

PASSPORT

TRAVEL • CULTURE • STYLE • ADVENTURE • ROMANCE!

Rhode Island

World Eats

by [Arthur Wooten](#)



Explore the culinary delights of Rhode Island, from authentic Portuguese dishes to romantic Italian spots and classic New England Inns. I recently experienced an exciting culinary renaissance in Rhode Island.

Whether it's authentic Portuguese cooking with Fado singing, an exquisitely romantic Italian spot, a classic New England Inn, or vegan pizza, there's something for everyone in The Ocean State. With over 400 miles of coastline, bays, and inlets, come prepared to dine on some of the freshest seafood imaginable.

NEWPORT

White Horse Tavern

One of my earliest memories of traveling to [Newport](#) was with my mother's parents, Granny and Papa and eating at the White Horse Tavern. I was about ten years old and even at that young age I was fascinated with the Tavern's architecture and history. Originally a two-room house built in 1662 the house was renovated and established as an inn back in 1673. It even housed troops during the Civil War. Remarkably, it has continuously served food since opening and today it is recognized as the oldest working restaurant in the United States.

Walking up to the aubergine painted three-story gambrel roof colonial felt like coming home. The white table clothed wooden tables inside with Windsor chairs at every setting looked as beautiful as ever. If it was cooler they would have had one of their over-sized fireplaces roaring.

Executive Chef Kevin DeMarco graduated from Johnson & Wales University and with his position at the White Horse he's proud to work closely with local purveyors to offer seasonal ingredients of the highest quality to the Inn's patrons.

On this trip back to the White Horse, for a starter I ordered their Beets & Goat Cheese: roasted multi-colored beets, crispy goat cheese, extra virgin olive oil and sea salt. It was a refreshing and delicious way to start off the dinner.

My entrée of choice was the Lobster Ravioli: shucked lobster, baby shrimp, and lobster sherry cream sauce served with a grilled baguette. Lobster was bursting out of the raviolis that were swimming in the gorgeous rich sauce. Note: although this is the quintessential New England restaurant with all of the expected items like clam chowder, beef wellington, and towers of the freshest raw bar ingredients, you'll find some new and exciting offerings too, like the crispy halloumi cheese with cherry peppers, honey, and local greens.

For a taste and feel of the true Rhode Island spirit I highly recommend the **White Horse Tavern**. 26 Marlborough Street, Newport. Tel. 401-849-3600. whitehorsenewport.com

MIDDLETOWN

Newport Vineyards

Being the smallest state in the US, one town is never far away from another, but it was surprising for me to discover that Rhode Island has over 10 vineyards and wineries. During this trip I was treated to an unforgettable three course lunch at Newport Vineyards.

Chef Adam Teixeira is passionate about food and his tasting menu proves it. This luncheon totally felt like an episode of *Top Chef*. Chef Adam came out with each dish and described what we were about to eat and the wines that accompanied them.

Newport Vineyards has their very own garden and greenhouse supplying them with almost everything they need to cook with. They also grow herbs and fruit to add to their beer production. While browsing the menu, a surprise amuse-bouche appeared. Savory sautéed mushrooms with dressed greens placed on top of a

shmeared with goat cheese served on a garlic toasted baguette. It was a wonderful hint as to what was to come.

The first course was an Autumn Salad: arugula, roasted carrots, apples, red onion, feta, spiced pumpkin seeds with a raisin vinaigrette. I could taste the homegrown sweetness that you achieve when food is this fresh and without preservatives or additives. And the spiced pumpkin seeds were a fantastic pop of flavor. With the salad they suggested their Sauvignon Blanc. Crisp and dry, it was a perfect pairing.

Second Course consisted of Point Judith Bluefin Tuna (Point Judith is a stunning part of Narragansett Bay famed for its wild tuna) with Hubbard squash, sesame beans with a soy miso glaze. The tuna was cooked to perfection and melted in your mouth but it was the spices used in the Hubbard squash that really gave the dish the wow factor. I think I detected hints of curry and turmeric. The wine chosen for this dish was their Dry Rosé. Actually, this is my favorite of all the wines tasted.

For the third course, we were served a Stuffed Apple: a giant sweet apple from a neighboring orchard with cranberry, brown sugar, rhody coyote syrup, and sweet cream. It tasted amazing but I hardly made a dent in it I was so full. I really enjoyed their port with the dessert which was another great pairing. This was a 5-star experience as far as I'm concerned. The restaurant is on the second floor of the winery with wide-open picture windows offering you a chance to look out at the stunning rows of grapes basking in the sun, or you can be seated where you look inward and watch the process of the wines and beers being produced. *909 East Main Rd., Middletown. Tel. 401-848-5161. NewportVineyards.com*

WOONSOCKET

Patriots Diner



For breakfast nothing beats Patriots Diner. This is the quintessential classic diner that makes you feel like you are stepping back in time into a Norman Rockwell painting. They serve breakfast all day in addition to the lunch and dinner menus, and they also have the friendliest staff. For breakfast I was delighted with my Mediterranean Omelet: green peppers, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms, feta cheese served with home fries and toast. The omelet was so moist, and the ingredients tasted amazingly fresh.

