



Discovering – and Rediscovering – the Providence Food Scene

A lifelong Rhode Islander has the time of her taste buds exploring Providence eateries old and new.



Let me get this right out in the open – I love food. All sorts of food: Ethnic. Street. Gourmet. Comfort. Free. But Providence food, especially.

As a born-and-bred Rhode Islander, I spend an inordinate amount of time exploring the capital city's burgeoning foodie scene. From sushi to espresso, pizza to upscale fare, I love scouring Providence's tasty nooks and crannies for the newest food sensations.

So, when an invite for a Providence culinary press trip crossed my desk, I was giddy, though a tad apprehensive. What new things could this jaded journalist learn about the city's restaurants and Rhode Island in general?

Hint: A lot.

So here, in no certain order, is a list of my favorite Providence food destinations from that whirlwind weekend – some new, some classic, all delicious.

The Best Providence Food Destinations

Rhode Island Red Food Tours

Our first afternoon started out with a [Rhode Island Red food tour](#) of the downtown area. The three-hour-plus walking tour stops at eight restaurants throughout the city, with little bites at each one. You can even add alcohol pairings for an additional cost. It's a lovely introduction to the city for newcomers, as well as those who have been in Rhode Island for a bit. Our guide Jenny dropped Providence knowledge and trivia like tasty breadcrumbs throughout the afternoon. The food offerings left me stuffed and happy.

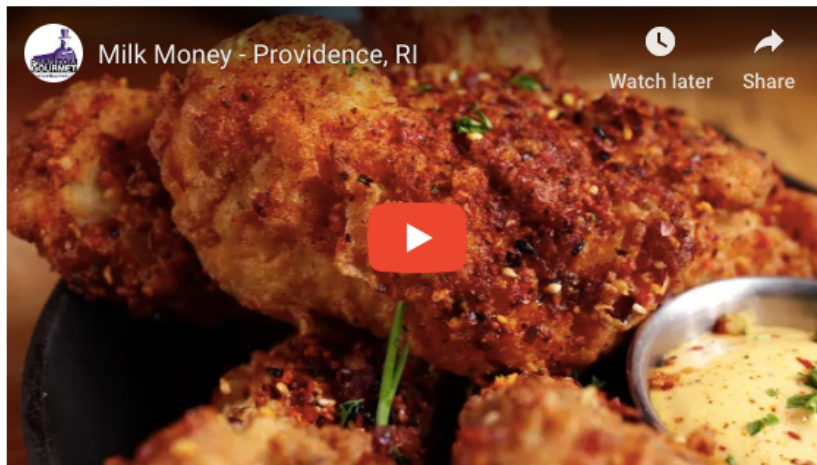


Friskie Fries

Oh, how I love [Friskie Fries](#). This spot, born from a popular food truck of the same name, serves gourmet french fries. Read: Crisp and golden, piping hot, with a soft center. You can get them buck naked, dusted with spices or all dressed up. Try the Rhode Kill for a taste of the classic Rhode Island wiener: they're topped with New York System meat sauce, onions, mustard and celery salt. My favorite was the Alleycat, with fresh garlic, Parmesan and olive oil. The best-seller is the Miss Potato Head (a nod to Hasbro, which has its headquarters in nearby Pawtucket), which come smothered in sour cream, bacon, cheddar cheese and chives.

Yoleni's

Located in the old Tilden-Thurber building, the lovingly restored **Yoleni's** is part Greek marketplace, part bustling breakfast-lunch-dinner spot. During our visit, owner Alexander Philippides served us a spread of marinated olives (ouzo, orange, herbs, etc.) and homemade Greek yogurt flavored with lemon. (You can customize your yogurt – the best I've ever had – with a selection of fresh fruit and granola.) The yogurt was so good that many of us came back at night to pick up some containers for a snack. It doesn't get any more authentic than this: The original outpost store is located in Athens, and the olive oil is grown from the family's trees in Olympia.



Milk Money

Come to the AAA Three Diamond Rated **Milk Money** for the cool atmosphere, brick walls and communal tables, stay for the famous fried chicken and funky plates. Squash sandwich, anyone? Yes, please! You'll find eggs Benedict with house-cured ham on the brunch menu, home-cooked fare with a twist for dinner, and plenty of vegetarian options to keep your veggie-loving friends happy. Pair your selection with a hand-crafted cocktail like the inventive (and superbly named) Cobra Kai – a mélange of matcha sake, chartreuse, gin and egg whites.



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Knead Doughnuts

There's a reason the Providence-Warwick metropolitan area was recently chosen as the **top "donut" city** in the nation. Hand-crafted doughnuts are having a moment, and **Knead Doughnuts** is a big reason why. (**PVDonuts** and **Allie's** – if you're up for a road trip – are also wonderful.) Of course, it doesn't hurt that there's a Dunkin' Donuts shop on nearly every street corner. But visit one of Knead's two Providence locations for doughnuts that will make you stop and savor. Every. Little. Bite. You'll find old-fashioned, cake, filled and brioche varieties in flavors like Black Forest, vanilla glazed, chocolate, blood orange, cinnamon roll, peanut butter and jelly the delicious list goes on. There are also daily vegan and flourless options. If you visit the Custom House location, take a peek at the left side of the building. You'll see this:



Cool, huh? [The Avenue Concept](#), a Providence-based nonprofit that fosters public art, is behind the mural ("Still Here" by the artist Gaia) and several others strewn throughout the city. Head to the website for a map of where you can find them all.



Gracie's

Spoiler alert: [Gracie's](#) is one my favorite restaurants in Providence. It's more than earned its [AAA Four Diamond](#) status with its tasty, inventive fare and outstanding service. We feasted like royalty in a dim, private room surrounded by wines of all vintages. Even the bread was amazing: We had our choice of warm sourdough or a cornbread basted with duck fat. The menu changes with the seasons, with standouts like Atlantic cod loin with chickpea stew, chorizo and squid, and a tasting of winter vegetables. Save room for executive pastry chef Melissa Denmark's amazing three-course dessert tasting.



Sydney

The avocado toast at this bright and sunny [Australian-themed eatery](#) is everything: slathered with bright-green avocado, cherry tomatoes and a smattering of feta. Or opt for the ricotta toast. A savory option is topped with winter greens and drizzled with balsamic, while a sweet version comes with honey and brûléed fruit. You'll also find healthy yogurt bowls, breakfast sandwiches, overnight oats and a bevy of home-baked goodies, as well as light sandwiches for lunch. (Next time, I'm trying the signature roasted broccoli, served with ricotta salata and lemon-caper aioli on ciabatta. Drool.) Perfectly crafted beverages round out the menu, with offerings like flat whites, matcha green tea lattes and plenty of bold cold brew.



Malted Barley

This is where I discovered I liked hard cider. A lot. [Malted Barley](#) has 37 craft brews (including cider and fruit beers made from bananas and pineapples) on draft, plus more than 60 bottles and cans. Order up a flight of your favorites and pair them with perhaps my favorite new Providence food find: a delectable, made-to-order fresh pretzel. You can get them plain and salted, served with a to-die-for apricot butter, or stuffed with myriad fillings for a sandwich. It's a great place for lunch, a mid-afternoon snack or a quick bite before a show.