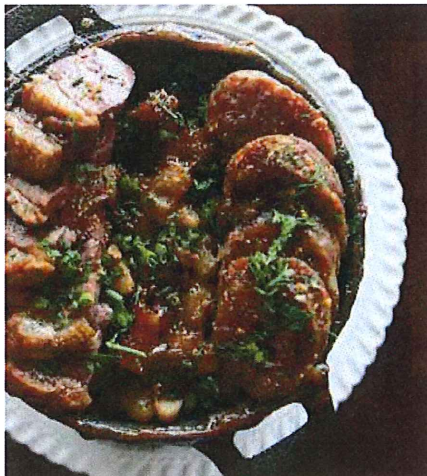


~ OMAHA & LINCOLN NEBRASKA

Nebraska has a kind of quiet kind of confidence – constantly creating, evolving, and progressing with a community spirit that is inspiring – and the latest innovation is the food scene.



The Great Food REVOLUTION

"WHERE ARE YOU GOING AND FOR HOW LONG?" the bored customs officer asks me. "I'm going to Nebraska for a week," I say with enthusiasm. "Omaha, Nebraska?" the officer repeats in an accusatory and quizzical voice. "Why?" he continues. "To discover the culinary scene," I respond. In one motion, the officer stamps my passport while shaking his head with a puzzled stare. "Ok..." he finishes as if to concede defeat.

With dozens of new restaurants cropping up, countless culinary nominations and awards, I'm on a culinary journey to discover the range of diverse tastes in both Lincoln and Omaha beyond simple meat and potatoes. "In 1971, I came to Nebraska from Iowa, there were a lot of steakhouses, people didn't want to go out before going to the theatre, they wanted to go out to eat as the main event," explains Jim Trebbien co-owner of Chef2 in Midtown Crossing, Omaha.

Nebraska, I learn, is a place where a true sense of community still pervades. "If you have an idea for something, the community will stand behind you and make it happen and support you," says more than one local. The word collaboration continually crops up, and it's a spirit that seems ingrained into every person I meet. Perhaps it stems from the tight knit farming mentality, after all you only have to drive 20 minutes in any direction to stumble upon a cattle, corn or soy farm. "The collaborative spirit in Omaha and Lincoln is one that is constantly evolving. Chefs are stepping out of their competitive boxes and understand the benefit [of what they are doing to] the community as a whole. [It's the best way] to share ideas and techniques with others who have the same passion and love for their craft," says John Benton, executive chef at Venue in Lincoln.

With that Midwest decorum, it would be uncharacteristic for Nebraskans to overtly boast about their accomplishments. In fact you probably weren't aware that Omaha ranked eighth among the 50 largest cities in the United States for both per-capita billionaires and *Fortune* 500 companies. Nebraska is not just great food and billionaires though. "We've got museums, fine arts, great sports teams, but we're also known in this town for having a... group of people that know what hospitality is all about," says Willy Thiesen, owner of Pitch Pizzeria in the Dundee Dell district of Omaha.

There is a level of ambition here like the vast prairie that surrounds it, but it is kept in check by humility. As Executive Chef Paul Kulik of Le Bouillon in Omaha pronounces. "[We're] the best kept food secret in America." It's the quiet ones that you should watch out for, and Nebraska is well on its way to make a splash in the culinary pond.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: The elegant bar at Grane at Midtown Crossing in Omaha; executive chef and owner of The Grey Plume, Clayton Chapman; olive oil at Chef2 in midtown Omaha; a perfect cappuccino at Beansmith Coffee Roasters in Sarpy County; rustic French country fare at Le Bouillon in Omaha.

~ THE CHEFS

Clayton Chapman, The Grey Plume

Lauded as one of the premier chefs in the state, I have heard plenty of accolades about the executive chef, Clayton Chapman of The Grey Plume well before dining at his restaurant in Omaha. Though there is a modern and innovative approach to cuisine here, it is still rooted in tradition and a commitment to maintaining relationships—local producers are proudly listed on the menu, while pieces of artwork from local artists and artisans are displayed throughout the restaurant, all while maintaining a no waste policy and a certified green restaurant.

When I finally meet the shy executive chef, he welcomes me into the kitchen introducing me to his culinary team, who work together in symbiotic harmony, with few words spoken. There's a level of mutual admiration and lack of egoism that, unlike many kitchens I've visited before, is refreshing.