The "drink" of Rhode Island is officially coffee milk. When I saw it on the menu, I smiled. It brought me right back to my childhood. Growing up just outside of Boston, we always had coffee milk. I guess the official way of making it is with coffee syrup and milk, but as kids we just had a large glass filled halfway with hot brewed coffee and then added milk to it and a ton of sugar. We must have been bouncing off the walls.

Upon leaving I noticed an overstuffed sandwich another customer had ordered. It was a grilled chicken BLT, and it looked so tempting I almost ordered it to go. 65 Founders Drive, Woonsocket. Tel. 401- 765-6900. patriotsdiner.com

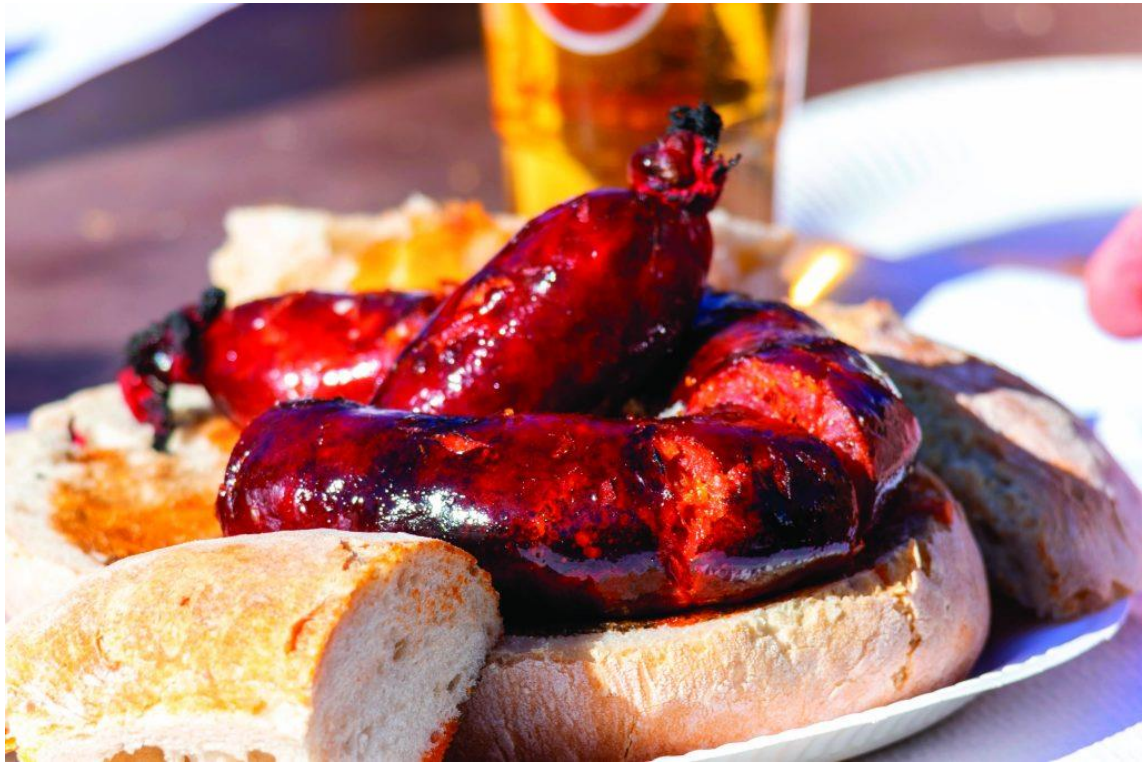
EAST PROVIDENCE

O Dinis

I'm $\frac{1}{4}$ Scottish and $\frac{3}{4}$ Irish so why does eating Portuguese cuisine feel so comforting and homey to me? Thanks to my grandparents, again. They lived, for a good portion of their lives, in Fall River, Massachusetts, which is just over the border from Rhode Island. In the late 1800's a great portion of Portuguese people immigrated to Fall River to find work in the cotton mills. With them they brought their gorgeous recipes and soon their restaurants started popping up everywhere. Hence, at a very young age I was devouring roasted pork belly or steamed crab rolls, served simply with clarified butter and a pickle and chips on the side.

