuna and different varieties of tobiko on the outside.

White shrimp pizza at Roseland Apizza, Derby—Perhaps a physicist can explain how a New Haven-style, thin-crust pizza can hold up to roughly a dozen enormous shrimp without collapsing.

Cupcakes at Erica OBrien Cake Design, Hamden—These are simply Connecticut's best cupcakes, frosted with an ideal ratio of buttery buttercream frosting to cake.

The lobster roll at Lobster Shack, Branford—Our favorite warm, buttery, lemony, Connecticut-style lobster roll is the Lobster Shack's, available as a quarter-pound or, better yet, the "Whaler" with a half-pound of picked lobster meat.

Wings at Dew Drop Inn, Derby—This now-gentrified biker bar serves wings that are fresh, crisp and juicy, and come in dozens of imaginative flavors like maple butter bacon and mango pineapple habanero.

Clams DeMayo at Biagetti's, West Haven—When Biagetti's isn't slammed, customers in the know request the clams DeMayo, cherrystone clams in their shells stuffed with scallop and shrimp doused in garlic, seasoned breadcrumbs and white clam sauce.

Guava and cheese Danish at Bread & Chocolate, Hamden — Of its many great treats, Bread & Chocolate's best is its croissant pastry topped with the famous Latin combination of guayaba y queso.

Filet Cognac at Goodfellas Restaurant, New Haven — Chef-owner Gennaro "Gerry" Iannaccone's signature, a steal on Ladies' Night, is his grilled CAB tenderloin topped with portobello mushroom and picked lobster meat and finished with a Gorgonzola cream sauce.

Mashed potato and bacon pizza at BAR, New Haven — The mashed potato and bacon pizza is one of those unlikely sounding combinations that works perfectly.

Three-man boat at Sono Bana, Hamden — The three-man sushi boat overflowing with sushi and sashimi is a miracle of design in its beauty and balance.

Fresh clam white pizza at Zuppardi's, West Haven — At Zuppardi's, which originated in New Haven in 1932, shucked-to-order littleneck clams are baked on fresh dough with a mix of garlic and spices and served with lemon wedges.

Grilled cheese at Caseus Fromagerie & Bistro, New Haven — For its grilled cheese, Caseus stuffs thickly sliced, Lupi's Bakery rye with a half-pound of "our best melting cheeses."

Chocolate éclair at DiSorbo's Bakery, Hamden — Outside of the delicate coffee éclairs of France, the best you'll find anywhere is DiSorbo's richly chocolate frosted, pastry-cream-filled chocolate éclair.

Trout at Kala Bistro, North Haven — This casual sibling of Spanish temple of gastronomy, Olea, scores big with its skin-on trout fillet in a Dijon mustard sauce with lyonnaise potato and shallots.

Sky Highs at Katz's Deli, Woodbridge — Katz's Sky High sandwiches are served on rye with coleslaw and Russian dressing and come in pairings like corned beef and tip tongue or pastrami and chopped liver.

Tortelli di zucca at L'Orcio, New Haven — Perhaps New Haven's most authentic Italian establishment, the handmade butternut squash mousse-filled ravioli in a butter sage sauce with Pecorino Romano are wonderful.

Gnocchi with lamb at La Tavola Ristorante, Waterbury — In chef-owner Niccola Mancini's skilled hands, housemade ricotta gnocchi aren't so much the base as just another ingredient tossed with braised lamb shank, portobello mushroom, roasted



FRANK COHEN

The cheeseburger at Louis' Lunch in New Haven is served with tomato and onion on toast.

tomato and baby spinach.

Falafel sandwich at Mamoun's, New Haven — Mamoun's has been serving open pita sandwiches, brimming with crunchy falafel ball, salad ingredients and tahini dressing, since Gerald Ford was president.

Coquilles Saint-Jacques at Union League Café, New Haven — A truffle sauce puts Union League's coquilles Saint-Jacques with black trumpet mushrooms and celeriac purée over the top.

Hummel dogs at Glenwood Drive-In, Hamden — There's no better place to order a great grilled Hummel dog, which you can then prepare exactly as you like it at the fixings station.

Chowder-style Icelandic cod at Shell & Bones, New Haven — Chef Arturo Franco-Camacho is especially gifted with seafood and soups, and his Icelandic cod merges the two as the moist, flaky fish is served in an incredible clam broth with potato, bacon, corn, leek and light cream.