My eight course tasting menu is thoughtfully conceived—showcasing a variety of classic and modern techniques, with equally matched wine pairings. A miniscule gouda crisp, and dots of arugula puree sit at the bottom of my bowl coated by a luscious white parsnip soup paired with a sparkling Marques de Gelida Brut Gran Reserva cava. A sweet u8 New Bedford day boat scallops with bok choy, kohlrabi, and persimmon is seared and served with a crisp 2012 Stuhlmuller Vineyards chardonnay, while the Plum Creek Farm's duck which carefully showcases the poultry four ways is paired with a 2008 Pascal Granger Earl Julienas beaujolais. I finish with an olive oil genoise with pear sorbet, drops of maple and powdered olive oil and glass of Broadbent Madeira.

Nick Strawhecker, Dante Pizzeria

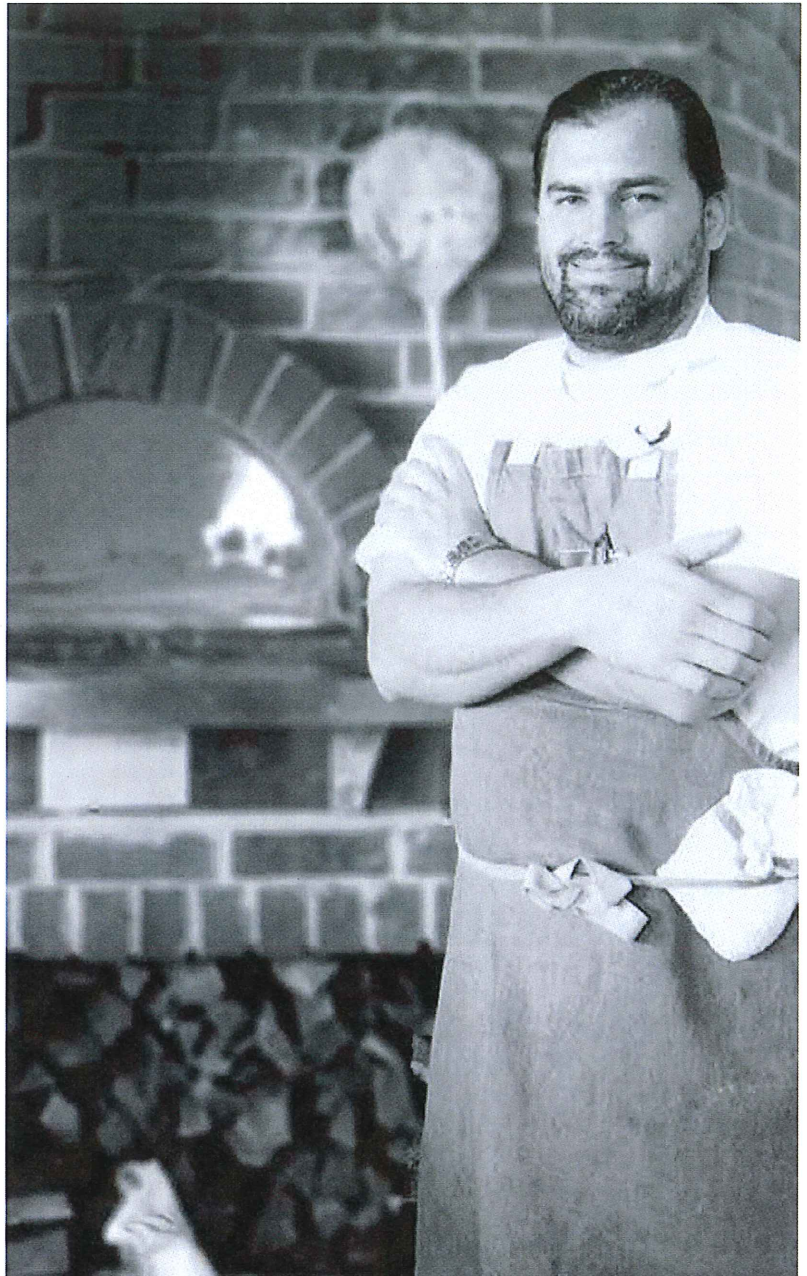
Between sips of Villa Rubibi Schioppettino, I am holding back from bringing a bowl of crystal clear rabbit brodo to my lips—the light, earthy broth is enriched with three silky rabbit stuffed tortellini that any Italian *nonna* would be proud of making.