The owner and Chef of O Dinis is Natalia Paiva-Neves. Born in Portugal, she came to the states at a young age but never lost her love for her ancestral food. Her passion was infectious. "I have always had a love affair with all things related to food and feel the need to feed people, to feed their soul. I see food differently than others and pride myself on being able to take simple ingredients and transform them into delicious dishes."

For a late afternoon lunch our table ordered the Chouriço Grelhado: grilled Portuguese sausage, and the Amêijoas à Bulhão de Pato: littleneck clams steamed in a white wine and garlic sauce. The sausage was out of this world and the char on it was smoky and intoxicating. A bite of sausage and then washed down with the clams smothered in white wine and garlic was sublime.



Grilled Portuguese Sausage (Photo by Mauro Rodrigues)

For an entrée we ordered Natalia's giant pot of white beans and seafood, a special of the day. It was amazing. Recently I visited glorious Porto, Portugal and this dish automatically transported me back there. O Dinis is named after Natalia's father who established this restaurant. On Music Mondays they also offer live Fado singing. Fado is a very emotional style of singing found in pubs and cafes all over Portugal. Outside of Portugal, this is truly the most authentic Portuguese cuisine I've ever tasted. 579 Warren Ave, East Providence. Tel. 401-438-3769. odinisrestaurant.com

PROVIDENCE

Double Zero

Located on the second floor of the Plant City Food Hall is Double Zero. The name derives from the 00 flour used primarily for pizza dough. The restaurant specializes in Italian inspired plant based and vegan food. My eye brows skeptically raised a few inches as I sat down, but then I glanced out over the expansive dining room overlooking the [Providence River](#) and I saw scores of people laughing and enjoying their food. After looking at their extensive menu of gluten free and soy free items my table of six settled upon pizza, several different types. A Margherita with tomato, basil and cashew mozzarella; a Pesto with macadamia ricotta, zucchini, arugula and almond parmesan; a Truffle with cashew cream, wild mushrooms, charred kale with a lemon vinaigrette; and finally the Chicken Bacon Ranch with tofu bites, shiitake bacon, cashew herb ranch, with pickled red onion.



Vegan Margherita Pizza (Photo by Nina Firsova)

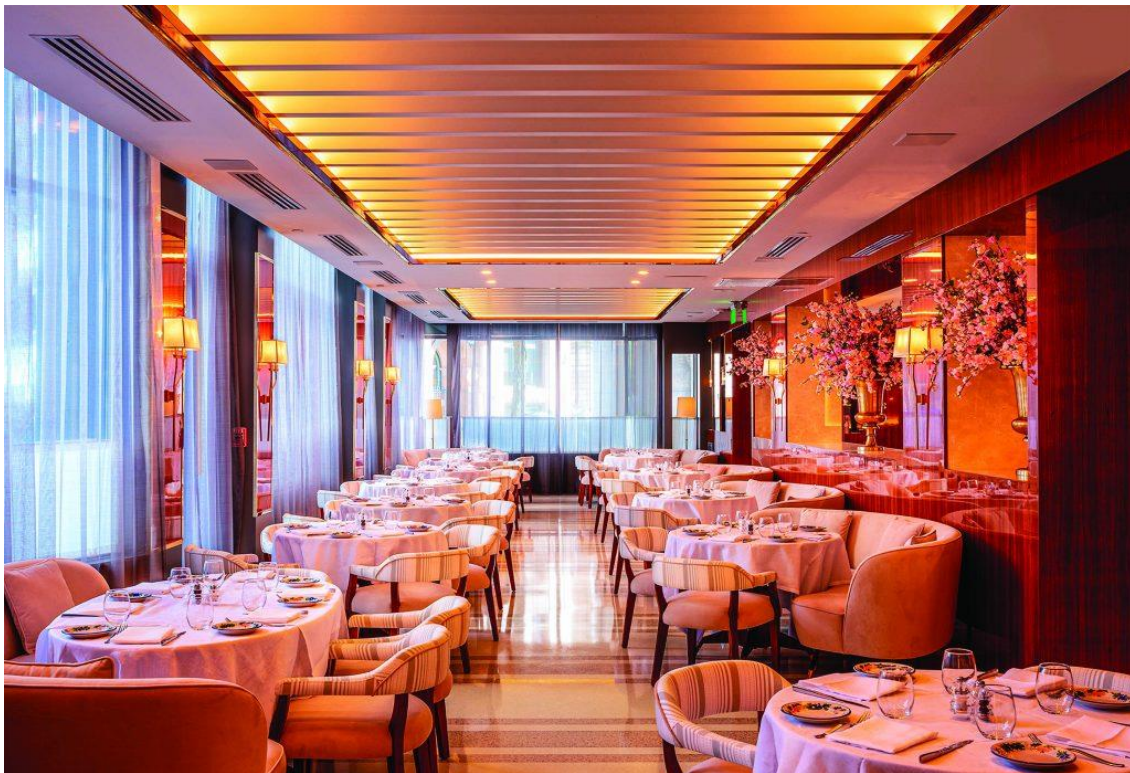
I was blown away by how the vegan versions tasted exactly like what they were imitating. I take that back, this is no imitation. These are unique creations. Between the cashew mozzarella and the shiitake bacon, I don't know which I was more surprised by. Plus, the crusts were addictive.

