

Food News

New Study Says This Is The Best Restaurant Scene In The U.S.

Add it to your bucket list!

BY AMANDA MACTAS PUBLISHED: FEB 19, 2025 10:03 AM EST



Food tourism is an increasingly popular way to travel and a great way to learn about different regions and cultures. While many people go abroad for their culinary journeys, domestic travel is constant, and when it comes to booking your next trip, the food scene often weighs in on where you decide to go. I always compile a restaurant hit list before exploring a new area so I can make sure to make reservations in advance and learn about what different cities have to offer. So, it's not shocking that Escoffier School of

Culinary Arts conducted a [study](#) to determine where people should be eating in the U.S. this year.

To determine the top states for dining out, Escoffier explored data from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, National Restaurant Association, Georgia Tech, and other sources. These analyses included looking at expenditure for "food at home" versus "food away from home," the number of restaurant jobs in each state, population-adjusted restaurant density, tourist-to-restaurant ratios, and the number of independent restaurants, culinary schools, and Michelin-starred restaurants. The purpose was to highlight that amazing [food destinations](#) aren't just limited to major cities but can be found in small towns and unassuming neighborhoods, as well. Shockingly, [New York](#) didn't come in first, but it did come in a close second.

The Top 10 States With The Best Restaurant Scenes

1. Hawaii
2. New York
3. Nevada
4. California
5. Florida
6. Massachusetts
7. Illinois
8. Texas
9. Rhode Island
10. New Jersey

The study was filled with interesting insights into how different states approach food. Of note, it was found that Nevada residents spend almost half of their [food budget](#) on restaurants, and the state also has the highest percentage of restaurant jobs. Hawaii had the highest tourist-to-restaurant ratio of the states, but Vermont scores big points for having the most independent restaurants of the bunch.

If you're looking to sidle up to a Michelin-starred restaurant, California has the most, with 85, but D.C. has 25, which is way up there for such a tiny piece of land. I never thought I'd put NJ on my culinary bucket list, but it looks like I'll have to pay it a visit sometime soon!