Owner and executive chef, Nick Strawhecker has an enviable resume—after graduating from Johnson & Wales University, he moved to Piedmont Italy to study at The Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners followed by stints at Michelin restaurant Il Falconerie in Tuscany, and Aria in Spring Chicago. "I have completely adapted an Italian viewpoint to guide our menu and food philosophy: use what is near and what is seasonal as long as it is raised sustainably and without chemicals," the chef states proudly.

Inside the rustic restaurant, pictures of men playing bocce hang alongside a framed map of Italy while cheeky, winking red devil heads are painted on another wall. An open concept kitchen gives me a front row seat to the masterful cooking, as I nibble on chicken liver crostini infused with red wine braised onion, duck prosciutto and crunchy pine nuts. I watch as cooks drizzle thin dough with golden olive oil and delicately tear fresh Branched Oak Farms hand stretched cow's milk mozzarella. Finally, I return to my table and dive into a succulent rabbit roulade with roasted persimmon and fennel salad, and potatoes tossed in mint pesto that has me sinking into my seat.

Venue

Executive chef John Benton is an old soul. "He was one of those kids in the kitchen at 14 and stayed with it. I've learned more about food in fifteen minutes with chef than in 15 years," says Jeff Barclay, owner of Venue Restaurant in Lincoln. A graduate of Johnson & Wales University, the classically trained Benton has spent time in Europe and the East coast, before returning to his hometown of Lincoln to helm Venue. "I love to learn and grown and train, teach and mentor. As a chef I want nothing more than to provide an excellent guest experience. To have the opportunity to come back [to Lincoln], seeing old friends has been really nice," says Benton who, at 25, has a level of maturity, passion and skill that is both admirable and obviously apparent. Delivering a menu that injects an understanding of flawless technique and flavour combinations, Benton creates dishes that are instantly memorable like the house smoked salmon spread, rich and creamy with pops of herbaceous dill, capers and citrus zest, the sweet caramelized butter basted diver



"We've got museum, fine arts, great sports teams, but we're known also in this town for having a group of people that know what hospitality is all about."

scallop paired with spinach risotto given depth with a smoked paprika oil and peanut butter cheesecake with silky dulce de leche sauce, garnished with fermented cocoa nib giving a burst of acidity. This is one chef to watch.

Le Bouillon

Everything around me screams French bistro—the black and white checkered floor at the bar, dark wood chairs and wrought iron lamps. Housed in an historic former fruit and vegetable warehouse in the old market district, the white painted brick walls are simply adorned with watercolour paintings and an enormous, kaleidoscopic tree by Franco-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle.

But don't let the French décor intimidate, there is an atmosphere of warmth here, no stoic waiters and silver cloches. "This restaurant pays homage to the part of France that's closest to Omaha, the southwest region. It's a French country sensibility, but with our own spin," says executive chef Paul Kulik. Le Bouillon excels at French country cuisine like the toast topped with creamy roasted squash, ricotta, tart green apple and chili that begins my dining experience. This is followed by a bowl of steamed wild mussels in cider, fennel onion jam, foie gras butter and scallions, a dish that makes double dipping *de rigueur*. An array of southern French dishes follow, like the Spanish tortilla with salt cod and caramelized onion, duck hearts and arroz a la plancha with shrimp a kind of crisp rice dish folded over like an omelet that brilliantly marries with a glass of Domaine Faillenc Sainte Marie.

~ THE PIZZA CRAWL

Pitch Pizzeria

"It's 1000 degrees, and there is no room for error. You have to keep things moving in there. You know there's a sweet spot that has to be developed, it puts a char on the crust which gives it a bit of flavour," says Willy Thiesen proudly referring to the charcoal heated oven, the crowning glory at Pitch Pizzeria. The man behind Godfather's Pizza, opened Pitch in 2009 to rave reviews. My favourite is the shrooms pizza topped with roasted mushrooms, succulent oven roasted tomatoes, tangy Grana Padano cheese a drizzle of earthy truffle oil and herbaceous thyme cream. No errors in sight.

