

## PROVIDENCE: A CITY WITH TASTE

### OVERVIEW:

Among those who know and love food, Providence is considered one of the most important cities in the United States. Not only does the city have numerous critically acclaimed restaurants, but it is also a major center for the study and appreciation of the culinary arts.

### HISTORY & CULTURE:

Providence's history and geography have also helped to cement its reputation as a culinary capital. After all, the city is the birthplace of the diner, dating back to 1872. It remains at the forefront of other recent nationwide culinary movements such as farm-to-table cuisine and the prevalence of city-dwelling food trucks. One of the most beloved examples of this is **Haven Brothers**, a trailer on wheels that parks nightly next to Providence City Hall. From blue collars to bluebloods, everyone stops at Haven Brothers, which serves burgers and other treats from the grill until the wee hours.

Waves of immigrants have come to the city in the last two centuries, bringing their recipes and culinary traditions with them. As a result, Providence has a wide variety of ethnic restaurants from which to choose. The city is perhaps most famous for its Italian food, with the Federal Hill section of Providence named "One of the Five Best Little Italy's in the U.S." by Food Network Chef Mario Batali. Located on the shores of Narragansett Bay, local restaurants also make good use of the abundance of fresh seafood, offering fabulous, creative dishes. A strong Dominican population has also migrated to Providence infusing the flavors of Latin America throughout.

### EDUCATION:

Providence is the home of Johnson & Wales University, the world's largest culinary educator. Johnson & Wales alumni include some of the most well-respected chefs and restaurateurs in the world, such as Emeril Lagasse '77, Tyler Florence '94 and Sam Talbot '02. Many J&W alumni stay in the city when they graduate, which is why Providence has more degreed chefs per capita than any other city in the U.S. It also accounts for the sophistication of Providence's restaurant scene.

The world's premiere museum for the preservation and study of the culinary arts, the Culinary Museum at Johnson & Wales University, draws thousands of visitors annually. The museum contains more than a half million culinary artifacts, including an exhibit on food in the White House and more than 4,000 menus from around the world. It also provides a glimpse of the superstar chefs of tomorrow by exhibiting stunning sculptures made from sugar, bread or chocolate by current students.

### TRENDS:

While farm-to-table has infused most every major food city in the nation, Providence was instrumental in cultivating the trend at the start thanks to its myriad farmers markets and local artisans. Producers throughout Rhode Island provide farm-raised and sustainable products including Heritage Farms, Blackbird Farm, Zephyr Farms and FarmFreshRI. **Gracie's**, a Providence favorite, is located in Downcity and sources the kitchen directly from a neighboring urban rooftop garden, also owned by the restaurant. Heirloom tomatoes, peppers, Swiss chard, arugula, zucchini, husk cherries, squash, edible flowers and more are planted in the 500-square-foot garden.

The use of local purveyors also goes hand-in-hand with chefs throughout the city implementing more "green" efforts in their restaurants such as re-claiming and recycling materials and paying close attention to how meats and vegetables are raised and farmed.

A relatively new method Providence recently brought to its culinary plate is **Trace & Trust**. Trace & Trust is collaboration between restaurants, distributors and commercial fisherman. It's a system that allows anyone to track seafood by entering an identification number (found on the menu, on the package, etc.) into a Smartphone, and instantly receive information as to who, when and where it was caught, following the catch through the processing stage, then to the restaurant or food market, and finally to the consumer. The system provides transparency as to the sustainability, freshness and origin of the seafood being purchased.

As culinary habits change, so do menus to accommodate them. Special requests for gluten free, vegan and vegetarian menus have made them easy to come by for visitors in Providence who have dietary restrictions or food allergies. Likewise, many restaurants are serving up modernized comfort food with rustic preparations driven by the quality of ingredients.

**Food Truck Frenzy:** Foodies looking for the source of the modern food truck craze don't have to travel any farther than Providence. Home to one of the oldest traveling restaurants in the country, the Creative Capital's famed culinary scene has added some new and diverse mobile dining options for every palate. "Like No Udder" provides delightful dessert treats while "Mama Kim's Korean BBQ" has mastered the art of the East Asian cuisine. "Haven Bros." is a legendary late-night meal cart for visitors loitering around City Hall and "Hewtin's Dog Mobile" offers fresh hotdogs, sausages and sandwiches.

## **ANNUAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES:**

Providence offers other opportunities apart from its restaurant landscape to envelop visitors in the foodie culture. Experiential city tours and a calendar of annual food-related events area available, including:

**Eat Drink RI Festival:** Showcasing the best of the ever-expanding Rhode Island culinary scene, the Eat Drink RI Festival is a four-day, all-local food festival that is held throughout downtown Providence every April. The event regularly features 80+ chefs, farmers, bartenders and producers that put their cuisine on display in various events, the biggest being the Grand Tasting. For more information, please visit <http://eatdrinkri.com/>.

**Savoring Rhode Island:** Brainchild of renowned Providence Chef Cindy Salvato, these tours take patrons behind-the-scenes to meet chefs, bakers and pasta makers in Federal Hill. Guides share tips and advice about Italian cooking and sample regional favorites such as cheese, wine, antipasto, bread, homemade chocolates and cookies. More information is available at [www.savoringrhodeisland.com](http://www.savoringrhodeisland.com).

**Annual Restaurant Weeks:** Taking place annually in January and July, Providence Restaurant Weeks are highly-anticipated by Rhode Island residents and beyond. Dozens of restaurants participate by offering multi-course, prix fixe value menus for lunch and dinner. Restaurant Week updates can be found online at [www.goprovidence.com/RestaurantWeek](http://www.goprovidence.com/RestaurantWeek).

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