Executive Chef Luis Jaramillo is originally from Ecuador and made his mark in the US with his restaurant Fifty located in one of the most charming areas in NYC's West Village, Commerce Street. Chef Jaramillo's pizzas were so good I left the restaurant making a note to myself to search where I can find something like this in New York City. Plant City compound also includes several other restaurants and a marketplace. 334 South Water St, Providence. Tel. 401-429-2029. plantcitypvd.com/double-zero

PROVIDENCE

Bellini

This is an elegant dining experience without being too uptight or fussy. In fact, our maitre-d had a great sense of humor. Bellini is part of the Cipriani family, and it is named after their drink which was originally created at Harry's Bar in Venice, Italy back in the Bellini Dining Room 1930s. And that's where I had my first Bellini, at Harry's Bar. It's composed of fresh peach puree topped off with bubbling Prosecco.



Bellini Dining Room (Photo: Bellini)

Back in Providence, Bellini is located in the charming Beatrice Hotel. The restaurant and lounge area are simply beautiful. From the onyx bar to the high-gloss teak paneling and the beige travertine flooring, the rooms are soft, inviting, and chic. The menu refers to their cooking as Rustic Italian, but I disagree. I love rustic Italian, but Executive Chef Giulio Medizza's dishes are much more refined.

As soon as we sat down at our table, a delicious and perfectly made Bellini appeared. As a starter I ordered their Baked Truffle Polenta with stracchino cheese & mushrooms. Just the aroma of it was glorious. I loved the truffles, and the polenta was a perfect creamy texture that enveloped the cheese and mushrooms. I could have stopped there and would have been totally content.

For an entrée I ordered the special of the day, Risotto with Lobster. Often with dishes like this you have to hunt for your bits of lobster, but not here. There was a large claw and a full tail just waiting for me smothered in the perfectly cooked, slightly al dente risotto. Heaven. Completely full, I still ordered a dessert and opted for Pistachio Ice Cream. I can't wait to return to Bellini. *50 Westminster St., Providence.*
Tel: 401-331-4050. bellinirestaurant.com/providence

PAWTUCKET

Hangry Kitchen

I was really excited to visit Hangry Kitchen because it's owned and run by Chef Stacy Cogswell. I first heard of Stacy when I was watching *Top Chef* Season 12. I remember watching this little powerhouse flying around the kitchen. When I asked her about the *Top Chef* experience she commented, "I got a call from them and was a bit stand offish. It was my husband, who talked me into doing it." She landed in 10th place but she got a book deal after that. **The New New England Cookbook**

Stacy was born and raised in New England and with her restaurant Hangry Kitchen, she's created a fun and relaxing space to enjoy her very lovely and sophisticated recipes. Stacy and her crew work hard in the kitchen making everything from scratch, even their Parker House Rolls. She puts love into her food while husband, Robert Deetz, handles the front of the house. Extraverted, friendly, and downright nice, Robert worked the room as if it were choreographed.



Green Crab Chowder (Photo by Hangry Kitchen)

For a starter I had the Butternut Squash Dumplings: brown butter, pickled apple, sage and pepitas. It was so hearty and luscious it could have been my main dish. But for that, I ordered something I've never had before, Green Crab Chowder: green crabs, locally sourced cream and butter as well as fennel, onions, celery, parsley, leeks, potatoes and a fermented house hot sauce.

I asked Stacy what makes her dishes stand out the way they do? "Honestly, it's all the fresh ingredients sourced locally that make all the difference."

Although green crabs are an extremely invasive species, it's considered a culinary delicacy. Environmentalists are encouraging chefs to cook up as much of these creatures as possible. Stacy's recipe is beautiful: creamy, rich, and exciting. And we're helping out the environment at the same time. I wish Hangry Kitchen was closer to my home, I'd visit weekly or even more often, for sure. 542 Pawtucket Ave., Pawtucket. Tel. 401-424- 5812. hangry-kitchen.com.