La Casa Pizzeria

Family owned and operated, Joe Patane started La Casa Pizzeria in 1953 after the war when soldiers were coming back talking about the pizza they had eaten in New York. Today, La Casa pizzeria is still run by Patane's grandchildren. "My grandfather travelled around tasting pizzas and eventually

came home and worked on his own recipe. Nothing with the pizza has changed," says grandson Joel Hahn. When my steaming hot margherita pizza arrives, a short, pastry-like crust gives way to tangy Romano cheese and herbaceous tomato basil sauce.

Frank's Pizzeria

It's lunchtime and there are a slew of hungry businessmen feasting on slices of pizza inside the straight-out-of-New-York pizzeria in Linden Market, Omaha. With a wafer thin crust topped with a well seasoned, herb-rich marinara, fresh mozzarella and basil leaves it is easy to taste this pizza's provenance. Brooklyn native Joe D'Elia has been in the pizza business since he was 16, and his father Frank started the business in 2003. This is New York style Italian pizza done to perfection.

~ THE ARTISANS

Beansmith Coffee Roasters

Aaron Rauch is cradling a ceramic cup, carefully but skillfully streaming frothy cream into the ebony liquid to form a feathered leaf pattern. I'm in Sarpy County, fifteen minutes from downtown Omaha, in an industrial area that, upon first glance, would not immediately conjure images of delicately roasted coffee beans. But appearances can be deceiving.

Along with owner Chris Smith and roaster Nick Tabor, Beansmith Coffee Roasters has become one of the premier small batch artisan roasters in Nebraska, working with a host of hand selected producers from around the world.

I sample a variety of drip coffee, hand poured through a Chemex including a Gelana Abaya (from Ethiopia) with fruity characteristics and hints of chocolate and nuts. Set to open a high end coffee house in the Old Market in 2015, Beansmith is primed to set the bar high.

Le Quartier Baking Company

I walk into the small bakery, with the smell of fresh bread delightfully wafting in the air, while customers stare at pastries in glass displays, long, golden baguettes in straw baskets and rows of crusty artisan loaves. "We call ourselves a Montreal-style bakery which give us a license to be a little bit more North American in our baking style. We take an innovative approach to European classics," says Seth Quiring, one part of the brother duo behind Le Quartier Baking Company in Lincoln.

Opened in 2006, the bakery and café turns out an impressive array of loaves, pastries and baked goods. The "talent behind the bakery" is John Quiring, an electrical engineer turned certified baker who has trained in

Montreal and Paris. I spend time chatting with Seth about everything from opening day advice from his brother ("you're going to need to toughen up"), to the 158 year old starter used in their dough. I devour a breakfast croissant filled with egg, cheese avocado and tomato, the buttery and flaky dough crumbling between my fingers.

"My mother always made everything, from bread to apple sauce. [When I was younger], I wanted to get canned applesauce because that was what all the other kids were eating, and only now do I realize how great that was—we had our own apples in our backyard," remembers Seth. It's just the sort of honest comment and homespun wisdom that sums up the heart of this bakery.

~ THE EXPERIENCE

Hollywood Candy

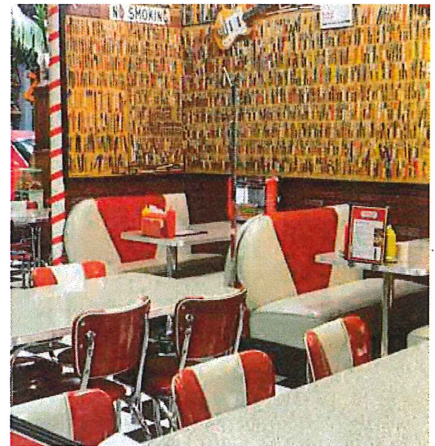
"I want to make this space into a winter wonderland with a skating rink, miniature train and figurines," says Larry Richling of his next big project on the upper floor of his Hollywood Candy and Fairmont Antiques and Mercantile store. A true visionary, collector, historian and most of all, storyteller, Richling has created a labyrinth store—inside there is an authentic 1950's diner and movie theatre, Santa's workshop and arcade, a pink Cadillac, candy store, movie posters and artifacts and even a vintage printing press. The store has a little bit of everything. All at once, I am Alice running with the white rabbit, Charlie running wild in the chocolate factory and Harry in Diagon Alley. There is the sound of animated voices and bright colours everywhere and every one of my senses is engaged. Richling is keen to offer anecdotes about his various collections. "Wait, before your go, you have to try this," he says dropping a golf ball sized chocolate in my hand. "What is it?" I ask. "It's a recipe from my aunt and it's the best peanut butter chocolate you'll ever taste," boasts Richling. He's right. Just like the store, it's an experience.