The PLT at Meat & Co., New Haven — Just as adjacent 116 Crown broke new ground with its craft cocktails, sibling Meat & Co. has broken new ground with gourmet sandwiches like its PLT with porchetta, arugula, tomato confit and paprika aioli.

Risottos at Bin 300 World Bistro, Wolcott — Bin 300 is justifiably famous for risottos like its rock shrimp and sweet pea; wild mushroom, prosciutto di Parma and white truffle oil; and Parmesan and sweet butter risotto.

Lithuanian coffee cake at Claire's Corner Copia, New Haven—Of a great assortment of indulgent cakes, the Lithuanian coffee cake (with buttercream frosting added) is undoubtedly the most popular.

“My mother’s chips” at Viron Rondo Osteria, Cheshire — These thin crosscuts of eggplant and zucchini flash-fried and served with tzatziki sauce are highly addictive.

Rodizio at ID Brazil, West Haven— Some are cheaper and some are fancier, but no churrascaria delivers better flavor on its grilled meats sliced tableside, which include top sirloin, brisket, lamb, chicken hearts and numerous other delights.

Hot-headed cowgirl roll at Miya's Sushi, New Haven — At this sushi joint decades ahead of its time, the hot-headed cowgirl roll is a coconut-covered creation with vegan cashew cream cheese, papaya, wild burdock, pickled radish and hot peppers.

Apple strudel at The Watch Factory, Cheshire— Pretty much a one-man operation, chef-owner Markus Patsch's apple strudel is exemplary, with beautifully layered apple filling perfect pastry.

Hot oil pizza at Colony Grill, multiple locations — This Fairfield County-based pizza group sells unique thin-crust pizzas, of which the best representative is the hot oil pizza garnished with a few little “stingers.”

And Farther Afield

Torchio pasta course at BALLO, Mohegan Sun — Although it doesn't show on the menu, you can always order an appetizer serving of housemade pasta torchio cooked in a wheel of aged Italian grana and finished with fresh shaved black truffle.

Poached lobster and avocado salad at Arethusa al tavolo, Bantam — Arethusa's lovely lobster and avocado salad with pinwheels of pink grapefruit is not only delightful but a perfect magazine cover item.

Fried oysters at Café Routier, Westbrook — Café Routier's fried oysters set the standard with their perfect breading, juicy interior and chipotle rémoulade.

Pepe La Pew burger at Jack Rabbits, Old Saybrook — Jack Rabbits brilliantly tops a CAB patty with grilled apple, applewood smoked bacon and Brie cheese.

Grilled bacon appetizer at Joseph's Steakhouse, Bridgeport — You might struggle with your steak after ordering the extra-thick grilled bacon appetizer, which pairs tremendously well with the Peter



MICHAEL MCANDREWS

The hot oil and stinger pizza at Colony Grill.

Luger-style steak sauce.

Lobster roll at Lobster Landing, Clinton — Poached in butter with a hint of lemon, one of Connecticut's best lobster rolls can be found at this quaint, friendly harborside eatery.

Kampachi crudo at Winvian, Morris — Chef Chris Eddy's kampachi crudo with peach, watermelon, verbena and yuzu vinaigrette is simple understated elegance.

Lobster bomb at Ford's Lobster, Noank — Ford's takes a bread bowl, toasts it lightly and fills it with half a pound of buttery lobster meat, over which most customers opt for an additional ladle of lobster bisque.

Tableside châteaubriand at VUE 24, Foxwoods — Perfect for couples, VUE 24's retro tableside châteaubriand, with chef's accompaniments and a trio of sauces, is well worth the drive and expense.

Doughnuts at Dottie's Diner, Woodbury — Folks say you have to go early if you want to be assured of getting some of Connecticut's best doughnuts, and they're at their best when they're still warm anyway.

Tagliatelle at Oyster Club, Mystic — The handmade tagliatelle, with a ragù of prime beef, pork, tomato, vegetables, cream, parsley and Parmigiano-Reggiano, will spoil you for most pastas.

Mango sorbet at Peaches N Cream Ice Cream, Litchfield — This sorbet tastes so real one expects it to have the life-sustaining properties of the tropical fruit itself.