

Madison Food Escapes

Dine in the city—but feel like you're a world away

BY NEIL HEINEN, SHAYNA MILLER, BRENNAN NARDI AND KATIE VAUGHN



Sure, we love Madison, otherwise we wouldn't live here. But it's nice to imagine just for an hour or two that we're somewhere else—whether it's the steamy streets of Bangkok, the sun-washed beaches of the Caribbean or even the crazed urban life of New York City. Wherever it is, these local restaurants will take you there—no passport required.

Coastal Cuisines

It's a fact that culinary innovations and trends start on the coasts and work their way inward. And these kitchens are certainly indicative of the east and west coasts both in atmosphere and taste.

West Coast

Sea World

The new downtown hotspot **Tempest Oyster Bar** features outstanding, sustainable seafood in a laid-back atmosphere carried out with bleached and weathered wood, white stucco walls and a bar fronted with old green bottles. Tempest feels like a trendy, understated place that would pop up in San Diego, and the fact that an old wooden Chris Craft boat and impressive blue marlin grace the front room of the restaurant gives the impression that the ocean isn't far away.

Bay Beat

From the gorgeous natural light that filters in to the character of the old brick walls, wood floors and bentwood chairs, **Sardine** reminds me of a place I'd stumble upon in a San Francisco neighborhood and return to again and again. Set near the waterfront, this bistro always has a nice wine list, cool cocktails and a relaxed but sophisticated vibe. Maybe it's all because co-owner/chef Phillip Hurley has worked in several kitchens in the City by the Bay.



Wine Time

Warm yet modern, earthy but sexy, **Harvest** could be set in the Napa Valley—if it weren't so committed to food grown here in the Midwest. The upscale restaurant, like the best of its wine country counterparts, focuses on local and organic ingredients, with menus that change constantly to reflect what's in season. Special dinners highlight area farmers and, of course, everything pairs beautifully with a good wine. (KV)

East Coast

New York State of Mind

It's tempting to say the only thing **Gotham Bagels** and **Stalzy's Deli** lack in terms of authentic New York feel is attitude. But the truth is, New York City stopped being rude a long time ago, so not even the orderly and efficient service gives away that both are a long cab ride from the Big Apple. What really causes one to look for an Upper West Side address for Gotham—or Lower East Side for Stalzy's—is bagels with a bite and a chew and a decent schmear, and a pastrami that's tender and just a little fatty with good mustard and a pickle—and we've finally got 'em both. For many years the question of what the Madison food scene lacked got the same answer—a real deli. Cross that one off the list. Now, if there were just a subway from Mifflin to Atwood. (NH)



Across the Nation

These city hotspots remind us of urban centers around the U.S.A, from northwestern nostalgia to honky-tonk taqueria.

Seattle Spot

Lakeside Street Coffee House isn't Pike's Market Seattle, or even Belltown Seattle. It's more Magnolia Seattle, or even Mercer Island Seattle with a peek of water through the window and a school across the street. But the attention to detail from bean to cup is Seattle through and through, and on a rainy day if you squint a little, the state Capitol looks like Mt. Rainier. (NH)



Steppin it Up

Tex Tubb's Taco Palace is an unfussy taqueria, someplace you'd encounter in San Antonio or Austin. The décor is pure fun and the neon-lit sign outside signifies this place is definitely a family friendly, casual neighborhood spot. Its spot-on margaritas (NOT made from a mix), cheap tacos and refill-it-yourself salsa bar are worth the trip alone. Lest you think this taco joint forgot it's in Madison though, it didn't; check out their Wil-Mar, Atwood or Schenk's Corner burritos. (SM)

European Escapes

Feel like you're jetting around Europe when you pop into these taverns and eateries, all of which lend that certain je ne sais quois to the experience.

Kick it Up

Order up an ale, stout, lager or other favorite European brew and settle in to watch a rugby match at **The Coopers Tavern**. (KV)

Prosit Place

Anyone who's been to Germany knows their affinity for good-time beer halls. You'll indeed find that same die Kameradschaft (camaraderie) at the **Essen Haus** in an