~ THE CRAFT COCKTAIL AND SPIRIT SCENE

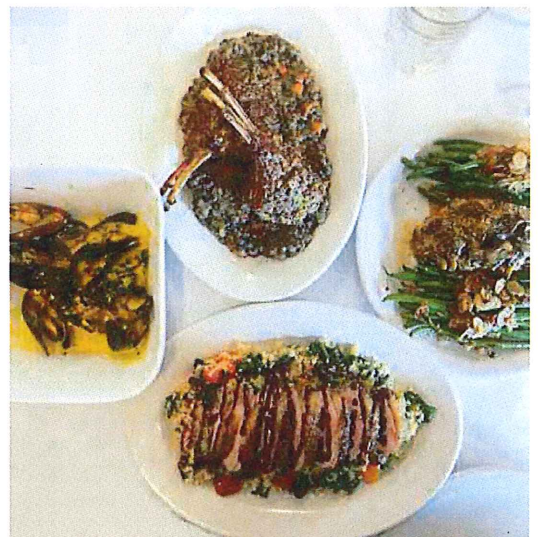
Grane

Any self respecting single malt scotch would want its final resting place to be Grane in Midtown Crossing, Omaha—home to a dispensary system by the ounce that allows customers to sample a variety of whisky from

Opposite, clockwise from top left: The Joslyn Museum in Omaha; executive chef Nick Strawhecker of Dante Pizzeria; a U3 prawn at Venue in Lincoln; executive chef Mary Kelley of Dundee Deli; an array of Greek mezze from The Parthenon in Lincoln.



"The collaborative spirit in Omaha and Lincoln is one that is constantly evolving. [It's the best way] to share ideas and techniques with others who have the same passion and love for their craft."



classics like Highland Park and Ardbeg to rare whiskies like Japanese Nikka Taketsuru 17 year old and French Bastille 1789. Owner Dan Matuszek talks to me about everything from the old fashioned cocktail on tap, to décor. “The brick on that wall is from an 1870s brewery in Cleveland— we really wanted to create a brand around the repeal of prohibition,” he reveals. Sitting at the glistening bar, with more than 400 bottles of whisky, I mull over the menu until I finally settle for Auchentoshan’s Three Wood, the dark amber liquid reveals citrus and butterscotch characteristics and I ponder my next choice.

The Berry & Rye

A bar that makes its own sodas, bitters and syrups moves into the realm of the serious craft cocktail. I’m at The Berry and Rye, a pre-prohibition era style bar in Old Market, Omaha. Dim lighting, weathered hard wood floors and exposed brick walls add to the moody atmosphere. Silver art deco cocktail shakers with flourished spouts hang near a massive mural depicting a bar scene. With enticing names like debonair pear, snowfall in Denmark and Trinidad smoke (made with rum, house-made cinnamon clove bitters, and S.G. Roi tobacco syrup), it’s no wonder mixologist Luke Edson received a top 10 nod at the 2013 GQ/Bombay Sapphire Most Inspired Bartender contest. I settle for a French 45, a perfectly made classic. There’s no sense of pretention here, only solid cocktails with attention to flavour and balance.

Dundee Dell

Executive Chef Mary Kelley is proudly showing off her latest tattoo, a map of Scotland. I’m inside Dundee Dell, housing one of America’s largest collections of single malt Scotch whisky, it also happens to be the place where Kelley’s parents first met. Maybe that

explains her affinity for scotch, a passion she shares with owner Pat Gobel. The two take frequent trips to Scotland to hand select the whisky that appears on shelves. “I’m a chef, and I think I have a pretty good palate, we spend a lot of time picking out all of our spir-its,” notes Kelley. Though the focus is on spirits, there is also a pub menu featuring legendary fish and chips made with specially ordered Icelandic cod and a secret batter that, according to Kelley, takes two days to make. For whisky aficionados the comprehensive menu offers an impressive selection, from smoky Islays to sweet American bourbon and a nice mix of lesser known producers and well established brands.

~ WHAT TO DO

Joslyn Art Museum

I feel as though I’m in the Nebraskan Taj Mahal; the art museum and memorial was a gift from Sarah Joslyn to the city of Omaha and a tribute to her husband George. Standing in front of the pinky-purple hued modern edifice, I come to understand why the architecture has been listed among the 100 finest buildings in America. 38 types of marble are used throughout the building, with hints of art deco, Roman and modern American styles. My favourite niche is the Storz Fountain Court, conjuring images of an Italian renaissance courtyard with Moravian floor tiles symbolizing literature, music, architecture, and painting. Art work by old world masters and American artists are displayed with by time period and style. After strolling through the museum, I stop in front of a painting called The Grief of the Pasha. It’s an uncanny resemblance as I realize that the painting is a virtual replica of the Storz Fountain Court.

Lauritzen Gardens - Omaha's Botanical Center

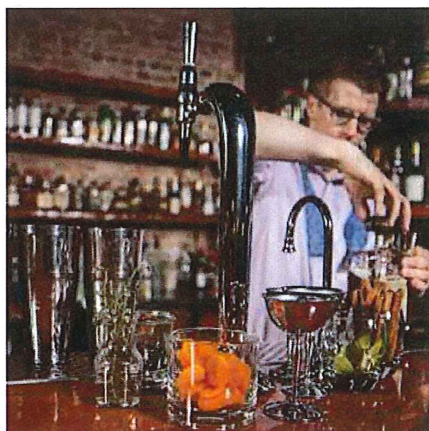
“I love the juxtaposition of the native prairie

grasses outside that really feel so Nebraska, and the tropical temperate plants inside that open people up a whole new world of plants,” says Mia Jenkins of Lauritzen Gardens, referring to the newly opened Marjorie K. Daugherty conservatory. A 20 000 square foot space separated into three sections, it starts in the temperate south and moves up in an elevated walkway toward a tropical house encompassing a palm collection, koi pond and more than 165 species of plants. This new addition is part of Lauritzen Gardens, a 100 acre site opened to the public in 2001 that includes a Woodland trail, four season plant displays and a yearly antique show. I sit down on a bench, listening to the flowing water, stare at the fern grotto and float a million miles away.

Lincoln Children's Zoo

I could swear the tiny marmoset monkeys are playing a game of hide and seek with me when I visit the Lincoln Children’s Zoo. Standing mere metres away through a glass enclosure the monkeys are amongst the dozens of animals that embody the zoo’s vision of having guests interact with and get up close to nature. Outside there is a trio of peacocks perched on a wooden fence like elegant soldiers, their brilliant iridescent feathers are gleaming under the light of the sun. “We had a class with a bunch of five year olds. A boy who had just lost his Dad was in the group. He stopped speaking after that happened, but his Mom brought him to this experience at the zoo. To her surprise, he went home that night and said ‘Mom guess what I saw?’ That’s the power that the engagement with animals is all about— it’s giving people the opportunity to have those close encounters,” sums up president John Chapo.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Fresh bread from Le Quartier Baking Company; executive chef John Benton of Venue in Lincoln; inside Hollywood Candy in Omaha; French country fare from The Normandy in Lincoln; slices of thin crust pizza at Frank's pizzeria in Omaha. This Page: Lauritzen Gardens - Omaha's Botanical Center in Omaha; the Berry & Rye pre-prohibition bar in Omaha; a tasty spread from The Bread and Cup in Lincoln.



RESOURCE GUIDE: OMAHA, NEBRASKA

OMAHA

While steakhouses, and Italian restaurants have been staples of the Omaha food scene for years especially in established areas like the Old Market downtown, The Midtown, Dundee, and Benson neighborhoods are the heart of this Midwestern city's emerging food scene. Not only are Omaha restaurants providing charcuterie, small plates and farm to table fare, but a lively cocktail scene, craft breweries, and specialty food shops are leading to a new, modern food scene. visitomaha.com; visitnebraska.com

SEE

Joslyn Art Museum

The museum opened in 1931 and features a Georgia Pink marble Art Deco style exterior. European and American works, a 1,200 seat auditorium, Peter Kiewit Foundation Sculpture Garden and Discovery Garden, Sculpture Garden and important works related to Native Americans make this a must-see in Omaha. 2200 Dodge Street; (402) 342-3300; joslyn.org

Hollywood Candy

Antiques, mercantile, candy, Hollywood memorabilia, diner, and much more in this unusual mazelike wonderland store. 1209 Jackson St; (402) 346-9746; hollywoodcandy.com

DO

Lauritzen Gardens – Omaha's Botanical Center

Four-season plant displays in an urban oasis. 100 Bancroft Street; (402) 346-4002; lauritzengardens.org

EAT AND STAY

The Grey Plume

Located in Midtown Crossings, the restaurant helmed by Chef Clayton Chapman espouses seasonal, local foods, small plates and contemporary flavours. Check out the pasta and charcuterie made in-house. 220 S. 31st Avenue, Suite 301, Midtown Crossing; (402) 763-4447; thegreyplume.com

Le Bouillon

Housed in the old French Café building, featuring watercolours by Sam Mercer and the eclectic Niki de St. Phalle Tree, the restaurant specializes in comfort foods from Southern France and Vins de Table. Chef Paul Kulik emphasizes fresh, unpretentious food with an American twist. 1013-17 Howard Street, Omaha, NE; (402) 502-6816 telephone; bouillonomaha.com

Dante Ristorante Pizzeria

Brick-oven pizza, meats, pastas and Italian wines based on a philosophy of locally sourced ingredients. Chef owner Nick Strawhecker brings a slice of Italy to Omaha. 16901 Wright Plaza The Shops of Legacy, Omaha, NE; (402) 932-3078; dantepizzeria.com

Frank's Pizzeria

Joe D'Elia offers some of the most delicious pizza in the city. New York style pizzas perfected from his native Brooklyn (where his family has been in business since the 1970s) are sold in a small, nondescript restaurant. Opt for a simple margherita pizza, hamburger-onion pies, traditional cannolis made with impastata ricotta or traditional veal parmesan. 711 N. 132nd Street; (402) 493-0404; franknewyorkpizza.com

La Casa Pizzeria

Midtown located, family-owned Southern-Italian style pizza and large selection of other Italian fare. Famous for its hamburger-onion pie (a local Nebraska specialty). Newly opened food truck also serves the community. 4432 Leavenworth Street; (402) 556-6464; lacasapizzeria.net

Pitch Pizzeria

Founder Willy Thiesen named Pitch after the coal that stokes the fire creating the restaurant's signature thin crust. Pastas, salads, sandwiches, soups, and healthy appetizers are also available. 5021 Underwood Avenue; (402) 590-2625; pitchpizzeria.com

Chef²

Omaha chefs, Jim Trebbien and Mike Combs offer a variety of products for chefs, and home cooks including olive oils, vinegar, sea salt, sugar, locally produced goat cheese, tapenades, gourmet pastas, crackers, and cake mixes at their culinary store. Tasting events, demonstrations and cooking classes are also available. 3157 Farnam Street, Suite 7104; (402) 991-656; midtowncrossing.com/retail/shop/chef2

Dundee Deli

Tastings available from the largest collection of single malt Scotch whiskies in the U.S. Chef Mary Kelley's fish and chips are legendary in the area. 5007 Underwood Avenue; (402) 553-9501; dundeedel.com

The Berry & Rye

Throwback pre-Prohibition cocktails and inspired contemporary creations at this craft cocktail room. Sodas, syrups, and bitters made in-house. 1105 Howard Street; (402) 613-1331; theberryandrye.com

Grane at Midtown Crossing

Mixologist and general manager Phil Cacciatore and owner Dan Matuszek offer premier and small batch whiskies, and handmade whiskey-based craft cocktails. Prohibition-style house Old Fashioned on tap. 120 S. 31st Avenue #5105; (402) 934-5727; granewhiskey.com

LINCOLN

EAT STAY

The Cornhusker, A Marriott Hotel

333 S. 13th Street Lincoln, NE; (402) 474-7474; marriott.com

Bread & Cup

Serves lunch and dinner in a casual atmosphere from locally sourced ingredients. Sample the house-cured charcuterie, baked goods and black bean soup. 440 N. 8th Street, Suite 150 Lincoln, NE; (402) 438-2255; breadandcup.com

Cultiva Coffee Roasting Company

Ever-changing selection of coffees from around the world roasted in-house. Café offers homemade breakfast including crepes. 727 S. 11th Street Lincoln, NE; (402) 435-1133; cultivacoffee.com

Dish Restaurant

Chef Travis Green blends myriad influences at his Nebraska steakhouse-meets-locavore haunt. Dishes include grilled duck, falafel sandwich, hummus and a tofu entrée. 110 O Street, Lincoln, NE; (402) 475-9475; dishdowntown.com

Le Quartier Baking Company

Owners and brothers Seth Quiring and head baker John Quiring excel at this Montreal style-artisan bakery with several locations in Lincoln and Omaha. Expect baguettes (plain and blue cheese), croissants, pain au chocolat, bread, and cronuts. 6900 O Street, Suite 132 Lincoln, NE; (402) 464-0345; lequartierbakingco.com

The Normandy

Casual French country cuisine ranging from cassoulet, crepes, and quiche, to soup, salads, and cheese plates from owner/chef Lawrence De Villiers and chef Caleb Heston. 2785 S. 17th Street, Lincoln, NE; (402) 476-0606; restaurantnormandy.com

The Parthenon Greek Grill & Taverna

Traditional Greek dishes from chef/owner George Kazas. Monthly wine dinners and during the summer Dog Tuesdays allows patrons to bring their canine guests, who are treated to edible dog treats, on the restaurant's patio. 5500 South 56th Street, Suite 100 Lincoln, NE; (402) 423-2222; theparthenon.net

CASK – Fermentations and Cocktails in the Haymarket

Boutique wines, craft cocktails and spirits. 728 Q Street, Lincoln, NE; (402) 416-2429

Venue Restaurant

Rooftop garden, hand-cut-in-house beef, in-house charcuterie and pasta reflect an ethos of sustainable, fresh, local food. Extensive wine list available. 4111 Pioneer Woods Drive Lincoln, NE; (402) 488-8368; yourvenue.net

Licorice International

Worldwide selection of licorice from countries including Australia, New Zealand, Finland and Holland. Owners Elizabeth Erlandson and Ardith Stuert also have an online order business and support soldiers overseas with their Treats for Troops program. 803 Q Street, Suite 300 Lincoln, NE; (402) 488-2230; licoriceinternational.com

SEE

International Quilt Study Center & Museum

Housed in a beautiful, airy modern building, Ardis and Robert James personal donation initiated the collection which now stands at 3,500 quilts and related textiles and documents from the 1700s to the present from more than 25 countries. University of Nebraska-Lincoln/Dept. of Textiles, Clothing & Design P.O. Box 830838 1523 N. 33rd Street Lincoln, NE; (402) 472-6549; quiltstudy.org

Nebraska State Capitol

Dubbed the Tower of the Plain and designed by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue it was completed in 1932. The Sower a 15,000 pound bronze statue of a man sowing grain caps the dome, a nod to the agricultural economy which is the backbone of Nebraska. Bright, murals and mosaics decorate the interior. 1445 K Street Lincoln, NE; (402) 471-0448; capitol.org

Sheldon Museum of Art

Impressive collection of American art reflecting different periods, including 19th century landscape and still life, American Impressionism, Regionalism, early Modernism, Abstract Expressionism, Geometric Abstraction, Pop, and Minimalism. University of Nebraska-Lincoln P.O. Box 880300 12th and R Streets Lincoln, NE; (402) 472-2461; sheldon.unl.edu

Haymarket

Redevelopment area downtown home to historic warehouses a new civic arena, hotels, upscale condominiums, a community plaza, parking, The Railyard (entertainment and dining hub) and office and retail space.

DO

Lincoln Children's Zoo

Interactive and up close animal experience for children and adults. 1222 S. 27th Street Lincoln, NE; (402) 475-6741; lincolnzoo.org

SARPY COUNTY

(402) 332-5999; gosarpy.com

Beansmith Coffee Roasters

Opened in 2010, this specialty coffee roaster sells single-origin coffees, espressos, and blends as well as coffee-making supplies. 12012 Roberts Road #C La Vista, NE; (402) 680-1125; beansmith.com